

**The Conception and Role of Language  
in Heidegger's *Being and Time***

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## Abstract

Heidegger's *Being and Time* (BT) is characterized by evocative, idiosyncratic, but highly deliberate use of language. The thesis argues that this is due to a conception of language informed by his general commitments to phenomenological philosophy and assesses the merits of such an approach.

The phenomenological character of BT is first investigated in the context of Heidegger's attempt to radicalize the foundational programme of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. A central part of this was Heidegger's development of a distinctively phenomenological conception of philosophical concepts as 'formal indication'. Because this forms the basis of Heidegger's general conception of language in BT, formal indication is examined in some detail.

The conception of language and its methodological role in BT itself are discussed against this background. Having outlined the general treatment of language in the analysis of Dasein, I examine Heidegger's ambivalent view of day-to-day language use, arguing that this ambivalence is prefigured in the earlier conception of formal indication. This suggests that 'routine' language use engenders a state of understanding characterized by 'emptiness' or a lack of actual awareness of its objects. To counteract this, Heidegger advocates the development of concepts appropriate to and expressive of the phenomenal relationships they address. It is therefore argued that at least some of the idiosyncrasies of the language in BT itself are motivated by and provide examples of this kind of expressive concept.

Finally, the success of this conception of language is assessed critically in the light of its key commitment to remain 'true to phenomena'. Following some general considerations, a comparison with Wittgenstein's later views is used in evaluating Heidegger's treatment of day-to-day language. Finally, some of the difficulties resulting from Heidegger's attempts to move beyond normal use to more 'proper' uses of language are addressed.

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## Introduction

*Nous commençons à lire le philosophe en donnant aux mots qu'il emploie leur sens 'commun', et peu à peu, par un renversement d'abord insensible, sa parole maîtrise son langage, et c'est l'emploi qu'il en fait qui finit par les affecter d'une signification nouvelle et propre à lui.*  
Merleau-Ponty

In his 1929 *Mind* review of *Being and Time* (SZ) Gilbert Ryle perspicaciously noted that Martin Heidegger had 'set himself to the construction of a new philosophical terminology, especially designed to denote unambiguously the basic categories of Meaning which he is trying to explicate.' He adds that Heidegger's sentences, 'which on first reading seem to be mere dogmatic assertions, have to be read as expressions of a Hermeneutic analysis to understand which is to see that it is true.' (Ryle 1929, 362, 367) On the face of it these are fairly odd claims. For how is understanding a sentence supposed to be conducive to its truth? And, if such a relationship is asserted, how is this to be distinguished from merely dogmatic assertion? Nonetheless, the perspicacity of Ryle's comments, I suggest, lies in that this is exactly the role Heidegger conceived of language as having both in general, and specifically, with all its linguistic idiosyncrasies, in SZ itself. The best way of understanding the basis of such claims is to clarify the way Heidegger conceived of the role of language in mediating disclosure of the world, a role which at the time of SZ was guided by his general philosophical commitments to phenomenology. This is one of the key tasks undertaken by the present thesis, the overall aims of which are to examine, in three stages, Heidegger's conception of language in SZ and to assess its merits as a phenomenological conception of language.

A 'phenomenological' conception of language might refer to different things. It might signal proximity to the school of thinkers that centred around Edmund Husserl in the early twentieth century, or it might suggest commitment to the well-known maxim of philosophizing about 'things themselves', about remaining true to phenomena. In Heidegger's case both apply, so the first task, that of the first chapter, will be to clarify in what sense(s) the hermeneutic ontology of SZ, perhaps despite appearances, is a 'phenomenological' position. In clarifying this, the following account relies largely on

material from Heidegger's lectures from 1919 onwards and sketches his attempted radicalization of the phenomenological project as a response to two specific problems suggested by Husserl's *Logical Investigations* of 1900. The result, in SZ, is a position which in a dual sense comes closer to phenomena than Husserl's later phenomenological works. As part of his critique of transcendental subjectivity, Heidegger emphasizes first the need for basic postulates to cohere with empirically familiar phenomena. This critique also leads him to abstract out the psychological connotations of Husserl's talk of 'acts' and arrive at an ontological idiom, referring to things themselves rather than consciousness. However, as will be seen, despite their difference of basic idiom, Heidegger's position amounts to a 'formalized' appropriation of Husserl's views, insofar as it continues to be shaped by the same framework of epistemological and methodological commitments. In the context of such commitments, I set out in some detail the distinctively phenomenological conception of philosophical concepts that Heidegger developed. The significance of this conception, which he referred to as 'formal indication', is that it underlies the conception of language later found in SZ. However, focusing on this as a prototype of the subsequent view has the advantage that it affords a clearer and more comprehensive view of Heidegger's phenomenological approach to concepts than the corresponding passages in SZ, allowing in particular the phenomenological significance of the key notions of 'authenticity' and 'originality' to be seen more clearly.

Following this the focus will shift to SZ, where the aim will be to show in some detail how the idea of formal indication is transformed into a more general view of language, and how this conception plays an important methodological role in SZ itself. As will be seen, the thought that language has such a role to play in the work is motivated by the view Heidegger takes of the imperfections of routine language use. The central function he attributes to linguistic signs is that of being conducive to understanding or, in Heidegger's phenomenological idiom, of allowing the world to be 'seen' or directly grasped. Despite the fact that it is adequate to most purposes, Heidegger contends that the way we usually use language does not really succeed according to this standard. But what countermeasure might there be to what he considers the 'emptiness' of such use? The ideal that Heidegger projects in his conception of formal indication is that linguistic terms

should be particularly appropriate to, indeed quite literally expressions of, both what they are used to talk about and the understanding in which they are grounded. By being expressive in this way, language is to be conducive to direct apprehension of the objects it addresses, just as Ryle describes. However, although his reliance on the earlier notion is clearly signalled in SZ Heidegger does not provide any more detailed account of what might constitute such expressive use of language. So, despite the difficulties posed by the veil of translation, I will attempt to shed some light on what this conception of expressiveness amounts to in practice by relating some of the idiosyncrasies of Heidegger's own use of language to this ideal. As will be seen, this relies quite heavily on the peculiarities of German so that Heidegger frequently interprets even the structure of words as signalling phenomenal relations in a way that has often evoked the charge that he is merely playing with words. However, as with the preceding one, the task of this second chapter remains primarily one of exposition. So while some of the problems posed by Heidegger's views are noted, discussion of these difficulties is initially postponed to allow a fairly complete picture of these matters to be built up.

Of course, any philosophical interest that attaches to Heidegger's conception of language will lie in its ability to deal with such problems. The standard to which Heidegger allied himself with most closely was that of being true to phenomena, and it is this standard to which I attempt, in the final chapter, to hold his own conception of language answerable. Given the catalogue of questions awaiting answer, and the rather schematic character of Heidegger's own account, this discussion will no doubt be inadequate, but it should allow some of the main contours to emerge that a phenomenological conception of language ought to have. One such feature is emphasis on the importance of understanding language *in situ*, as the actual 'embedded' phenomenon of language, and a concomitant challenge the philosophical value of conceiving of language from a standpoint of reconstruction or reductive abstraction. A second feature, which reapplies the moral of Heidegger's critique of subjectivity, is to resist thinking of language as having an inside-outside topology, as something within which the constitution of meaning happens. Given the first of these commitments, Heidegger's treatment of routine language use might seem, and I suggest is, incongruent. Against the background of broad similarity this tension will therefore provide the focus

for a critical comparison with the more enthusiastic view of normal use found in Ludwig Wittgenstein's mature views on language. However, one reason for being interested in Heidegger's approach to language is that it offers a far more positive approach to nonstandard uses than Wittgenstein's, reflecting the fact that real languages have latent expressive potentials to which we are indifferent in normal use. The closing considerations will focus on the difficulties of Heidegger's reliance on this kind of expressive potential and the associated commitment to the importance of words.

Finally, I would just like to point out that, in the light of the considerable exegetic load of the first two chapters, the third chapter has been organized so as to parallel the structure of the second. This hopefully has the virtue not only of signalling the relationships between these sections, but also of permitting an alternative reading strategy, such that these might be read directly after the corresponding sections of the second chapter.



## 1. Heidegger's Phenomenology

Phenomenology, according to its famous maxim, is about being true to phenomena, about getting back 'zu den Sachen selbst', i.e. to things themselves. It is in this sense, as a methodological stance, that Heidegger approvingly links his project of hermeneutic ontology with the work of Edmund Husserl in §7 of SZ.<sup>1</sup> Heidegger there outlines a 'preliminary conception' of phenomenology, anticipating the subsequent analysis of Dasein which more fully explicates the concepts – such as truth, understanding and interpretation – basic to his hermeneutic ontology. However, even in the full course of SZ there is little sign of the various touchstones of Husserlian phenomenology. Talk of intuition, consciousness, intentionality is conspicuous by its absence; above all, there is no mention of the reductions in terms of which Husserl characterized phenomenological 'method'. The question inevitably arises as to why not, and in what sense, if any, Heidegger's philosophy is 'phenomenological'.

The initial aim of this first chapter is therefore to clarify in what sense, or senses, SZ is a work of phenomenological philosophy. The basic claim will be that any apparent discontinuity with Husserl's phenomenology flows from an attempt to radicalize its programme. In particular, tensions generated by the demand for 'presuppositionlessness' led Heidegger to a 'formalization' of Husserl's phenomenology: although many of his concepts are still shaped by a framework of epistemological and metaphysical commitments adopted from Husserl, Heidegger's critique of transcendental subjectivity led him to insist on its coherence with empirical phenomena and to 'cancel out' talk of such consciousness. Thus regaining, so to speak, the naivety of an ontological idiom. The chapter's second aim is to set out how these phenomenological commitments impact on a conception of language. To do this, Heidegger's theory of the role of concepts in phenomenological enquiry, so-called 'formal indication', is explained in some detail. As

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<sup>1</sup> SZ, 27 f. The maxim stems from LU II, 10. The pagination of the German edition of *Being and Time*, from which I quote, is also given in the translations of Macquarrie/Robinson (1962) and Stambaugh (1996). Note that where German works are quoted in the following the translations are my own, although in the case of SZ both existing translations were frequently consulted.

formal indication remained the basis of the conception of language in SZ, this will clarify both the functional and representational character of the latter and its key concepts.

A key document in understanding Heidegger's conception of phenomenology at the time of SZ is provided by his 1925 lecture *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* (PGZ). The lengthy prelude to this early draft of SZ offers a comprehensive picture of his view of the development of phenomenology, culminating in a methodological characterization paralleling that of the brief account in SZ. This characterization centres on three 'discoveries' – intentionality, categorial intuition, and the 'genuine sense' of the *a priori* – which shed light on Heidegger's appropriation of basic phenomenological concepts. Significantly, these discoveries all point the way back to Husserl's 1907 *Logical Investigations* (LU), the work which decisively shaped Heidegger's allegiance to phenomenology.<sup>2</sup> The background provided by this work and certain of its tensions are therefore the place to start in understanding Heidegger's phenomenology.

### **A Husserlian legacy**

The first of the three 'discoveries' referred to by Heidegger, that of intentionality, is the structural feature of being 'directed towards' something. This 'discovery', or rediscovery, was made by Franz Brentano, who recognized in this erstwhile Scholastic notion the defining characteristic of the psychological.<sup>3</sup> In the LU Husserl had adopted this notion from his teacher Brentano as a basic concept in an attempted 'new foundation of pure logic and epistemology'. (LU I, 7) The assumption underlying this foundationalist project was that meaning and knowledge can be represented in terms of intentional structures. A second basic concept in Husserl's phenomenology was that of 'acts', in terms of which intentional structures and their various differences were characterized. Not surprisingly, these basic terms are used to characterize two distinctions of central importance to Heidegger's adoption of phenomenological method. The first of these, the distinction

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Heidegger's autobiographical 'Mein Weg in die Phänomenologie' (SD, 83 ff.).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Brentano 1973, 88 f.

between indications (*Anzeichen*) and expressions (*Ausdrücke*), illustrates how this terminology, although reflecting the obvious kinship of intentional concepts with psychological concepts, is applied by Husserl not only to mental, but also to linguistic structures. Although both are kinds of sign, making them ‘signs for something’ else, their distinction turns on meaningfulness. Whereas ‘indications [...] express nothing’ and – just as symptoms do not entail their causes – the indication and what is indicated stand in no necessary connection, expressions are distinguished as meaningful (*bedeutsam*) and differing from the ‘nonmeaningful’ referrals of indications in virtue of certain ‘meaning conferring’ (*bedeutungsverleihende*) acts.<sup>4</sup>

The second distinction is that between meaning and knowledge, according to which phenomenological grounding of knowledge centres on the role of ‘intuition’ (*Anschauung*) or of ‘evidentness’ (*Evidenz*). The difference between meaningful intentionality and knowledge is construed in terms of intuitive ‘acts’ through which otherwise ‘empty’ intentional structures attain ‘satisfaction’ or ‘fulfilment’ (*Erfüllung*). On this conception, fulfilment comes in different degrees, with evidentness as the saturated or limiting case of intuitive fulfilment. Perceptive intentions, for example, can be ‘filled out’ partially in the act of seeing the perceived object from a certain perspective; the ideal of evidentness is the limiting case of the perceived object’s being given from all possible perspectives – an ideal realized by the presence of this object at the locus of its intentional representation: ‘ultimate fulfilment’ is attained when ‘the intuitive representative is the object itself, as it in itself is.’ (LU II, 647) Intuitive fulfilment of meaningful intention, and in particular the limiting case of evidentness then provide the basis for Husserl’s phenomenological interpretation of truth as adequation: ‘Evidentness’ is an act of ‘congruent synthesis’ (*Deckungssynthese*), its ‘objective correlate is called *being in the sense of truth, or truth*’. (LU II, 651)

This phenomenological conception of knowledge and truth is reflected in the two further discoveries referred to by Heidegger in PGZ. For despite its close analogy with the Kantian doctrine of the complementarity of intuitions and concepts, it forced Husserl to recognize the inadequacy of acts of sensory intuition (Kant’s ‘intuition’) alone in accounting for intentional acts in which, say, sense content is synthesized (conjunction

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. LU II, 30, 33 and 37, 44 respectively.

and disjunction) or forms the basis of abstraction ('ideation'). To meet this inadequacy Husserl postulated acts of 'categorial intuition', thus generalizing the notion of intuition to include both 'sensory and categorial acts', with a corresponding 'new concept of matter' comprising both 'sensory (real) and categorial objects'. (LU II, 541) Although he too retained an empiricist hierarchy, viewing acts of sensory perception as 'simple' (*schlicht*) apprehension in contrast to 'founded' acts of categorial intuition, Husserl criticizes Kant for having failed to 'clarify what is peculiar to pure "ideation"' and so having lacked 'the phenomenologically genuine concept of the *a priori*'. (LU II, 733) A further consequence is that, on its phenomenological interpretation, truth is formalized so as to become a potential characteristic of *all intentional structures*, not just propositions or predicative assertions. In this sense, Husserl characterizes the difference between satisfied and empty intentions as that between 'proper' and 'improper' (*[un]eigentlich*) or 'intuitive' and 'significative' (or 'symbolic') intentions.<sup>5</sup> Thus 'meaning fulfilling' (*bedeutungerfüllende*) acts are to distinguish knowledge, i.e. 'proper' acts of thought, from merely significative, symbolic or 'empty' intentional meaning, just as the latter is distinguished from the nonmeaningful by 'meaning conferring' acts.<sup>6</sup>

One reason for Heidegger's abiding interest in the LU was Husserl's attempt to abstain from metaphysical commitments with regard to the nature of intentionality and the tensions that this entails. These result from the 'principle of presuppositionlessness', which requires 'strict exclusion' of all assertions that cannot 'be fully and entirely phenomenologically realized', and which Husserl saw as incumbent on any 'epistemological investigation' – such as an attempted phenomenological founding of pure logic – 'that lays serious claim to scientific character'. (LU II, 24) In the LU Husserl interpreted this principle as entailing that no determinate 'psychological reality' could be postulated as the bearer of intentional acts, and characterized his investigation of the 'conditions of possibility of science or theory altogether' as '*a priori* epistemological

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<sup>5</sup> 'When one speaks of the contrast between proper and improper representation [*eigentlicher und uneigentlicher* Vorstellung], one usually has in mind the contrast between *intuitive* and *significative*'; 'improper acts of thought would be [...] all the significative acts which might possibly serve as parts of [...] predicative intentions', which, Husserl continues, is possible for 'all significative acts'; 'The *proper acts of thought* would be the corresponding fulfilments.' (LU II, 722, cf. 50)

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Husserl's example of printed word: as merely perceived it lacks the 'word character'; with meaning conferring acts it becomes a word, directing consciousness to its object. (LU II, 46 f.)

conditions which can be contemplated and researched in abstraction from any relation to the thinking subject and to the idea of subjectivity altogether.<sup>7</sup> This requirement leads to two interrelated problems:

*Is Husserl's position metaphysically neutral?* Certainly it is unsatisfactory insofar as it clearly assumes the availability and familiarity of intentional acts to humans while simultaneously insisting that 'descriptions of phenomenology [...] are not concerned with [*betreffen nicht*] experiences or classes of experiences of empirical persons'. (LU I, 13) So there remains at least a lacuna in explaining the relationship between the two. But this is merely symptomatic of the underlying difficulty that, although relatively indeterminate, Husserl's position is not commitment free. For even if one concedes that talk of acts and intentions can be conceived of in abstraction from the idea of 'subjectivity altogether' and, as Husserl in the LU intends, one abstains from further explication of the character of cognitive agency, the postulation of acts and intentional structures nonetheless has presuppositional character. For even to talk in these terms prefigures questions such as: What kind of 'acts' are at issue? In what sense are they performed or actualized? Acts of who or what are they?

*Can a phenomenological approach remain metaphysically uncommitted?* Husserl's idiom might be freed of psychological connotations by speaking of knowledge as a nexus of intentional structures, distinguished from mere meaning by corroborating ('evidential') events. But even if such an idiom were accepted as metaphysically neutral, in the sense of having abstracted sufficiently from the concept of subjectivity, the problem with presuppositions would remain. This is because, if phenomenological research is to be 'presuppositionless' in the way Husserl requires, it *must* account for the way in which humans can be involved in corroborating evidential events, as this forms a condition of possibility of such research. This can be shown by considering the difficulty of relying on intuitive (or evidential) acts as the basis of research. For, on the one hand, Husserl seems to have been in no doubt that his own philosophical research was phenomenological, and that his own intuitions were doing the right kind of verificationist work. But what reason could there then be for thinking that 'intuitions'

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<sup>7</sup> LU I, 238, 240. Cf.: The 'purity' of phenomenological relations 'forbids [...] any [...] kind of going beyond acts' own essential content [*Wesensgehalt*] [...], i.e. their postulation (even indeterminately general or as an example) as psychological realities.' (LU II, 16)

are not psychological events, or that they can be conceived of without reliance on ‘any relation to the thinking subject’? On the other hand, if these latter assumptions are made, what reason could there be for thinking that, say, Husserl’s own intuitions were the right kind of act – so to speak, how could Husserl then be sure that his own activity was phenomenology? In either case, reason might be found, but only if something is said about the character of the acts phenomenology is presupposing. – To this it might seem tempting to object that no reason is needed, that it is just evident that an empirical subject has access to transcendental subjectivity. But even then, it is not evident *how*. For, given Kant’s distinction between the transcendental subject, as the ‘original synthetic unity of apperception’, from empirical consciousness, it is not (surely!) obvious how acts of the two are related, nor therefore how the latter has access to the former.<sup>8</sup> The upshot is that, *pace* Husserl, it is an immanent requirement of his putatively foundational phenomenology to reflect on its own metaphysics, resulting in two, clearly interlinked, problems which were important in shaping Heidegger’s phenomenology. First, there is the particular *problem of access*, i.e. how are the intuiting structure and its acts to be conceived of? Secondly, and more generally, there is the *problem of presupposition*, i.e. of what nature altogether are the presuppositions of phenomenological inquiry?

The latter problem will be considered at some length later on, but it will be instructive to consider briefly how the problem of access led Heidegger to distance himself from Husserl’s later phenomenology. From around 1905 onwards, Husserl conceived of phenomenology as a form of transcendental idealism. Access to the realm of transcendental subjectivity was to be assured by the method of ‘phenomenological reduction’, a ‘universal epoché’, the essence of which is abstraction from (or ‘bracketing’) the existence – the causal (non)being – of the world. However, from around 1919 onwards and influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey, Heidegger had emphasized the need to root phenomenology in an account of concrete subjectivity, the kind of subjectivity inhabited by empirical human beings, which would later become the conception of

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<sup>8</sup> Kant 1933, 152 [B 131]. Notably, for Kant, there could be no question of the two coinciding in acts of intuition, since these would belong to sensibility, whereas the original synthesis is an act of understanding. – One might perhaps object that the access problem involves only the hypothetical necessity ‘if phenomenological research is possible, it must be possible for humans’. Presumably, Husserl thought the antecedent true.

Dasein found in SZ. Once their disagreements emerged, Husserl saw a position such as Heidegger's as a slip into anthropology and objected that any philosophical position which takes human being [*menschliches Dasein*] as its outset 'relapses into that naivety which [...] it was the whole point of [philosophical] modernity to overcome.' Any such position fails 'altogether to reach the properly philosophical dimension'.<sup>9</sup>

This judgement is slightly unfortunate, as Heidegger's position is largely a response to desiderata and problems of Husserl's own. This can be seen in Heidegger's 1920 summer lectures, which dealt with the difficulties of postulating a nonconcrete form of subjectivity in discussing two problems that, Heidegger argued (perhaps not very convincingly), entailed a presupposition of this kind. A central feature of his discussion is the attempt to bring out the incompatibility of postulating nonconcrete forms of subjectivity with phenomenological methodology. The difficulty Heidegger presses is that of explicating the concept of a transcendental subject: What is the nature of its 'behaviour' or 'acts'? In what sense does it 'have' experiences? And how can the subject be given to, or experience itself? In considering these questions, Heidegger distinguishes what he calls the relational sense (*Bezugssinn*) of an intentional act from its performative sense (*Vollzugssinn*), i.e. the relation in which the act stands to the agent from the manner in which the act is carried out or actualized.<sup>10</sup> In the case of transcendental subjectivity – as opposed to the acts of concrete subjectivity – experiences are a 'reciprocal relationship of constituting relations in the correlate of the objective and subjective'; their performative sense must be 'reinterpreted in a logical, constitutive manner.' (PAA, 136) It is not such reinterpretation of the psychological-sounding conception of acts as ('mindless') events taking place in a logical space, that troubles Heidegger – indeed he too will suggest that Husserl's acts be understood purely as intentional relations. But two

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<sup>9</sup> Husserl 1989, 179. – This followed their 1927 collaboration on an article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In correspondence Heidegger urged that the mode of being (*Seinsart*) of what Husserl was calling 'transcendental subjectivity' must itself be questioned and that it must be shown that in 'human Dasein' lies the 'possibility of transcendental constitution' (Husserl 1968, 601 f.). – On the background to this article and the break between Heidegger and Husserl cf. Pöggeler (1989) and Crowell (1990).

<sup>10</sup> During this early phenomenological period Heidegger standardly characterized the various senses present in a phenomenon according to a tripartite notion of sense, according to which any phenomenon can be characterized in terms of: (i) content sense: what is 'originally experienced in it'; (ii) relational sense: the 'original manner in which it is experienced'; and (iii) performative sense: the 'original manner in which the relational sense is performed' or actualized. (Rel, 63) For this tripartite view of sense – as *Gehaltssinn*, *Bezugssinn*, and *Vollzugssinn* – cf. e.g. PIA 53 f.; PAA, 60; AKJ, 22; Gp2, 261.

difficulties do arise in trying to conceive of a transcendental subject as somehow the distinct substrate that bears and operates on its contents: (i) There seems to be no way of characterizing the nature of the subject and its activity that might be independent of, and perhaps prior to, the constitution of objects and intentional relations; (ii) The subject, as the correlative counterpart of objects of consciousness, is not itself a possible object of consciousness. (Cf. PAA, 123 ff.)

These concerns do not comprise decisive objections to transcendental idealism as such, nor did Heidegger propose them as such, but they do challenge the compatibility of such idealism with a Husserlian phenomenological programme.<sup>11</sup> For if phenomenology is ‘a manner of research that intuitively presents its objects’ (Ont, 72), and eschews unexaminable presuppositions, then consistency requires an account of how intuitive presentation of content is possible for any agent it posits. However, given that (ii) precludes the possibility of an ‘introspective’ self-enquiry through which it articulates its own concept in a self-transparent manner, it is not obvious that even the transcendental subject would be capable of phenomenological research. But, more importantly, even if some account can be given of this, it is difficult to see how it could be compatible with Husserl’s conception of phenomenological method. Since (i) means that nothing can be said about the independent being of the transcendental subject, i.e. nothing can be said about the nature of this presupposition, its relationship to empirical human subjects is condemned to obscurity. This is problematic because there is then no way of explaining how the acts of a human agent – as phenomenologists were – relate to those of constituting subjectivity. To put it another way, Husserl thus fails to explain how phenomenological reduction, i.e. his conception of phenomenological method, works.<sup>12</sup> His claims that through the epoché ‘I grasp myself, precisely as ego in the world-epoché’, and that ‘as this apodictic ego I am that which is in itself prior to the being of the world’ merely document methodological confusion. (Husserl 1989, 170 f.) To render these claims more transparent would require, as Heidegger urges, an explication of the nature

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<sup>11</sup> Heidegger saw phenomenology and transcendental idealism as differing in their basic metaphysical commitments, in his terminology, these represent two different ideas of ‘originality’ (*Ursprünglichkeit*; PAA, 86; cf. p. 27 below).

<sup>12</sup> Hence, even when Heidegger did characterize his own method with reference to ‘phenomenological reduction’ he immediately added that this is a verbal, but not a substantial adoption of ‘a central term of Husserl’s phenomenology.’ (Gp, 29)



of the constituting subject, in particular how the reduction helps it in attaining self-awareness, or of object constitution *per se*, and in what relation these stand to real-life meditators.

So the immediate point is that, whatever basic assumptions are made by phenomenological enquiry, transcendental subjectivity ought not to be one of them. But at the same time, the more general point emerges that consistent adherence to phenomenological method means that, to solve the problem of access, one must spell out how its presuppositions cohere with the kinds of experience that humans actually have. There is a need, in other words, for phenomenology to remain true to phenomena in the sense of cohering with empirically lived phenomena. This is the phenomenological ‘relevance’ of empirical or ‘ordinary intuition’, its importance as an ‘unavoidable presupposition’, in securing the ‘mode of access that genuinely belongs’ to ontological enquiry.<sup>13</sup> So far from ‘relapsing’ into premodern ‘naivety’, Heidegger’s development of the concept of Dasein is motivated precisely by the attempt to expound the conditions of possibility of philosophical investigation.

### **Heidegger’s formalized appropriation of Husserl**

Differences over the issue of subjectivity form perhaps the most salient divergence between Heidegger and Husserl, but it is typical in emerging against a broad background of common motives and conceptual commitments. Heidegger’s account of phenomenology as method in SZ §7 is correspondingly shaped by both ambivalence towards Husserl and disaffection with the intervening developments of phenomenology. To signal this, Heidegger brackets his exposition of the concept of phenomenology between comments indicating his relationship to Husserl. An initial warning is sounded in the emphasis that ‘phenomenology’ is neither a standpoint nor school of thought

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<sup>13</sup> SZ, 37, cf. 31. – The ‘outset’ of phenomenological enquiry ‘is obviously respectively determined by the factual experience of the entity and the surrounding possibilities of experience’ belonging to ‘a factual Dasein’. (Gp, 30)

(*Richtung*) in philosophy, but a concept pertaining to method.<sup>14</sup> The same message is reiterated in his closing acknowledgement of his debt to Husserl and the cryptic aside ‘higher than the actual reality [*Wirklichkeit*] stands the possibility’, or the potential, viz. of phenomenology.<sup>15</sup> To generate the conceptual space required to situate his own version of phenomenology Heidegger operates with two key distinctions between (a) the ‘ordinary’ (*vulgär*) and ‘phenomenological’, and (b) a formal and ‘deformalized’ (material) concept of phenomenon. In what is no doubt intended as a paradigmatic example of the method of the whole work, his exposition proceeds from the formal and ordinary through to the phenomenological concept. First the formal sense of the ‘preliminary concept’ of phenomenology is determined; then, following brief illustration with reference to its ‘ordinary’ (i.e. Kantian) sense, this idea is ‘deformalized’ to yield the full concept of phenomenology in terms of its subject matter. (SZ, 28-35, 31, 35 f.)

Heidegger explicates the ‘formal’ sense of ‘phenomenology’ using the structure of the word, its two ‘constituent parts’: *φαινόμενον*, he explains, means ‘*that which shows itself in itself*, that which is manifest [*das Offene*]’; and *λόγος*, which makes what is being addressed manifest or obvious [*offenbar*], ‘lets [phenomena] be seen’ by pointing them out. The result, as intended, is a vacuous definition: ‘Phenomenology then states: Letting that [...] which shows itself be seen, from itself, as it in itself shows itself.’<sup>16</sup> However, although Heidegger’s interpretation morphologically appeals to ancient Greek, the force of this is clearly not intended to be historically ‘etymological’, but as a structural interpretation – the ‘history of the word itself [...] is not of significance here.’<sup>17</sup> It is this ‘formalization’ of phenomenology, as concerning the manner but not the subject matter of its inquiry, that makes possible (indeed makes very easy) Heidegger’s continued

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<sup>14</sup> *Methodenbegriff*. (SZ, 27) Despite this focus on method, Heidegger emphatically rejects (Ont, 79) the idea of phenomenological ‘methodology’ – which he presumably takes to mean a doctrine of method incompatible with research receptive to objects. (Cf. SZ, 35)

<sup>15</sup> SZ, 38. Elsewhere (Ont, 73 f.), this melancholic formula is clearly linked with phenomenology’s slide into transcendental idealism and the realities of its success as an academic fashion.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Phänomenologie sagt dann: Das[, ] was sich zeigt, so wie es sich von ihm selbst her zeigt, von ihm selbst her sehen lassen.’ (SZ, 28, 32, 34)

<sup>17</sup> SZ, 28. However, the ‘reference back to the correspondingly interpreted basic words of Greek thinking: *λόγος* (to make manifest) and *φαίνεσθαι* (to show itself) play a decisive role.’ (Richardson 1974, xi)

allegiance to the phenomenological maxim – ‘zu den Sachen selbst!’ – both in SZ and beyond.<sup>18</sup>

But which ‘Sachen’? What, according to Heidegger, is the subject matter of phenomenology? The answer he gives in SZ is the ‘being of what is’. (SZ, 37) A fuller answer is developed in his 1925 lectures, with reference to the three discoveries – intentionality, categorial intuition, and the ‘genuine sense’ of apriority – that he attributes to phenomenology. This parallel discussion makes clear how Heidegger has adopted far more than a mere slogan from Husserl’s LU programme. With regard to intentionality Heidegger emphasizes first its metaphysical indifference: Intentional relationships are of interest only as the ‘structure of directedness-toward’, all ‘theory about the psyche, consciousness, person and suchlike’ is to be avoided. (PGZ, 46) The phenomenological talk of various ‘acts’, he continues, is not to be conceived of as being linked with a (psychologically conceived) subject, rather the ‘concept of the act’ refers only to an ‘intentional relation’. (PGZ, 47)

As a passing illustration of phenomenal material in SZ Heidegger cites what he calls the ‘ordinary’ concept of phenomena based on the Kantian notion of sensible or ‘empirical intuition’. (SZ, 31) To extend this notion into the ‘phenomenological’ concept of a phenomenon, he relies on Husserl’s generalization of the notion of intuition. But in his discussion (in PGZ) of categorial intuition, Heidegger backs away from Husserl’s hierarchical empiricist assumptions. Rather than following him in restricting ‘simple’ apprehension to acts of sensory intuition, as opposed to founded acts of categorial intuition, Heidegger claims that the range of what is available to ‘direct cognizance’ is far greater than might be dictated by ‘a certain theory of knowledge or [by] psychology on the basis of a theory of perception’.<sup>19</sup> ‘*Sensibility*’, he concludes, ‘*is a formal phenomenological concept*’ that refers ‘to all material subject matter’ offered by things themselves; it contrasts with the ‘proper concept of the categorial’ as that which is ‘formally and objectively empty’. (PGZ, 95 f.) Like Husserl, Heidegger therefore holds that ‘the idea of objectivity [is] extended’ such that by ‘thoroughly researching the

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. SZ, 34 f. – See also the late Heidegger’s retrospective comments on phenomenology. (US, 95; SD 70-1, 83, 87, 90; Richardson 1974, xv)

<sup>19</sup> PGZ, 52. – Incidentally, I am here translating ‘schlicht’ as both ‘simple’ (Husserl) and ‘direct’ (Heidegger). For, whereas with Husserl this is contrasted with ‘founded’ acts, such a simple-complex connotation would be inappropriate to Heidegger’s position.

content of the corresponding intuition[s]' phenomenology discovers a 'concrete path' to 'genuine categorial research'. (PGZ, 98) – To anyone accustomed to a physicalist paradigm of objectivity, as in the Kantian picture, this might seem to be a cavalier view of objectivity and objective research. But the idea is simply that different kinds of relationship have their respective manner of 'fulfilment': hopes and needs can be fulfilled or otherwise, a portrait can succeed or fail in being of someone, a certain purpose can be served or fail to be served by a tool. Categorial research, as it is called here, is possible in so far as such (intentional) relationships become the object and the basis of 'conceptual interpretation' (PGZ, 117) that characterizes the way of relating (*intentio*) and that to which it relates (*intentum*). The 'genuineness' of phenomenological research relies only on the idea that relationships in the world, once expressed conceptually, can be seen to hold or otherwise and so relies on the same kind of verificational competence as found in the understanding of relationships such as  $1+1=2$  or simple facts about language.<sup>20</sup> The default assumption becomes that all such *intenta* – whether causally efficient, abstract, sensory, or imagined – exist in some sense, one to be distinguished and understood according to the way in which the respective intentions attain fulfilment.<sup>21</sup>

Against this background, in his 1925 lectures, Heidegger characterizes the subject matter of phenomenology in relation to its third discovery: 'The structures of intentionality in their *a priori* are the phenomena.' (PGZ, 117 f.) Heidegger's conception of apriority is perhaps unusual in relating not to independence from experience, but to his notion of phenomenal content. He explains this in analogy with sensory intuition, which, for Kant, provides both the material for other intentional 'acts' – those of understanding – and the inherent, but unarticulated basis for a transcendental investigation of the 'forms of intuition'. In the same way, on Heidegger's picture, 'phenomenal' structures encompass quite generally 'what is given and explicable in the phenomenon's mode of encounter'. (SZ, 31, 37) On this basis he interprets *a priori* as meaning 'structurally prior'. (PGZ, 101, 117 f.) Whatever is structurally prior is 'always already in' the

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<sup>20</sup> Which, Heidegger emphasizes, is the sense of the traditional appeal to clear and distinct perceptions. (Cf. *Logik*, 99-123)

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger would say that these relationships 'have being' rather than 'exist', since he reserves the latter term for the 'being' of *Dasein*. The contrast here is with nonexistence or nonbeing, so that such intentional relationships cannot be ontologically disqualified by not being physical real.

phenomenon.<sup>22</sup> Such structurally prior relationships, Heidegger therefore holds, are amenable to the same processes of hermeneutic analysis and conceptual interpretation as any initially accessible presentation of phenomenal material.<sup>23</sup>

It can now be seen that Heidegger's 'formalization' of Husserl's phenomenology in SZ §7 operates at two levels. At a surface level it provides a literary means of both emphasizing his fidelity to the phenomenological maxim and acknowledging his personal debt to Husserl, whilst nonetheless distancing himself from the latter's turn to transcendental idealism. But it is not merely a matter of literary etiquette and, as the 1925 lectures show, both the proximity and the sense of Heidegger's formalized appropriation of Husserl's project is palpable. For Husserl, too, phenomenology was concerned with the 'structures of intentionality', but Heidegger's ontological idiom is simply the fallout from a 'formalization' of the former's talk of consciousness.<sup>24</sup> Once intentionality is purged of metaphysical underpinnings of a presupposed kind (e.g. subject) and is taken to encompass all kinds of relatedness that can be evidentially identified, the term 'intentionality' itself is merely place holding: Husserl's talk of noesis and noema in characterizing intentional relationships, having first become *intentio* and *intentum*, (PGZ, 61), now becomes being (*Sein*) and entity (*Seiendes*). So by 'formalizing' out latent conceptual subjectivism, Heidegger regains the naivety of dealing not in consciousness, but with things themselves. Nonetheless, as emphasized in his 1925 lectures, Heidegger inherits a framework of epistemological and methodological conceptual commitments from Husserl's phenomenology, such as intentionality, its generalized notions of categorial intuition and objectivity, and a conception of the *a priori* which relies on these. As will now be seen, this debt also extends to the notion of formal indication, which underlies the conception of language found in SZ. Reviewing that conception *in statu*

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<sup>22</sup> SZ, 193 – Heidegger also explains it in a manner redolent of Aristotle: “[p]rior” is not a characteristic in the sequential order of cognition [...] The *a priori* is rather a *characteristic of the sequence of construction in the being of that which is*. (PGZ, 102) Cf. Aristotle: ‘The natural way to go about this is to start with what is more intelligible and clear *to us* and move from there to what is clear and more intelligible *in itself*.’ (*Physics*, 184a 17-8)

<sup>23</sup> Corresponding, Heidegger repeatedly characterizes his task in SZ as raising mere understanding of phenomena to the level of an explicit conceptual grasp. This claim is particularly salient at SZ 315, 180, 200 f., but occurs frequently (e.g. 5 f., 7 f., 16, 54 f., 58 f., 72, 183).

<sup>24</sup> Heidegger's talk of 'intentional structures in their *a priori*' might sound like transcendental idealism recast in an intentionalist idiom. But by rejecting any kind of internal-external schism, Heidegger's conception of Dasein is designed to frustrate the application of such traditional epistemological categories as idealism and realism, and rob this opposition of its problem-generating appeal. (Cf. p. 67)

*nascendi* will allow some of its important features to emerge more transparently than in the dense and sometimes occlusive narrative of SZ.

### **Formal indication**

The second, more general, problem left open by Husserl's LU was the problem of presupposition, i.e. of what nature are the presuppositions of phenomenological enquiry? Heidegger, who understood his own work as an attempt to radicalize Husserl's phenomenology, was clear that it would constitute a 'desertion of the basic phenomenological attitude, if the concept of phenomenological philosophy and its "presuppositions" did not arise from this itself.' (PAA, 31) His answer to this challenge centred on the notion of 'formal indication' as a general characterization of the role of signs or symbols in phenomenological enquiry.<sup>25</sup>

To see what exactly Heidegger thought the problem of presupposition was, it will be useful to begin by noting his insistence that 'philosophical concepts' have a character peculiar to them that contrasts, in particular, with what he called 'theoretical' or 'order concepts'.<sup>26</sup> In his view, order concepts are characterized by apprehending entities as 'things' (in the terminology of SZ: as present-at-hand entities), which means apprehending them in terms of properties and (non)existence, and so implicitly thinking of them as part of a classificatory matrix.<sup>27</sup> Heidegger takes such projection of a perspective of ordered objectivity to be the basic ontological presupposition underlying descriptive or explanatory scientific activity. For, in being defined in relation to a certain

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<sup>25</sup> Although it pervades his work around 1920-2, Heidegger provides no tidy systematic account of formal indication, and so reconstruction of his view must rely on interspersed comments, the main sources of which are PIA, AKJ, Rel and PAA. He seems to have commenced such an account once, but this was abandoned following complaints by students who (understandably) failed to see its relevance in lectures ostensibly on the phenomenology of religion. (Cf. Rel, 55-65; Kisiel 1993, 149 f.) – Awareness in the literature of the importance of formal indication has grown following the publication of Heidegger's early (1919-23) lectures. Dahlstrom (1994) and Imdahl (1994) offer helpful surveys of the main sources and motifs; much of the relevant material is summarized in Kisiel (1993). Cf. also Oudemans (1990), Streeter (1997).

<sup>26</sup> *Ordnungsbegriffe*. Cf. Rel, 3-18; Gp2 141-4, 235-7.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. SZ, 67 f. – I.e. a thing is characterized in terms of *essentia* and *existentia*. (Cf. Gp 108 ff., especially 119) This underlies Heidegger's terminological distinction of 'reality' from actuality (*Wirklichkeit*): 'Real is what belongs to the res.' (Gp, 45, cf. 44-50)

domain of entities, Heidegger holds, the individual ‘positive’ (i.e. positing) sciences rely on a prior division of entities. (SZ, 9 f., 51 f.) He links this with what he calls the ‘theoretical attitude’, the tendency to think of a science as (ideally) comprising a deductive system of propositions, resting on corresponding axioms or presuppositions, by suggesting that only ‘in the sphere of positings at all does the talk of presupposition possibly make sense.’ (KNS, 94) Within the scope of such a theoretical attitude one option already seems to arise for distinguishing philosophy from the individual positive sciences. It might be regarded as ‘universal ordering’ (Ont, 59), a discipline encompassing all entities (things) in their generality. However, Heidegger objects, such a philosophy would be inadequate because the underlying notion of thingness cannot itself be understood in terms of thingness, so that the ‘sense of objectivity’ concerned could not be explicated by such enquiry. (Ont, 60) For this reason, Heidegger’s ‘theoretical attitude’ is architecturally constrained to leave unexplained the nature of its own presuppositions, generating a tension between this attitude and the requirement of ‘presuppositionless’ phenomenology.<sup>28</sup> Hence the idea that philosophical concepts differ in kind from order concepts. For, if order concepts depend on the notion of thingness (res, reality) to define their objects in terms of genus and differentia, the mode of conceptual address proper to philosophical ontology, one task of which is to explicate the notion of thingness, must differ from that of ‘ontic’ study.

There are obvious difficulties with the overly constrictive view of this ‘theoretical attitude’. Even if it captures something of the geometric paradigm of traditional logic, it is surely a caricature of real science. Or, *supposing* it characterized accurately what Heidegger called Husserl’s ‘theoretical phenomenology’,<sup>29</sup> surely he cannot mean to suggest that his own phenomenology is not theory? Rather than focus on these difficulties, the point I want to emphasize is Heidegger’s actual demarcation. This is not between theory and philosophy, since clearly Heidegger’s own practice is theory in a less constrictive sense. The message is rather that concepts can have a role other than classification, and that this is the role of concepts required by phenomenological enquiry.

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<sup>28</sup> ‘It belongs to the sense of theoretical presuppositions, i.e. those on which the *theoretical attitude* stands, on which it lives, that they are not grasped, and are not able to be grasped, by precisely this attitude.’ (PIA, 157; cf. SZ, 52)

<sup>29</sup> AKJ, 35. Heidegger thought Husserl remained in the grip of the mathematical-geometric paradigm. (Cf. Ont. 71.)

Incidentally, this should not necessarily be taken to mean the role of concepts in the use of so-called ‘phenomenological philosophy’. For, in the sense of Heidegger’s determination of phenomenology in SZ, enquiry about any subject matter whatever can be phenomenological. The point is purely negative: that concepts can have a role other than classification. But which?

The distinction between philosophical concepts and ordering concepts forms the point of departure for Heidegger’s 1921/2 series of lectures, entitled *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle* (PIA), where he begins by emphasizing the *performed* or *actualized character* of philosophical understanding.<sup>30</sup> This is something to be actually lived, in real time so to speak, implying that the ‘peculiarity of philosophical concepts’ must be understood in terms of the role they play in the ‘the manner of philosophical experience and [...] the manner in which philosophical experience makes itself explicit’. (PAA, 171) To provide an account of this kind would be to provide an answer to the ‘problem of concept formation’ in the form of ‘a phenomenology of intuition and expression’, which, around 1920, Heidegger held to be of ‘central importance’ in his project of radicalizing phenomenology.<sup>31</sup>

The first point to note is therefore that formal indications are *indications*. In this Heidegger relies on the idea that ‘indication of something by another’ means not ‘to show it in itself, but to represent [*darstellen*] it indirectly, mediately, symbolically’.<sup>32</sup> Although this encompasses all use of signs, as with Husserl’s ‘significative’ or ‘symbolic’ intentions, Heidegger’s discussions of formal indication focus mainly on the role of definition, since this is where concepts and presuppositions are most concisely explicated.<sup>33</sup> In this paradigm case, ‘indicating’ definitions ‘precisely do not give the object to be determined fully and properly [*eigentlich*]’. (PIA, 32) As this suggests, Heidegger also follows Husserl in holding that acts of ‘fulfilment’ make the difference between significative, or meaningful, acts and proper knowledge or understanding. No matter how well honed, an indication is ‘empty’ in that it lacks the performed aspect.

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<sup>30</sup> PIA, 1-2. They have the character of *Vollzug*, from *vollziehen* (to carry out, complete, or perform).

<sup>31</sup> PAA 8, cf. 171. He even described the problem of concept formation as ‘the philosophical problem in its origin’. (PAA, 169)

<sup>32</sup> PGZ 112. The same idea is found at SZ, 29. (Cf. p. 9 above.)

<sup>33</sup> ‘The idea of definition is nothing but the formal interpretation of the full sense of knowledge.’ (PIA, 54)



Symbolic representation, in other words, constitutively falls short of actual(ized) apprehension. The term ‘indication’ merely signals this deficiency; conversely, the qualification as a ‘formal’ indication signals the positive character of a definition. (PIA, 32) A *formal* indication is one in which, although itself ‘empty’, the “[f]ormal” provides the “character of the approach” to performing [...] the original fulfilment of what is indicated’. (PIA, 33) The difference is that the link between formally indicating signs and what they stand for is to be tighter, or more determinate, than in the case of unqualified indications. So whereas a high temperature can be a symptom, or indicative of many different kinds of illness, the link between concepts and what they conceptualize is to be strongly localized. Formal indication is an indeterminately determinate use of signs, one that shows ‘the “way”, in its “outset”. Undetermined in content, a determinate bind on performance is given in advance.’ The “[f]ormal” is such content as refers the indication in the [right] direction, prefigures the way.’<sup>34</sup>

But to what? The talk of a ‘bind on performance’ reflects the fundamental relationship between such indications and what they issue from, namely the ‘specific performed context’ of understanding, ‘the situation of evidence’ or ‘experience in which the object properly [*eigentlich*] gives itself as that which it is and how it is’. (PIA, 35 f.) Heidegger refers to this kind of apprehending experience as the ‘grounding experience’ (*Grunderfahrung*) from which a definition or concepts result and to which they remain accountable. Accordingly, ‘[p]henomenological definition’ is to indicate the ‘grounding experience’, such that the way ‘back’ to this is clear; the concepts describing or defining an object, Heidegger demands, must be created so as to reflect ‘the way *in which the object becomes originally accessible*.’ (PIA, 20) So this is the function, on Heidegger’s account, of philosophical concepts: Formal indication is an indeterminately determinate use of signs which is to serve as constraint sufficient to bring about the same

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<sup>34</sup> PIA, 20 (“[f]ormal” anzeigend’ means ‘der “Weg”, im “Ansatz”. Es ist eine gehaltlich unbestimmte, vollzugshaft bestimmte Bindung vorgegeben.’), 34. – Heidegger also compares and contrasts his use of the term ‘formal’ with Husserl’s contrast between (eidetic) formalization and (classificatory) generalization. (cf. Husserl 1992a, 31[§13]) Unlike both, Heidegger confusingly explains that own use of the term ‘formal’ has ‘nothing to do with generality’ and that the ‘origin of the formal’ lies in the ‘relational sense’. (*Bezugssinn*; cf. footnote 10) This is nonetheless intended to convey that formal indication should ‘indicate the relation to the phenomenon in advance’, i.e. the ‘original’ manner ‘in which it is experienced’. (Rel, 59, 63)

understanding as they issue from. Formal indications are thus to function as a pointer, a signpost, or a path to grounding experience.

This characterization has two sources of opacity. The first concerns the sense of ‘pointing to’ invoked here. Some clarification is provided by the comment that the ‘sense structure’ of the ‘empty’ content ‘provides the direction of performance’. (PIA, 33) In other words, the structuredness of the signs used, and their interrelations is taken to be ‘pointing’ the way to experiences of understanding, thus enabling the latter. This relies on something like a form-content distinction between the manifold of linguistic forms – definitions, sentences, words, i.e. at all syntactic levels – and ‘deformalizing’ situations of ‘evidence’. Here, again, a parallel emerges with Husserl’s contraposition of meaningful expression and indications, which ‘express nothing’. Formal indication moves beyond the indeterminacy of mere indication through the determining sense-structure of linguistic forms that enable it to mean, or express, something. In ‘order to grasp the complete sense’ of a formal indication, to follow where it points, ‘radical interpretation of the “formal” itself is required’. (PIA, 33) This interpretation of ‘empty’ linguistic forms is a means to the end of ‘performed understanding of the formally indicating definition’ and belongs to a process of ‘working forth to the situation’, one in which formally indicating ‘characteristics’ become ‘deformalized’ by ‘receiving the concrete factual categorial determination from the respective direction of experience and interpretation’.<sup>35</sup> Put simply, mere – ‘formal’, ‘empty’ – signification and actualized, performed understanding are the two extremes between which interpretation mediates.

The second source of opacity is the notion of grounding experience. In understanding the link between this and formal indications, it is helpful to note Heidegger’s proximity to Wilhelm Dilthey’s view of the mutual interdependence of experience, understanding, and expression.<sup>36</sup> Dilthey saw our lifeworld as permeated with ordered objective structures and practices that result from, and continue to shape human purposes and understanding. Such ‘objectifications of spirit’ or ‘expressions of life’ range from ‘morals, law, the state, religion, art, science and philosophy’ through to ‘every

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<sup>35</sup> PIA, 72, 141. Heidegger often talks of ‘deformalization’ (e.g. AKJ, 24; SZ, 35).

<sup>36</sup> Dilthey 1990, 176, 235. Heidegger refers to this triad – *Erlebnis, Verstehen, Ausdruck* – at PAA, 169. – Many of Heidegger’s key notions (e.g. existentials, significance, temporality, historicity) are prefigured in Dilthey. For a good survey of such themes cf. Guignon 1983, 45-59.

square planted with trees, every room in which chairs are arranged’, including linguistic expressions and works of art. (Dilthey 1990, 252, 177, 256) Because they result from processes of understanding and determinate possibilities of experience, and are literally expressions of these, Dilthey reasoned that such objectifications allow these same possibilities to be relived or reactualized. (Dilthey 1990, 263-7) So concepts, forms of expression, that emerge from acts of understanding should be conducive to, or ‘point to’, reattainment of that same understanding, i.e. their grounding experience. – Nonetheless, why should these privileged events, of actualized understanding, be thought of as ‘experience’? Here one should recall the generalized phenomenological conceptions of objectivity and sensibility, which allow ‘direct cognizance’ of any kind of intentional structure. The notion of grounding experience, although it might sound like a standard empiricist notion, should be thought of in an analogously general sense, to include at least experience in thought, and perhaps any other – e.g. imaginative – ‘exploits’ in the realm of intentionality.<sup>37</sup> Although this seems troubling, since it is not obvious that intentional objects generally offer the same kind of epistemological constraints as perceptible objects, the idea is presumably not as odd as it initially sounds. After all, we all witness and defer to those with greater intellectual experience, and know what it is like to guide someone, or be guided through a train of thought. So experience in thinking, why not? If one accepts this, as Heidegger does, then the idea of evidential episodes in thought – having insights or realizations, reaching a conclusion etc. – is perhaps no more problematic than the idea of evidential episodes via the senses. (The only criterion for such evidential episodes would be ‘you’ll know it when you see it’.) But whether by sense experience or thought experience, Heidegger’s performed apprehension relies on the ideal of full actual presentation of sense. Grounding experiences are to comprise the basis of ‘concrete work’ (PIA, 27), which, he explains, relies on a ‘compression’, literally – adhering ‘to the word’ – a ‘conrescence’ or growing together, such that in concrete apprehension the ‘(ultimate) structural sense of the full object’ is grasped in its full determination.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Heidegger accredits Husserl with having rediscovered ‘the sense of all genuine philosophical “empiricism” [*Empirie*]’ (SZ, 50n.) Recall also the title of late Heidegger’s work *Aus der Erfahrung des Denkens*.

<sup>38</sup> PIA, 28. – ‘Phenomenon’ is the ‘being present of an object.’ (Ont, 69)

This picture of the functioning of signs has repercussions for the representational character of formal indications, resulting in what might be called their twin virtues of *phenomenal receptivity* and *expressiveness*. The first of these requires that concepts should be formed by phenomena. Their definitions should present phenomena in a manner so ‘undetermined [...] that precisely the performance of understanding leads this peculiar definition to the right possibility of determination’; the ‘in itself justified emphasis on the forming of concepts’, ‘the function of “meaning-differentiation by forms” proceeds from the [phenomenal] “material”’. (PIA, 17; AKJ, 13) Such phenomenal receptivity requires that definitions and concepts (i.e. use of signs) are to be articulations of grounding experience, the intensity of sense, or determinacy, of a phenomenon in its proper context. In this sense, – one to be noted – Heidegger describes grounding experience or ‘concrete situation’ in terms of originality as the ‘sense-genesis’ or ‘original contexts of sense’; these comprise the ‘proper original sphere’.<sup>39</sup> The corresponding ‘ultimate task of phenomenology’ is the return ‘to genuine contexts of sense and the articulation of the directions of sense genuinely included therein.’ (PAA, 74; cf. AKJ, 24) Thus concepts are viewed as somehow proper to their respective origin, the grounding experience in which they arise and to which they remain internally related.

Phenomenal receptivity is important for Heidegger in setting up a dialectics, or better still a ‘diahermeneutics’ (Gp2, 262), between the use of symbols in a formally indicative manner and the presentation of intentional objects. This means, in a positive sense, that in being used ‘significantly’ signs capture to some degree the sense prefigured in phenomenal contexts, and so in turn acquire the peculiarity of evoking the original sense context. The meanings of ‘linguistic expressions’ should ‘spring into’ them ‘out of the phenomenal context and its categorial tendencies’.<sup>40</sup> In this way the expressiveness of philosophical concepts is supposed to be a correlate of their conduciveness to actualizing the understanding on which they are based. Unsurprisingly therefore, Heidegger also experimented with the term ‘expressive concepts’ (Gp2, 240) to reflect this Diltheyan

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<sup>39</sup> PIA 23, PAA 179, 180, cf. also 186; KNS, 24. – Such talk of originality once again echoes Husserl (LU I, 246).

<sup>40</sup> PIA, 144. – In this spirit, Heidegger suggests that even grammatical relationships are grounded in phenomenal relations. (PIA, 82-3)

interdependence of experience, understanding, and expression.<sup>41</sup> But the virtue of expressiveness is a dynamic standard: once understood (or disclosed) to some extent, the object addressed ‘decides’ whether or not it is being well expressed. The negative aspect of this diahermeneutic relationship remains that, no matter how appropriate a formal idiom is, it will lack the concretion of sense in actual phenomena. Symbolic forms might be made ever more appropriate to phenomena, better articulating or expressing these, but they constitutively lack full adequacy. Formal indication is thus locked into the ‘circle’, or diahermeneutics of interpretation: signs formally indicate phenomena, phenomena prefigure the forms of symbolic indication. For this reason, ‘formal indication has an ineluctable significance’ in being ‘genuinely motivated by the concrete and factual [...] as non-prejudicial, but also non-decisive, prefigurative touching on the factual.’ (PAA, 85) Nonetheless, it has a ‘necessarily restricted mode of performance’ since, although its content ‘directs [us] to the manner of proper encounter’, it remains inconclusive in leaving ‘the genuine phenomena to become determinately decisive’. (PIA, 74, 33 f.) As such provisional and tentative addressing of phenomena, formal indication is methodologically attuned to ongoing interpretation, characterizing the ‘method of outset of phenomenological interpretation in each stage of its execution’, with ‘the interpretation’s preconception’ each time ‘stem[ming] from the respective stage of appropriation’. (PIA, 141, 87)

How does the notion of formal indication help with the problem of presupposition? The first difficulty to which it responds, implied by Heidegger’s critique of the ‘theoretical attitude’, is that ‘presuppositionless’ enquiry cannot be thought of in terms of taxonomic classification. It also responds to the fact that philosophical enquiry starts amidst a situation of understanding, so that ‘presuppositionlessness itself can only be gained in factual, historical self-critique.’ (AKJ, 5) Heidegger’s intended solution is effectively a *reconstrual* of the nature of presuppositions, reflected terminologically in his talk of the

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<sup>41</sup> Even in SZ, Heidegger’s use of the term ‘*ausdrücklich*’ might be construed in terms of such expressiveness. Macquarrie/Robinson and Stambaugh render ‘*ausdrücklich*’ (etymologically: ‘expressly’) as ‘explicitly’, which is both idiomatic and captures well the sense of ‘exposition’ – laying out, unfolding – suggested by Heidegger’s ‘interpretation’ (*Auslegung*). But it is also influenced by the use of ‘expression’ to render (*sich*) *aussprechen*/*(Hinaus)gesprochenheit* (e.g. SZ, 28; 161, 220). The result is a ‘reorganization’ and partial occlusion of Heidegger’s distinction between being ‘spoken out’ or verbally performed vs explicitness or having an expression for. (Cf. on this Macquarrie/Robinson 1962, 190n)

problem of ‘preconception’ (*Vorgriff*) or ‘outset’ (*Ansatz*; cf. AKJ, 9, 28). The role he envisages is that of symbols conditioning, i.e. delimiting or constraining, the *outset* of enquiry, their making the world available to reiterable understanding and interpretation by presenting it in a certain articulation. Enquiry of the kind Heidegger envisages is ‘open’, in contrast to the ‘conclusive’ mode of his ‘theoretical attitude’. Thus, formal indication is to fulfil its task as a ‘weak’ mode of address, one both provisional and determinately indeterminate. By stopping short of conclusively determining phenomena, there can be no question of reifying or positing objects; formal indication, so to speak, rejects the logic of position. Similarly, the difference between a conditioned outset and ‘presuppositions’ lies in that its initial articulation is considered open to further development, or even complete revision (cf. SZ, 9.), within the dynamic process of enquiry, rather than comprising immutable foundations on which the static edifice of a propositional system is erected. – Nevertheless, does this reconstrual solve the problem of presupposition for phenomenological enquiry? No. Clearly, the conception of formal indication must form part of a more comprehensive answer, since it only concerns the attitude we should take to the way that signs present the world to us. Indeed, Heidegger himself, in SZ, has much more to say about the phenomenal basis of ‘philosophical experience’, such as everyday understanding of the world. This points the way to a more general concern. Following his own maxims, Heidegger’s view of the ‘peculiarity of philosophical concepts’ was based on an attempt to explicate the character of ‘philosophical experience’. (PAA, 171) But if this means, as he once stated, that ‘[f]ormal indication makes sense only in relation to phenomenological explication’ (Rel, 64), just how generalizable is it? Does Heidegger’s focus on the paradigm of phenomenological or philosophical enquiry lead him to a distorted view of the nature of language and its presuppositional function?

This question can perhaps be better judged in the broader picture provided by SZ. But, as has already been suggested, one reason for being interested in the notion of formal indication is the insight it offers into the conception of language to be found there. This might initially seem implausible, since no detailed account of it is found there and

references to it are sparse.<sup>42</sup> But despite its low profile in the work, Heidegger continued to emphasize the importance of formal indication both at the time of SZ's publication and beyond.<sup>43</sup> In particular it should be noted how Heidegger's view of concepts as formal indications illuminates the phenomenological import of two key concepts in SZ. The first is that of originality. The implications of this will be discussed later, but it is worth highlighting in advance that Heidegger talks of phenomenal grounding experience as the 'proper origin' of concept formation, that is, invokes the notion of *originality* in *sense-genetic* terms. The second is the idea of *Eigentlichkeit* and *Uneigentlichkeit* – usually rendered as (in)authenticity – which I have been rendering as (im)proper.<sup>44</sup> Heidegger's use of these terms coincides both terminologically and substantively with Husserl's views on indication: indications, being empty, are 'improper'; apprehension, or understanding, comes to be 'proper' when fulfilled, actualized, or performed.<sup>45</sup> It is important to be clear about the sense, or better senses, in which 'proper apprehension' is proper. Given the published text of SZ, it might seem tempting to think of this one-sidedly in an agent-centred manner, namely as Dasein's appropriating understanding and objects, with proper understanding being a matter of individual Dasein's 'own' self-understanding. But Heidegger's view of proper understanding has a further aspect. The problem with the 'situation of understanding in its outset', he explains, is that 'the object' does not offer 'itself fully and properly [*eigentlich*]'. (PIA, 34) By contrast, he characterizes grounding experience as the 'situation of evidence' in which a decision is made according to 'experience in which the object properly [*eigentlich*] gives itself as that which it is and how it is'. (PIA, 35) So there is a dual emphasis in the proper actualization of

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<sup>42</sup> Heidegger talks literally of 'formal indication' (formale Anzeige) or cognates at SZ 114, 116, 117, 231, 313, 315; of temporary indication at SZ 14, 41; formal sense at SZ 34, 43 and of indication of a formal concept at SZ 53. – These references might seem sparser still in English translation. MacQuarrie/Robinson miss, and so do not render, the terminological significance of 'indication'; this oversight, with the exception of p. 315, is remedied in Stambaugh's revised translation.

<sup>43</sup> In a letter to Karl Löwith in August 1927, Heidegger writes: 'Formal indication, critique of the customary doctrine of the *a priori*, formalization and the like, all of that is still for me there [in SZ] even though I do not talk about them now.' (Quoted from: Kisiel 1993, 19) In his 1929/30 lectures formal indication is still described as the basic or pervasive character of philosophical concepts. (GM, 425, 430)

<sup>44</sup> The reason for which being that this avoids an ambiguity found in SZ. (Cf. below p. 44 f.)

<sup>45</sup> The clearest examples of this use are found at PIA, 33-35, but cf. PIA 41, 60, 62-3, 73. For example: "Formally indicated" means [...] indicated in such a way that what's said is of the character of the "formal", improper [*uneigentlich*]; Formal indication 'provides the way to try out and to fulfil what's improperly [*uneigentlich*] indicated', so that it comes to be proper [*zum Eigentlichen kommen*']. (PIA, 33) The opposite of improper indication is 'proper possession [*das eigentliche Haben*]', 'the specific being of what's respectively performed'. (PIA, 34)

understanding: it is not simply that an agent comes to acquire actual understanding, but that the object of understanding simultaneously shows itself as it in itself is.<sup>46</sup> This is why it is to be proper *understanding*.

Finally, two concerns about Heidegger's reliance on grounding experience must be mentioned. The first is the general concern as to whether or not (all) intentional objects can be thought of as presenting themselves in such evidential incidents. Heidegger's own account was primarily concerned with philosophical understanding, so perhaps it can be allowed that the main way, if at all, that such subject matter is corroborated is via insight. But, even if the general idea of actualized apprehension were granted, a second concern remains as to whether this is a realistic, or even desirable, standard on which to base views about the proper functioning of concepts. So the question remains whether overreliance on the paradigm of phenomenological concepts and philosophical enquiry leads Heidegger to a distorted view of linguistic phenomena in general. As one might put it, is Heidegger 'phenomenological' in a good sense or a bad sense: does he remain true to phenomena, or true to Husserlian conceptual commitments?

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. SZ, 28. – Kisiel (1993, 46) talks of a 'properizing event' and accurately captures this reciprocity: 'It is my proper experience because it appropriates me and I, in accord, appropriate it. I am It, I am of It, It is mine.'



## 2. Language in *Being and Time*

There are two reasons for initial scepticism about the prospects of finding a developed view of language in SZ. First, Heidegger does not foreground treatment of language and deals with it only peripherally within the framework of his analysis of Dasein. Secondly, he concludes what little he does say about language with the implicit admission that the ‘manner of being of language altogether’ has been left undetermined, claims that philosophy has nothing to gain through ‘philosophy of language’, and suggests with a hint of approval that the Greeks had ‘no word for language’. (SZ, 165-6) With these terse, obscure, and controversial claims Heidegger seems to dismiss philosophical understanding of language as both uninformative and rightly peripheral.

To appreciate what specific import, and what justification, these comments might have, it is necessary to be clearer about what Heidegger *does* say about language and it will be the aim of this chapter to build up a reasonably comprehensive picture of both the conception of, and the role played by language in SZ. This is undertaken in three stages. The first section surveys the general framework of concepts within the analysis of Dasein in relation to which Heidegger’s view of language is at least outlined in SZ. The second section of the chapter sets out more fully the ambivalent view Heidegger takes of normal language use, attempting to identify both the positive and negative factors that inform this ambivalence. In the final section there is a slight change of approach. Since the characterization of routine language use that Heidegger offers has troublesome implications for his own undertaking, I attempt to bring out something of the role played by language within SZ itself. In the latter two sections it will become clear how the conception of language Heidegger relies on in SZ is shaped by, and a partial elaboration of his earlier views on formal indication. The aim of this chapter is therefore primarily to expound and reconstruct both the conception of language found in SZ and the role this plays in the work itself. Several problems which emerge from this picture, in particular from the attempt to extrapolate the notion of formal indication into a fully-fledged conception of language, will be noted, but critical discussion is postponed to the corresponding sections of the next chapter.

### The 'place' of language

Language is discussed in SZ within the framework of the 'preparatory' existential analysis of 'Dasein'. Heidegger characterizes this analysis as 'ontological interpretation', as conceptualizing the 'structure' of the 'being' of its objects, and contrasts this with 'ontic' enquiry that 'sticks to entities' in explaining or describing its subject-matter.<sup>47</sup> The structures of Dasein, more specifically termed 'existentials', are supposed to characterize not just what, but the way that Dasein is. Language is discussed, rather peripherally, in terms of the role it plays in Dasein, and in particular in relation to the three existentials 'understanding', 'interpretation', and what is usually translated as 'talk' or 'discourse'. To understand the role of language within this more general picture, the first task is to clarify what 'Dasein' is supposed to be, and how these three so-called 'existential structures' interrelate.

What does Heidegger mean by 'Dasein'? Everything and nothing, one might say. Nonetheless, §§1-44 of SZ make clear that, whatever else it might later become, within the framework of the fundamental analysis of Dasein it refers to human beings in everyday life. So, to a first approximation, 'Dasein' refers to human beings and means the way human being is, the way human beings are. Important clarification is provided by the claim that '*Dasein is its disclosure*'. (SZ, 133) This basic term 'disclosure' replaces (Heidegger's earlier) talk of 'understanding', 'grasping' or 'possessing' intentional objects and so becomes the appropriate 'grounding experience' that finds expression in, say, linguistic concepts. Heidegger's explication of this kind of openness, of Dasein as its disclosure, provides a paradigm case of what is often regarded as his 'word play': Dasein itself *is* its respective Da – '*ist selbst je sein "Da"*'. (SZ, 132) The expressive force of this attempt to interpret out morphological structure, to have the structure of the word itself speak its content, is lost in English translation. Two comparisons can, however, illustrate

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<sup>47</sup> The characterization of 'ontological' interpretation elucidates the notion of existentiality (SZ, 312, 12); 'Ontic' enquiry 'bleibt am Seienden haften' and corresponds to 'existentiell' analysis (SZ, 63, 13).

how this ‘word play’ might seem appropriate in German. First, it is worth noting the homology between Dasein and the Latin *adesse* (to be present), or being (*esse*) at (*ad*) a certain location.<sup>48</sup> Secondly, Dasein’s involvement ‘in being’, as being-in-the-world characterized by ‘care’, can be paralleled with the Latin *interesse* as ‘being between or among’ other entities, but which can also convey that something is of importance.<sup>49</sup> Heidegger’s notion combines both senses: Dasein *adest* and *interest*, it is an entity that is *present* in the manner of *interested involvement*. The obvious question is: in what sense is the ‘space’ referenced by the prefixes ‘Da/ad/inter’ to be construed? This is addressed by Heidegger’s conception of existential spatiality, within which the world is grasped primarily in purposive or instrumental terms. (SZ, 102 ff.) So, by unpacking the sense of existential location, presence, or thereness in ‘being there’, Heidegger’s analysis of the ‘existential constitution of the “there”’ (SZ, 134 ff.) simultaneously becomes an analysis of the structure of disclosure. (SZ, 132) This analysis, into which language eventually enters, can be seen as addressing what belongs to the structure of interested involvement itself, in abstraction from such substantial notions as person or subject.<sup>50</sup> The word ‘Dasein’ then refers to a kind of entities, paradigmatically human ones, whose way of being it is to disclose their surrounding world by having an active interest in it.

To be present in this way, two requirements must be met, corresponding to the existentials into which Heidegger analyzes the ‘there’. The first requirement, that an ‘interested’ entity must have some sense of mattering to itself (cf. SZ, 12), is reflected in what Heidegger calls ‘disposition’. This is supposed to convey *that* Dasein *finds itself* in the world and that it constitutively, but pre-reflectively, feels or ‘finds itself’ *somehow*.<sup>51</sup> This feature of Dasein, Heidegger suggests, has a specific function in that various dispositions –

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<sup>48</sup> This seems to have been the basis of the German verb *dasein*, from which the noun *Dasein* was an 18th century derivation, originally meaning ‘to be present’. (Grimm 1984, vol. 2, col. 806; Pfeifer, 1989, 257)

<sup>49</sup> Heidegger considers such ‘betweenness’ at SZ, 132.

<sup>50</sup> SZ, 46 ff. – ‘The concept of facticity: our respectively own Dasein initially includes in the determination “own”, “appropriation”, “appropriated” nothing of the idea “ego”, person, “I”-pole, act centre.’ (Ont., 29)

<sup>51</sup> Cf. PGZ, 352. In German, *Befindlichkeit* is to capture ‘daß es sich [...] in seiner Geworfenheit befindet’ (‘that it finds itself in its thrownness’; SZ, 135) and ‘wie es sich (dabei) befindet’ (roughly: how Dasein finds it to be the way it is). There is no satisfactory translation for this term, rendered variously as ‘state of mind’, ‘moodness’, ‘situatedness’, or ‘attunement’. Under some duress, ‘disposition’ captures its dual sense insofar as Dasein is – positively, indifferently, or negatively – *disposed to* its being (dis)positioned in the world. The use of this term here has nothing to do with the sense of dispositions as states of potentiality (such as that of sugar cubes to dissolve).

exemplarily that of ‘anxiety’ – reveal Dasein to itself, as mattering to itself, by presenting it as the ‘entity which is answerable to its being’.<sup>52</sup> The second requirement is that an ‘interested’ entity must have some grasp of the relevance of items situationally engaged with for its well-being. This adumbrates the task for understanding, the second existential structure constituting disclosedness. Despite the familiarity of this term, Heidegger’s is a fairly idiosyncratic conception of understanding, to be distinguished from both the Kantian ‘faculty of concepts’ and debates of Heidegger’s contemporaries about the distinction between understanding and explanation, supposedly reflecting the respective methodologies of the humanities and sciences.<sup>53</sup> Its first distinctive feature is as apprehension of purpose, or of what things are for (their *Worumwillen*; SZ, 143). Such purposes are not to be cosmic teleological constants, but conditioned by human goal-setting, since entities encountered in the environment are potentially useful or expedient only in relation to determinate aims, in Heidegger’s terms a ‘project’.<sup>54</sup> A second distinctive feature of understanding, Heidegger tells us, is that unlike a ‘plan’, it entails no ‘thematic’ grasp of the possibilities it addresses. (SZ, 145) By ‘thematization’ Heidegger means ‘objectivizing’, a ‘delimitation of the area of subject matter’ that prefigures the concepts appropriate to the relevant entities and befits this subject matter to scientific enquiry. (SZ, 363) So, on this picture, ‘understanding’ refers to *purposive* and *pre-objective* understanding of the world.

Heidegger contrasts this ‘pre-structure of understanding’ with the ‘as-structure of interpretation’. (SZ, 151) Interpretation, defined as ‘the development of understanding’, is to be a level within disclosure at which entities become ‘explicitly understood’ and assume ‘the structure of *something as something*’.<sup>55</sup> Although always ‘grounded in understanding’ (SZ, 148), different kinds of interpretation – e.g. in circumspection or predicative statements – differ in what they respectively take their object to be, as being, i.e. in their sense of ‘as-ness’. For Heidegger the most basic mode of interpretation is instrumental or

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<sup>52</sup> SZ, 134. This is put more forcefully in the earlier draft of SZ: ‘Disposition is the genuine way of being Dasein, of possessing oneself as discovered, the manner in which Dasein is itself its there.’ (PGZ, 354)

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Kant 1933, 195 [B 199]. – Heidegger distances himself explicitly from the debate over the distinction of understanding and explanation at SZ, 143. For a survey of this debate cf. Schnädelbach 1983, 138-171.

<sup>54</sup> As Heidegger puts it, the ‘primary “for what” is a for-the-sake-of-which. [...], the “sake for which” always concerns the being of *Dasein*’. (SZ, 84)

<sup>55</sup> SZ, 151, 148, 149. – ‘Something as something’ is the only idiomatic rendering of ‘Etwas als Etwas’ in English, which is slightly unfortunate given Heidegger’s emphatic distinction between things and tools. The general point he is making about interpretation is that this individuates entities as entities (whether tools or things).

‘circumspective’ interpretation, which addresses entities *as* tools, in terms of purposiveness.<sup>56</sup> This improves on indeterminate ‘background’ awareness of understanding by identifying entities in terms of what they are for (their ‘*Um-zu*’): to the question of what a ready-to-hand entity is, it responds ‘it is to ...’. (SZ, 149) Nonetheless, according to Heidegger’s distinction, commitment to a pre-structure of understanding means that ‘interpretation has always already decided, finally or with reservations, on a certain conceptuality’. (SZ, 150)

This analysis is given a confusing twist by the claim that understanding and disposition are ‘equiprimordially determined’ by a further existentially that forms the ‘existential-ontological foundation of language’. (SZ, 133, 160) This further existentially, *Rede*, is Heidegger’s translation of the Greek *λόγος* and is usually rendered in English as ‘talk’ or ‘discourse’. However, in view of its definition as ‘the articulation [*Artikulation*] of intelligibility’, it will be rendered in the following as ‘articulacy’.<sup>57</sup> This talk of ‘intelligibility’, of what can be understood, relies on SZ’s account of the worldliness of the world, in particular the instrumental ‘references’ inherent in its “‘in order to ...” structure’.<sup>58</sup> Heidegger calls the totality of such instrumental relations ‘significance’ (*Bedeutsamkeit*), and sees this as constituting the ‘structure’ of the world, its worldliness, and as the basis for Dasein’s interpreting its being-in-the-world. (SZ, 87, cf. 86) It is this ‘significance’ that articulacy articulates. He further suggests that there are four ‘constitutive elements’ to the structure of articulacy: (a) that which is being talked about or referred to (*Worüber*); (b) what is said, the words uttered or written (*Geredetes*); (c) communication (*Mitteilung*), by which Heidegger means the sharing of disclosure, i.e. of disposition and understanding, in the public space; (d) intimation (*Bekundung*), that which Dasein reveals gesturally in the tone or manner of linguistic acts. (SZ, 161-2) This general pattern of (intentional) structure has a central role in Heidegger’s conception of

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Circumspection’, ‘Umsicht’, is Heidegger’s term for the kind of understanding that guides practical action. (Cf. SZ, 69) This presumably alludes to the Aristotelian practical reason, or *φρονεσις*, which he also translates as ‘Umsicht’. (PIA2, 255; Soph, 21)

<sup>57</sup> SZ, 161. Although ‘articulacy’ misses the – nonetheless: partly misleading – connotation of public discourse and the mundane register of *Rede*, it should become clear that it expresses better what Heidegger means by the latter. (There is no equivalent to ‘articulacy’ in German that Heidegger might otherwise have used.)

<sup>58</sup> SZ, 68. *Verständlichkeit* (‘intelligibility’), as that which is ‘articulated in understanding disclosing [*verstehenden Erschließen*]’, signal this link with Heidegger’s conception of understanding (*Verstehen*; SZ, 151, cf. 161).

truth. For the function of *Rede* or λόγος, as the articulation of intelligibility, is to ‘point to’ what is talked about so as to allow it to be ‘seen’ – in the general sense of Dasein’s ‘sight’ – or ‘noticed’.<sup>59</sup>

Against this background, Heidegger’s fairly schematic characterizations of articulacy and its relevance to language can be clarified somewhat. First, articulacy delineates what signs stand for, their respective ‘signification’ (*Bedeutung*). As he puts it, articulacy is the ‘significational dividing up of the disposed intelligibility of being-in-the-world.’ (SZ, 162) Further, it is in terms of the ‘whole of signification’, i.e. significance, that he characterizes the emergence of words shaped by articulacy. On the basis of what is ‘divided up in articulating articulation [*redenden Artikulation*]’, ‘[i]ntelligibility’s whole of signification *advenes to the word*. Words accrue to the significations.’<sup>60</sup> So it is here, finally, that something palpably linguistic – words – features in Heidegger’s analysis of the structure of disclosure. Indeed it is as the public use of linguistic signs, as the ‘spokenness of articulacy’, that he defines ‘language’ (*Sprache*) itself.<sup>61</sup> The relationship between articulacy and language is supposed to be that between ontological and ontic phenomena: articulacy is an existential, part of Dasein’s structure, with a ‘worldly manner of being’; language is ontic, the spoken or written manifestation of articulacy in observable entities, the ‘word totality’ that is encountered (purposively) in an ‘innerworldly’ manner as ‘ready-to-hand’. (SZ, 161)

This, in broad outline, is Heidegger’s view of ‘ontological “position”’ of language in the phenomenon of disclosure, and the context of his claim that the ‘theory of signification is rooted in the ontology of Dasein.’ (SZ, 166) Before filling out some details of this general picture, I want to highlight two sources of concern with this general framework to be returned to critically in the next chapter. The first is whether or not the analysis Heidegger offers is actually coherent. To begin with, it not clear in what sense, if any, understanding and interpretation can be distinguished, especially as even Heidegger does

<sup>59</sup> It is ‘aufweisendes Sehenlassen’ or ‘Vernehmenlassen’ (SZ, 32, 34).

<sup>60</sup> SZ, 161. – ‘Advenes to the word’ translates literally ‘zum Wort kommen’ but misses its idiomatic meaning of having the opportunity or turn to speak. (E.g. ‘Jetzt kommst du zum Wort!’ – It’s your turn to speak.)

<sup>61</sup> Heidegger literally talks of the ‘spoken-out-ness’ ([*Hin*]Ausgesprochenheit), the state of having been pronounced. (SZ, 161, 167) His comments of SZ, 168 f. imply that this is to encompass written, as well as oral use of signs.

not seem to want to suggest that they are manifested separately. This becomes clear in his treatment of Dasein's 'sight', the guise in which the generalized concept of intuitive apprehension resurfaces in SZ.<sup>62</sup> Heidegger now takes the sight of understanding to be *the* foundational form of direct awareness, thus underlying not only Husserl's, but all traditional conceptions of thinking, intuition and perception.<sup>63</sup> Yet, even in this most basic operation of disclosure, understanding and interpretation are not pared apart: '*All* pre-predicative direct seeing of the ready-to-hand is in itself already understanding-interpreting.' (SZ, 149; italics added.) What, then, is 'understanding'? This would require some purposive grasp of the world that is prior to any individuation of entities as being for those purposes.<sup>64</sup> Yet, to take Heidegger's paradigm example, in what sense can one be said to understand hammering unless able interpretatively to identify some entity *as* 'for hammering'? Or conversely, how can one be said to 'understand' a hammer's instrumentality, unless there is some manifestable awareness of its 'as being for' hammering? If the identification of entities 'as being for ...' some purpose or other is a feat of interpretation, it is not clear what *understanding* of readiness-to-hand (i.e. purpose or the 'for what') is supposed to consist in independently of such interpretation. It might seem that the notion of articulacy helps make sense of pre-interpretative, 'nonthematic' understanding, since articulacy involves saying something of an already determinate referent. (Cf. (a) and (b) above). But if, as Heidegger also claims, articulacy underlies understanding, it seems that an as-structure is already present prior to interpretation, thus deflating his initial distinction.

A second concern is the opacity of the notion of articulacy (*Rede*, λόγος). Heidegger insists that this is the 'existential-ontological foundation' of language, but in what sense? One way of construing articulacy would be as a psychological capacity underlying the phenomenon language. According to Heidegger's four-point definition, it would then be the basic capacity of an agent to pick out an object referred to, to say something of that object, to say it in the public domain, and simultaneously to express

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<sup>62</sup> SZ, 146, cf. 123, 150. In German Heidegger can deploy the term *Sicht* (sight) to suggest a phenomenal unity between circumspection (*Umsicht*) in environmental awareness, consideration (*Rücksicht*) and forbearance (*Nachsicht*) in awareness of others, transparency (*Durchsichtigkeit*) in self-awareness, and the foresight (*Vorsicht*) of understanding in general.

<sup>63</sup> SZ, 147, 149. Cf. *Logik*, 113-23.

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger suggests that initially apprehension of a hammer is not even 'circumspectively thematic'. (SZ, 69) In one passage he seems to recognize, but does not pursue, the tension between understanding and interpretation, pondering whether these might be a unitary phenomenon. (SZ, 151)

itself. Although this would give some tangibility to a foundational claim, it would introduce overtly psychological terms and assimilate Dasein to the kind of transcendental ‘medium’ of constituting consciousness in ways Heidegger rejects. Alternatively, articulacy may be taken as intending to discern necessary structural features of linguistic phenomena. This would retain a sense of ‘ontological’ generality, but fail to explain in what sense articulacy is the ‘foundation’ of, and perhaps even distinct from, the ontic level of sign use. – Both of these concerns, however, can be better dealt with against the background of Heidegger’s account of day-to-day language use, to which I now turn.

### **Routine use of language**

Heidegger’s analysis of the ‘there’ presents a tidy hierarchical picture of different levels, on which the public phenomenon of language emerges from the substructures of interpretation and its foundation in articulacy, disposition and understanding. Nevertheless, a further discussion of the role of language is made necessary by thinking of Dasein as ‘thrown’ into a historically conditioned intentional situation, a commitment that is relevant for SZ at two levels. For, if Dasein is to inherit the possibilities made available by the historical heritage (SZ, 383), then one would expect an account of how its intentional situation is set up, and of the, presumably central, role played by language in transmitting such possibilities. Further, since Heidegger’s question of being is ‘nothing but the radicalization’ of Dasein’s ‘understanding of being’ (SZ, 15), the point of departure for ontological enquiry itself is subject to the same conditions of situation. Such an account of the role of language in setting up Dasein’s intentional situation is found in Heidegger’s discussion of ‘inauthentic’ everyday being.

Heidegger’s view of language in everyday life is ambivalent. Such use of language, which will be referred to in the following as ‘routine use’ or ‘routine mode’, Heidegger stigmatizes as ‘rumour’ (*Gerede*) or ‘idle talk’. Despite this, conspicuously pejorative, choice of term, Heidegger emphasizes that routine use is a ‘positive phenomenon which constitutes everyday Dasein’s understanding and interpretation’. (SZ, 167) Language, as normally manifested in spoken and written use, ‘harbours in it an



interpretedness of Dasein's understanding', and so too 'already a developed conceptuality'. (SZ, 167, 157) Accordingly, Dasein and language complement one another in their historicity. Language is a product of 'the discoveredness respectively attained and handed down' which 'preserves, in the whole of its divided-up contexts of signification, an understanding of the disclosed world', of self and others. As such, for thrown Dasein, it conditions 'the available possibilities and horizons for new approaches by interpretation and conceptual articulation.' (SZ, 168)

Perhaps surprisingly, given this importance, Heidegger paints a very negative picture of routine language use. This, he says, is the medium of 'public interpretedness' (SZ, 169), which – rumour indeed – contents itself with an average kind of understanding. What is said can 'be largely understood without the hearer's bringing himself into an original understanding being towards what is being talked about. [...] one means *the same*, because one understands what is said in the same averageness.' (SZ, 168) Words themselves, what is said, gain a 'life' of their own and can be passed from speaker to speaker as empty tokens in processes of 'hearsay'. Without an 'original appropriation' of what is being spoken about, the 'initial lack of firm grounding [*Bodenständigkeit*]' of such freely circulating linguistic signs ascends to 'full groundlessness'. (SZ, 168) In this sense, the disclosive function of routine language use culminates in a counter-tendency to 'close off', a phenomenon which remains largely unnoticed because its 'indifferent intelligibility' leaves speakers with the impression that they understand everything. (SZ, 169)

The tone of such comments should not, however, be allowed to occlude the 'positive phenomenon' as which routine use was introduced. At a general level, two important clarifications are called for. First: Heidegger's close linking of routine language use with everyday understanding is no coincidence. The Husserlian correlation of intentional acts and their objects is reinforced by Heidegger's insistence on construing both in their relation to actually lived experience.<sup>65</sup> Hence, as understanding is usually manifested in linguistic acts, in that experience through which Dasein achieves the state of everyday understanding, these are two sides of the same phenomenal coin, meaning that everyday

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<sup>65</sup> This insistence came in his critique of Husserlian subjectivity, cf. above p. 13 f.

understanding and routine language use are to be understood correlatively. In Heidegger's terms, they form complementary aspects of the most usual way, or 'existential mode', in which Dasein's articulacy is manifested. (SZ, 133 f.; cf. 167) Second: The fact that such 'routine use' (*Gerede*) refers to a mode of articulacy (*Rede*) reflects Heidegger's view that this is a *manner* of using language, rather than a delimitation of commonly used or mundane language from highbrow or technical vocabularies. So the distinction drawn by 'routine use' is not equivalent to that of 'everyday language' as this term is usually used in philosophy of language. 'Routine use' refers not to the language used, but to way it is used.<sup>66</sup>

The first positive aspect to be clear about is the *preconditional function* of this routine mode. For there is no suggestion that routine use of language need, or even could be otherwise, or that its defects, whatever they are, should ordinarily be overcome. Indeed, Heidegger remarks that the 'groundlessness of rumour' eases its functioning in public discourse. (SZ, 169) So despite the conspiratorial allure with which he spites 'One's' everyday being, he is quite clear that this is the way human being usually – in his words '*zumeist und zunächst*' – is. This formula is frequently used by Heidegger in signalling his distinction between Dasein's everyday (*uneigentlich*, 'inauthentic') and proper (*eigentlich*, 'authentic') being. Yet no matter how this distinction between proper and everyday disclosure is construed, the latter is not something that can be cast off. Dasein can 'never escape' everyday understanding, in which, out of which, and against which 'all genuine understanding, interpretation and communication, rediscovery and new appropriation' occurs. (SZ, 169) *All* genuine understanding etc., not least proper understanding, 'remains dependent on One [*das Man*] and its world'. (SZ, 299) Accordingly, '*proper* existence is not something that floats above falling everydayness', it is merely a 'modified grasping'; '*proper* disclosedness' is still 'guided by the concerned lostness in One', but 'modifies' its understanding of being without a change "in its content". (SZ, 179, 297) However, if proper disclosure is a *modification* of everyday understanding, then the latter remains a necessary precondition for attaining the former. Thus, as Heidegger acknowledges, the phenomenal order is that we are initially

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<sup>66</sup> The translation of 'Gerede' as 'routine language use' is intended to prevent confusion of these senses and to avoid the disdain of Heidegger's own term.

(*zunächst*) inducted into historically conditioned disclosure by routine language use, and that we usually (*zumeist*) disclose in the everyday mode.

The second positive feature of the routine language mode to be clear about is what might be called its *instrumental adequacy*. For since, as Heidegger puts it, much of what we learn in life never exceeds the ‘average understanding’ of ‘One’, such understanding must clearly, as a rule, be perfectly adequate to the purposes of everyday life. (SZ, 169) This is reflected in the instrumental conception of language which Heidegger subscribes to, more or less *en passant*, in relation to his views on the primacy of purposive understanding. Thus, when words ‘accrue to’ their significations, they do so as ‘ready-to-hand’ entities, signs are ‘to begin with themselves instruments whose specific instrumental character consists in *showing*.’ (SZ, 77) In a basic sense, signs are to resemble other instruments in being ‘constituted by [instrumental] reference’ and are a means to getting things done within practical contexts. (SZ, 78) Yet, in fact Heidegger attributes signs with a dual character, due to a ‘*distinguished* use’ that sets them apart from other instruments.<sup>67</sup> Unlike other instruments, a sign ‘explicitly raises an instrumental whole into circumspection’; signs ‘allow the ready-to-hand to encounter’, or ‘more exactly, a context’ of such readiness-to-hand, they ‘show primarily that “in which” one lives’. (SZ, 80, 79 f.) Despite this peculiarity, signs remain instrumental in character and are to be grasped in a pragmatic way: a sign is ‘properly “apprehended” precisely *not* when we stare at it’, in disinterested contemplation, but when allowing ‘[c]ircumspective surveying’ to gain ‘an orientation within the environment.’<sup>68</sup> This instrumental conception of language also makes a brief appearance in Heidegger’s discussion of predicative statements. He focuses on these in arguing that predicative acts are a derivative form of interpretation, one which in determinately pointing out features of its referent relies on an antecedent circumspective, i.e. purposive, interpretation of it. In making this claim, the discussion centres on acts of theoretical predication, which Heidegger saw as the (misleading) core paradigm of traditional logic. Nonetheless, he points out:

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<sup>67</sup> SZ, 79. Given the expression ‘*vorzügliche Verwendung*’, and the nature of the distinction he suggests, it is quite possible that Heidegger is here exploiting the relationship of *vorziehen* – the literal sense of which is to bring or draw forth – and *vorzüglich* (distinctive, excellent): the distinctive use of signs being to bring to the fore instrumental reference.

<sup>68</sup> SZ, 79. – The dual character of signs is summarized as follows: the ‘Sign is an ontic ready-to-hand [entity] which [...] *simultaneously* [...] indicates the ontological structure of readiness-to-hand, the totality of [instrumental] reference and worldliness.’ (SZ, 82; italics added.)

Between interpretation still completely enveloped in concerned understanding and the extreme countercase of a theoretical statement there is a multitude of intermediate steps: statements about occurrences in the environment, accounts of the ready-to-hand, 'reports on situations', recording and registering 'facts of the matter', describing a state of affairs, recounting what has happened. These 'sentences' cannot be reduced to theoretical statements without essentially distorting their sense. They, like theoretical statements themselves, have their 'origin' in circumspective interpretation. (SZ, 158)

These (passing) comments are of quite general interest in relation to Heidegger's conception of language. To begin with, they clarify his view that signs can be used across a whole spectrum of linguistic behaviours, with the circumspective and the theoretical modes merely as extremes. Since Heidegger discusses these extremes to illustrate a transformation in the as-character of intentional objects – from the 'hermeneutic-as' to the 'apophantic-as' – they provide a clue as to *why* the Heidegger of SZ thought the 'manner of being of language' so badly understood. For, if the extremes are marked by a difference in as-character, what entities are taken as being, presumably so too are intermediate gradations; and insofar as different modes of sign use interpret their objects in different ways, with respectively different senses of 'as-ness', it becomes plausible to suggest that latching onto the common feature of sign use will not engender a philosophically revealing conception of language. These comments also clarify that Heidegger does not conceive of circumspective understanding as essentially prelinguistic. For although his paradigm example of hammer use might seem intended to suggest this, there is no claim that circumspective, purposive or instrumental apprehension is not manifested *in* the use of language. In fact, quite the contrary, as Heidegger makes clear that even in normal use sentences such as 'the hammer is heavy' can be an 'expression' of 'concernful deliberation'.<sup>69</sup> Nor can Heidegger's critique of predicative statements be taken to suggest practical understanding could somehow dispense with language use, since, as he emphasizes, 'interpretation *spoken out* circumspectively is not necessarily already a statement in the defined sense.'<sup>70</sup> However, the most immediate relevance of these comments is to underline Heidegger's commitment to the view that all language use

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<sup>69</sup> SZ, 360 f. – Note that Heidegger talks here of sentences. The use of scare quotes ("sentences") in the preceding indented quote is explained by the ambiguity of the German 'Satz' between sentence and logical proposition. The claim is that in the intermediate cases sentences are used, but not propositions.

<sup>70</sup> SZ 157. – This 'defined sense' is that of SZ, 154 f., which Heidegger considers to be modelled on acts of theoretical predication.

– all sentences – have their ‘origin’ in purposive action. In other words, Heidegger’s conception of routine use not only allows, but centres on the assumption that this is instrumentally adequate to practical requirements.

So which supposed deficiencies accompany routine language use? Two leitmotifs can be discerned in Heidegger’s disapproving tones, which inform an ambiguity in his talk of ‘(un)eigentliches’ disclosure, understanding etc. The first concerns the relation of Dasein to others: everyday understanding is ‘public’, ‘indifferent’, ‘averageness’, one just is as ‘One’ is. In this respect, self-realization, freeing one’s own true self from the amorphous hegemony of the masses looks like the antidote to everyday being. In this sense, ‘eigentliches Dasein’ allows its ‘ownmost [*eigensten*] self’ to act within it (SZ, 295) and is about Dasein’s becoming the spontaneous cause, or the author of its own being. To be ‘eigentlich’ is to be ‘authentic’, everyday being is nonauthorial or ‘inauthentic’. It is this motif, prominent in Heidegger’s discussion of the role of conscience and guilt, that gives substance to the idea that SZ is an ‘existentialist’ work, guided by the idea of authenticity. The second leitmotif focuses on the relation of Dasein to what is talked about: routine language use remains ‘groundless’, it lacks ‘original appropriation’ or ‘original understanding’. This talk of grounding, propriety and originality clearly reinvokes the earlier notion of formal indication, and its (already Husserlian) contrast between ‘improper’ (*uneigentlich*) expressions and ‘proper’ (*eigentlich*) actualized apprehension. So in this respect, prominent in Heidegger’s discussion of truth (cf. SZ, 224), the antidote to everyday being would seem to be the actualization of more proper disclosure.<sup>71</sup>

The obvious question to ask is: if these important motifs are so distinct, why should Heidegger allow such ambiguity in talking of ‘eigentlich’? The answer to this, presumably, is that he intended them to form two aspects of one and the same phenomenon. To appreciate this, consider the limitation of reading ‘Eigentlichkeit’ as authenticity. Whatever the intrinsic or exegetic virtues of a focus on being oneself, it seems that this cannot be the whole story for Heidegger, since there is no obvious sense

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. p.30. – It is therefore misleading to claim that ‘Heidegger’s notions of “authenticity” and “inauthenticity” (or “ownness” (*eigentlich*) and “un-ownness”) as well as Sartre’s central concepts of “bad faith” and “sincerity” are wholly concerned with the question of who one is.’ (Solomon 2001, 30)

in which self-realization is related to matters of fundamental ontology. But, given Heidegger's view of Dasein as situated disclosure, a possible link does emerge: if disclosure qua Dasein is always situated, understanding of being, even ontological understanding, is attained by radicalizing understanding of that situation in which Dasein already finds itself 'thrown'. Since Heidegger regards 'disclosedness' as 'primarily constitutive' of being-in-the-world, the projects of authentically self-being and hermeneutically disclosing the world then coincide in 'resoluteness' as the occurrence of 'original truth', a 'distinguished mode of Dasein's disclosedness'.<sup>72</sup> However, rather than trying to pursue the idea that Heidegger fuses Kierkegaardian and Husserlian interests in this vein, the following considerations will put aside the first motif of authenticity and concentrate only on deficiencies of routine use that result in relation to the second motif of proper disclosing.

Drawing on his characterization of the structure of articulacy, Heidegger suggests a specific sense in which routine use is a limited actualization of the possibilities inherent in articulacy. Routine use, he explains, focuses on what is said, rather than on what is being talked about.<sup>73</sup> This, of course, sounds only expedient: when getting things done in everyday life, what could be of more use than attending to what is said? This much Heidegger can concede in the spirit of instrumental adequacy. The deficiency he nonetheless insists on is that of 'empty intending' in which language 'is discharged in mere words, without an explicit [*ausdrückliches*] relationship to the things being talked about.' (PGZ, 54; GAP, 20) As already noted, this clearly follows the earlier conception of formal indication, but importantly, it is now offered not as a characterization of the 'peculiar character' of philosophical or phenomenological concepts, but as a general thesis about language and the awareness that speakers have of this in everyday life. So Heidegger is urging that routine, i.e. most, language use preserves 'what is said' in a way

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<sup>72</sup> SZ, 299, 297, cf. 221. – As Macquarrie and Robinson (1962, 343n) note, the morphological or 'etymological connection between "Entschlossenheit" ("resoluteness") and "Erschlossenheit" ("disclosedness") is not to be overlooked.'

<sup>73</sup> In routine use – *Gerede* – 'one only listens to what is said [*das Geredete*] as such', 'Being with one another moves in talking with one another and concern with what is said', 'What is said as such [...] takes on authoritative character.' (SZ, 168). – This also provides a good example of Heidegger's exploitation of morphology. His terminology is supposed to make manifest that *Gerede* (rumour) is a form of *Rede* (articulacy); moreover that *Gerede* focuses on *Geredetes* (what is said). The latter similarity might presumably be invoked in support of Heidegger's – nonetheless hardly plausible – claim that the term 'Gerede' is not intended pejoratively.

that does not require proper, actual(ized) apprehension of ‘what is being spoken about’, and borders on merely knowing the right words to utter.<sup>74</sup>

Now, if this were the only problem presented by routine language use, then the task for Dasein, and philosophy, might merely be seen as that of keeping alive or constantly reappropriating (making our own) the disclosure deposited in language. To do this, since the understanding we have of being is conditioned by it, a hermeneutic archaeology of language might, perhaps, be the requisite way of understanding our own situation. But the point of Heidegger’s claim that the ‘business of philosophy’ is to preserve the ‘*force of the most elementary words*’ (SZ, 220) is not straightforwardly to foster a conservative approach to language. Rather, the actualization of inherited understanding is supposed to enable critical – or ‘destructive’ – appropriation of the concepts deposited in traditional language.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, Heidegger repeatedly emphasizes the need for a revision, rather than merely a reappropriation, of extant concepts. To counteract what he sees as the failing of traditional ontology, its conceiving of all entities as things or ‘present-at-hand’ objects, he diagnoses the need to overhaul its concepts and so to ‘explicitly overcome’ this ‘initially dominant’ understanding of being. (SZ, 225) Again, asking about the ‘sense of being [will] demand a conceptuality of its own’ that is ‘essentially set apart’ from the established concepts in which the (lifeworldly) significance of entities is determined.<sup>76</sup> And although ‘existential analysis’ seems constantly to be doing violence to the ‘everyday interpretation’ of being, Heidegger insists that ‘in this field of investigation’ such violence is not ‘arbitrary but a necessity grounded in the subject matter’: to grasp entities in their being, ‘not only are the words mostly lacking, but above all the “grammar”’.<sup>77</sup>

The result is ambivalence. Although routine language use and the concepts deposited in established language play a constitutive role in setting up Dasein’s

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<sup>74</sup> Cf. SZ, 5. – As Heidegger tersely puts it elsewhere, this understanding consists in ‘Wortdenken, Hörensagen, Angelesenem.’ (GAP, 274)

<sup>75</sup> SZ, 22. As he had earlier put it, the ‘entire conceptual material must be newly determined by being originally grasped. This is the tendency peculiar to phenomenology.’ (PAA, 168)

<sup>76</sup> In Heidegger’s words, ‘... from concepts in which that which is [*Seiendes*] reaches its significative determination [*bedeutungsmäßige Bestimmtheit*]’. (SZ, 6)

<sup>77</sup> SZ, 311, 327, 38. – Hence the demand that grammar should be ‘freed from’ orientation towards (traditional, subject-predicate) logic and informed instead by an understanding of the structure of articulation. (SZ, 165; cf. footnote 40)

understanding of being, this does not mean that this understanding has been actually appropriated, nor does it make established language the most appropriate conceptual interpretation of the phenomena it discloses. Once again, such ambivalence parallels the view of ‘presuppositions’ that Heidegger had developed with the notion of formal indication, and which now recurs in his picture of language in general. Insofar as routine use of established language does enough to induct us into understanding of being, it furnishes an outset for both reappropriated disclosure and new conceptual interpretation. The conditioning of understanding it provides is not, however, a conclusive ‘positing’ of how things are, but a way into the ongoing ‘diahermeneutic’ process or, as it is now called, the hermeneutic circle. As Heidegger puts it in SZ: ‘Philosophy will never seek to deny its “presuppositions”, but neither may it simply concede them’; rather, by comprehending them it proceeds to a ‘more penetrating explication [*Entfaltung*]’ of ‘what they are presuppositions for’. (SZ, 310)

Before looking more closely at some of the ways in which routine language use might be surpassed, various problems with these views should again be registered for later consideration. Clearly the view of philosophical concepts as formal indications has been generalized into a view of routine language use as ‘empty intending’. Significantly, the earlier view has now been filled out with a sketch of routine use in instrumental terms. But Heidegger’s view of its preconditional function in disclosure remains largely unchanged, and pejoratively downplays the significance of instrumentally adequate routine use. Several questions therefore arise with this extrapolation of formal indication into a general view of language. Does this view of the functioning of signs, based on the paradigm of philosophical enquiry, remain true to linguistic phenomena more generally? In particular, is its negative assessment of routine use justified, and if so, by what standard? And is the view it suggests of the nature of preconditions for disclosure tenable, or does it fail to take adequate account of the presuppositional impact of its instrumental underpinnings? Finally, is Heidegger’s low-key instrumentalist conception of language itself untenable or in tension with his further views, as some suggest?



### Expressive use and originality

This view of routine language use generates something of a methodological tension for SZ itself. For, while holding that the function of language is to allow phenomena to be seen, Heidegger intends both to preserve the ‘force’ of ‘elemental’ words and to embark on conceptual revision that does considerable ‘violence’ to everyday understanding. The question is: how is this to be done? For Heidegger has told us that language is usually understood in the routine ‘empty’ way, in which linguistic expressions circulate freely without ‘proper’ and ‘original’ understanding. Yet, as he recognizes, this affects ‘[e]very originally created phenomenological concept and sentence’; once ‘communicated’ there is the possibility of ‘degeneration’.<sup>78</sup> So what can be done to ‘preserve’ or revitalize the force of elemental words? And how are conceptual revisions supposed to allow phenomena to be seen any better than established language does?

A clue on how language might be used so as to resist such degeneration is found in SZ’s conception of signs. Signs, as noted above, have a dual instrumentalist character for Heidegger. Like other tools, they are involved in worldly affairs and are used, in their relations to other entities, in getting things done. Unlike other tools, signs are to have the peculiarity of generating awareness of the context of their involvements, of setting this off against the inconspicuous backdrop of world. Consideration of this ‘peculiar instrumental character of signs’, Heidegger emphasizes, is particularly relevant in the creation or ‘institution of signs’: because the worldly context usually remains inconspicuous, an instrument is needed to do the “work” of *allowing* the ready-to-hand to *become conspicuous*’; the ‘production of such instruments (of signs) must be attentive to their conspicuousness’ and tailored to assure ‘easy accessibility’. (SZ, 80) – Hence, independently of the various individual uses to which they may be put, this dual conception identifies a general standard of propriety for sign-instruments, insofar as these can be more or less well suited to the task of inducing awareness of their context. Extending the ideas of purpose and propriety which shape Heidegger’s talk of Dasein, one might say that this conception allows that signs have different modes of being. Corresponding to

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<sup>78</sup> SZ, 36. – Adorno (wrongly) suggests that Heidegger was unaware that the ‘anonymity of the exchange society’ to which SZ was opposed would impact on its insights too, once put in words. (Adorno 1964, 18)

routine language use and everyday being, signs too can function ‘improperly’, that is, function in an instrumentally adequate manner, but in which they need not excel according to their standard of propriety. Over and above this, there is the aspect of ‘properly’ being as a sign, which requires being produced so as to allow ‘what is talked about’ to be seen easily or ‘become conspicuous’.

The content of the scattered statements in SZ about what makes signs expedient to their proper task comes as no surprise. In discussing the development of understanding, Heidegger emphasizes that interpretation can either ‘create the conceptuality belonging to the entity to be interpreted out of this itself’, or ‘force [this entity] into concepts’ which conflict with its ‘manner of being’. (SZ, 150) Or, as he puts it in introducing articulacy, ‘*what is said*’ should be drawn or created [*geschöpft*] from ‘what is talked about’ and so make this manifest and accessible to others.<sup>79</sup> These comments reinvoke the twin virtues of phenomenal receptivity and expressiveness found with the idea of formal indication, which once again now recurs as a general thesis about linguistic forms, rather than being confined to philosophical concepts.

Although Heidegger does not *say* anything more specific about what it is for concepts to be expressive, the idea I want to pursue in the following is that his approach to this can be elicited from what he *does* in SZ. Given the methodological difficulty Heidegger faces and his distinctive views about its importance, one would expect expressive use of language to play a positive role in SZ, as a concerted and careful statement of his philosophical views. One should also expect, if this goal of expressiveness is doing any work, that it would provide a rationale for, and so correlate with, the infamous linguistic idiosyncrasies of SZ. The suggestion, therefore, is to make SZ the object of a ‘case study’ in expressiveness and to be guided in this by such idiosyncrasies. The following considerations proceed in three steps. First, I attempt to convey some sense of the peculiarities of Heidegger’s language in SZ. Against this background, the mechanisms of Heidegger’s ‘expressiveness’ will be sketched. Finally, since many correctives are urged in its name, his notion of originality is addressed.

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<sup>79</sup> SZ, 32. Cf. 315, and 35, where it is emphasized that in phenomenology, the ‘character of description’, ‘the specific sense of the *λόγος*’, should be fixed by the nature of the subject matter (*Sachheit*) to be described.

An ideal guide to the peculiarities of Heidegger's language in SZ is provided by John Macquarrie's (1992) survey, which classifies these under three heads: (a) Terminological innovations. These include both conventional and (occasionally) artificial neologisms, which respectively adhere to or break with standard German syntactic conventions, and transfers of word function from one part of speech to another, such as the substantivization of adverbs, pronouns and relative expressions – the 'there' of Dasein, the 'one' of everyday fallenness, the 'for-which'. (b) The appeal to 'original' senses. This covers the use of archaic expressions and the deployment of 'etymological meanings' in which the structure of a word is exploited in being taken as a literal expression of its meaning: existence as *ek-stasis*, a 'standing out', Dasein as *da-sein*, 'being there', etc. (c) Heidegger's 'playing on words', which includes the grouping of words of similar structure, the use of common (etymological) roots to convey figuratively the interrelations between different concepts,<sup>80</sup> and deliberate equivocation in the use of terms to express two or more well-defined meanings. (Macquarrie 1992, 53-4)

With this survey, Macquarrie's aim was to elucidate the difficulties of translating SZ. He suggests that, although Heidegger makes liberal use of them, in principle the features grouped under (a) present no great problem in translation. Such features, which rely largely on the inherent – i.e. syntactically legitimate – plasticity of German, no doubt contribute quirkiness to translations. But, with some plausibility, he claims that most of the terminological innovations 'sound no more strange in English than Heidegger's equivalents do in German.' (Macquarrie 1992, 53) To see the kind of features that Macquarrie classifies under (b) and (c), it is helpful to look at some of the central terminology of SZ, since it is here, if anywhere, that one would expect Heidegger to make good his claim to be preserving the '*force of the most elemental words*'. (SZ, 220) The following list provides a sample of how Heidegger operates more generally.<sup>81</sup> In each case a string of Heidegger's terms is listed, followed by familiar English translations

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<sup>80</sup> Macquarrie's example is the suggestion of light (*Licht*) which links talk of Dasein's *lumen naturale* with that of a (forest) clearing (*Lichtung*).

<sup>81</sup> I.e. it is not intended to be systematic or exhaustive. See Schöfer (1962) for a detailed and sympathetic study of Heidegger's linguistic peculiarities. Aler (1992, 13-23) also provides a concise and astute survey, covering similar ground to Macquarrie. – Recall that Heidegger even justifies his use of hyphenation in expressions such as 'being-in-the-world' to indicate (*anzeigen*) a 'unitary phenomenon' (SZ, 53).

(Macquarrie/Robinson), followed in square brackets by a suggestion as to what is supposed to be conveyed by the corresponding lexical relationships:

Sorge – Fürsorge – Besorgen  
 care – solicitude – concern/provide  
 [care is a unitary phenomenon]

Geworfenheit – Wurf – Entwurf  
 thrownness – throw – project  
 [projection counters thrownness]

eigen – eigenst – Eigentlichkeit – aneignen  
 own – ownmost – authenticity – (to) appropriate  
 [proper disclosure must be actualized individually]

verschlossen – erschlossen – entschlossen  
 closed off – disclosed – resolute  
 [resoluteness is the extreme positive mode of disclosure]<sup>82</sup>

Sicht – Umsicht – Rücksicht – Nachsicht – Durchsichtigkeit – Vorsicht  
 sight – circumspection – considerateness – forbearance – transparency – foresight  
 [the generalized phenomenological sight of Dasein is a unitary phenomenon]

Rede – Gerede – Geredetes  
 discourse – idle talk – what is said in the talk  
 [everyday language is a mode of Dasein's general capacity to articulate]

Ursprung – ursprünglich – gleichursprünglich  
 source – primordial – equiprimordial  
 [some concepts have their origin (source) in the same (gleich) phenomenon]

Welt – Umwelt – Umsicht – Umhafte  
 world – environment – circumspection – aroundness  
 [signals the relationship between the world of practical engagement, and the faculty which discloses this]

These examples illustrate the way in which Heidegger anchors key distinctions in a gestalt-like manner within the morphological form of his terminology. Such *morphological anchoring* – as I shall call it – is common to both the etymological meanings and the signalling of interrelationships via shared roots that Macquarrie groups under (b) and (c) respectively. It is not difficult to appreciate how such exploitation of word structure should be difficult to preserve in translation. For, irrespective of whether one thinks this might be of philosophical interest, it should be clear that in each of the above cases the English translations, in having to deploy different lexical material, lose the gestalt-like qualities of the original terms. In other cases, shared etymology allows

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<sup>82</sup> Note that Heidegger characteristically uses the prefix 'Ent-' in its privative sense. Sometimes this is at least consistent with common use (e.g. *Ent-wurf* – see above, *Entweltlichung*, de-worlding; SZ, 65), other times not. (E.g. *Ent-fernung* as 'de-distancing', or bringing things nearer; SZ, 105.) He is emphatic that 'resoluteness' (*Ent-schlossenheit*) is a distinguished form of disclosure. (*Erschlossenheit*; SZ, 296 f.)

them to be preserved. For example, Heidegger's analysis of the concept of phenomenology in SZ §7 in terms of its 'constituent parts' ('*φαινόμενον*' and '*λόγος*') and the link between *Existenz* (existence) and the temporal *Exstasen* (ecstases) are still signalled in translation. In an indirect way, the same applies to the term 'Dasein' which has been adopted in English translation precisely because no idiomatic rendering could have reproduced the use Heidegger makes of this term. However, since his translator must frequently wrangle with two forms of literalism, the first a standard 'word-for-word' approach, the second a 'radical one of digging up the roots of words, no matter what their dictionary sense and current usage', translatability clearly meets limits, shaped by the conflicting demands of fidelity and idiomatic rendition.<sup>83</sup> As a result, as one commentator says of the standard English translation of a sample passage of SZ, 'the most that can be said is that it consists, in some degree, of English words.' Lost in translation is the 'etymological word-play, whose constituent jokes have no available correlates in the target language.' (Smith 1991, 157)

Put that way, it sounds as though non-German-speaking readers miss out on the amusing side of SZ, but that, presumably, this is not a philosophical matter. Although he too talks of 'word play', Macquarrie cautions that Heidegger's 'playing upon words [...] may be very seriously intended', and emphasizes that there is 'nothing woolly about' Heidegger's language, which 'when carefully studied [...] is seen to be an impressive and consistent structure.' Perhaps ironically, Macquarrie notes that the 'only advantage' of exploiting similarities in word structure is that 'they help throw into relief the structure of his argument'. (Macquarrie 1992, 54, 56) The irony, of course, would be that, even if this is the 'only advantage' of his 'word play', it concords precisely with Heidegger's general characterization of the function of language as 'allowing ... to be seen'. Might such 'word play' therefore be intended to have a serious function?

The answer, I suggest, is that it is. The expressivist ideal of formal indication, that of a harmony between forms of expression and phenomenal relations, would seem to require of Heidegger's intended methodology that relationships between phenomena are

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<sup>83</sup> This apt characterization is Ashton's (1971, 22). – One debatable possibility, suggested by Smith (1991) is that the German language is syntactically more amenable to such exploitation than, say, English.

signalled in some such way in linguistic expressions. So, given his stated indifference to ‘inelegance of expression’ (SZ, 38), it seems reasonable to suppose that such use of terminological *gestalts* is supposed to allow one to see (hear) at least *that* there is a relationship between the phenomena referred to with these expressions. However, as with the earlier view of formal indication, interpretation is needed to spell out what is signalled by this morphological anchoring, and so to reestablish the link between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is talked about’ lacked in routine use. The first aim of Heidegger’s terminology is therefore what might be called *local attunement*. By being calibrated so as to reflect, evoke, or resonate with the view of phenomena advanced by his theory, Heidegger’s terminology assumes a ‘mnemonic’ function. This is, of course, something any theorist does in choosing appropriate terms to mark important distinctions in a theory. One thing that distinguishes Heidegger, and no doubt fuels the charge of playing with words, is the extent to which he pursues local attunement. Indeed sometimes, as Macquarrie suggests under (c), he seems to be doing little more than grouping words of similar structure. For example, the charge of word play seems well made when Heidegger presents *Auffälligkeit*, *Aufdringlichkeit* and *Aufsässigkeit* (conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, obstinacy) as three modes of the world’s *Aufleuchten* (lighting up; SZ 75, 74); or when he forcefully distinguishes *Vorhabe*, *Vorsicht* and *Vorgriff* (fore-having, fore-sight, fore-conception) as aspects of the *Vorstruktur* (fore-structure) of understanding.<sup>84</sup> Although in such cases it seems capricious to attempt to underline phenomenal unity by means of a prefix, elsewhere Heidegger uses similar means to signal more important relationships, such as the unity of care, or the graduated modes of disclosure (cf. above table). However, whether capricious or more contentful, it is worth emphasizing that Heidegger’s signalling of relationships not only works at the word level, but relies on the *fine-grained formalism* of morphemic similarities and differences to highlight the contours of his theory. In addition, this local attunement is indifferent to the distinction between archaic, contemporary or neologistic forms of expression. Its maxim would be: if a term suits the theory, then it is the right one to use.

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<sup>84</sup> SZ, 151, 153. The English translations are about as (un)idiomatic here as the German. (Cf. Macquarrie/Robinson 1962, 191n)

Complications arise due to the interplay between this locally attuned morphological anchoring and the broader picture of established language. This sometimes results in what might be called Heidegger's *dialectic use* of words, in which existing forms of language are interpreted beyond their familiar 'everyday' meaning. For example, the terms 'world' and 'death' are interpreted, in peculiarly Heideggerian manner, as existentials, as the 'referential totality of significance' and one's 'being-towards-the-end' respectively. (SZ 123, 245) The 'vulgar' concepts of time and history are both transcended by supposedly more 'original' interpretations of these phenomena. What is distinctive about these revisions is their intended relationship with routine and everyday language use. Heidegger presents them not as disjunct meanings, alongside or correcting those of established use, but as already inherent in the latter; established uses are to silhouette their more basic meanings and therefore be subject, as it were, to a corrective from within. Significantly, this is a means Heidegger relies on to reinforce the plausibility of his views, for by 'revitalizing' existing words he can create the impression that the interpretation he offers was already latent in those expressions. This can be illustrated with the distinction he makes between readiness-to-hand, presentness-at-hand, and existence as three kinds of being. Although the term 'Zuhandenheit' (readiness-to-hand) is based on the antiquated 'zuhanden' it is recognizable from the idiomatic and synonymous 'zur Hand sein': because both mean 'to hand' or just 'handy', handiness sounds like the right kind of quality for instruments' being. Inanimate objects are otherwise characterized as 'Vorhandenheit', based on 'vorhanden' which means available or (in non-Heideggerese) existing. But Heidegger is happy to construe this as meaning literally 'coming before the hand' in human affairs (*Handeln*), as signalling dependence on the paradigm of artisanal production.<sup>85</sup> Finally, restriction of the term 'existence' to Dasein-like entities clearly signals a link with the temporal 'ecstases' that, according to Heidegger, underlie the constitution of Dasein's being.

A complex case of such dialectic use is found in Heidegger's use of the term 'Dasein'. This takes its lead from standard usage in German, according to which the term

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<sup>85</sup> Gp 143, 149 ff. – The restriction of traditional ontology to presentness-at-hand, Heidegger held, was the result of a tendency to think of all entities as products, either of human or divine creation.

can mean existence, presence, or ‘life’.<sup>86</sup> The latter usage is also reflected in the idiomatic talk of human existence as *menschliches Dasein* or pronominally of our, my, etc. Dasein.<sup>87</sup> So although Heidegger’s specific reference to human being(s) is idiosyncratic, his use of the term largely coheres with established usage. Moreover, its idiomatic tendency to refer to animate or even human being makes it an appropriate alternative, given Heidegger’s stated aim of avoiding the traditional connotations of terms such as ‘subject’, ‘person’, or ‘human’.<sup>88</sup> As a ‘pure expression of being’ it also accommodates Heidegger’s thought that terminological use of words should express not only what its object is, but how it is, with the latter being more important than the labelling (referring) function: ‘the human is only human *on the basis of the Dasein in him*, which is more original than the human’.<sup>89</sup> Although it does this already at a grammatical level, since the verbal noun ‘Dasein’ reflects its suggested temporal character, the term’s full expressiveness is to emerge with Heidegger’s attempt to interpret its morphological structure in its attunement to his existential analysis. By saying that Dasein ‘is there’ Heidegger seeks to encapsulate *in a word* his thesis that the worldliness of the world has the character of existential spatiality, and that this kind of presence is essentially involved with its surroundings.<sup>90</sup>

These examples illustrate three characteristic features of Heidegger’s expressive use. Firstly, as previously, they rely on a *fine-grained formalism*, with the structure of linguistic forms though to word structure taken as signalling phenomenal relations. Secondly, they are cases of *local attunement*: by suggesting some plausible relationship

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. Wähig (1997). The term was used in the translation of Darwin’s ‘struggle for life’. (Pfeifer/Braun 1989, 257)

<sup>87</sup> This seems to what led Heidegger to use this term from 1923 onward: ‘Facticity is the designation for the character of being of “our” “own” *Dasein*.’; ‘Facticity = our own respective Dasein [...] [however,] the expression “human Dasein” has been avoided on principle [*grundsätzlich*].’ (Ont, 7, 21)

<sup>88</sup> SZ, 46 ff. – Cf. footnote 50.

<sup>89</sup> KM, 229 f. According to SZ (12) at least, it is a *reiner Seinsausdruck*, although this seems to be contradicted in a 1927 lecture. (Gp, 36) This view of ‘terminological’ meanings, referring to the being of entities, that complement everyday meanings (referring to entities) is developed in 1924 lectures. Heidegger emphasized how verbal nouns, such as ‘Dasein’, succeed in expressing both aspects. (GAP, 24-7)

<sup>90</sup> Cf. p. 34. – It might be thought that ‘Dasein’ is merely a wilfully eccentric way of saying ‘subject’ or ‘human being’. Consequently, Ernst Tugendhat, for example, objects that, because it lacks a plural, the term ‘seems to make no sense’, adding that he cannot see that its introduction ‘is supposed to have any positive sense at all.’ (Tugendhat 1979, 172) But, given the above, it is surely clear that a positive sense was intended. In particular, the absence of a plural is unproblematic, since characterizations of how human being is apply indifferently to humans in the singular or plural.



between the expressions used and the interpretation advanced, Heidegger's terminology seems to capture precisely what he intends to convey. Yet, thirdly, although Heidegger's interpretation of these terms is somehow nonstandard, local attunement is possible only because it meshes so closely with established uses that these and his theory mutually reinforce one another: the theory looks plausible because it agrees with established use, the term looks particularly right because it agrees with the theory. Such mutual reinforcement provides the means of dovetailing, or *dialectically integrating*, the expressiveness of Heidegger's locally attuned terminology into established language, so that it seems to be deepening the understanding we already have. This effect, of course, is precisely what Heidegger wants to suggest, namely that his meanings were already 'in there' in established language, waiting to be unpacked by the right interpretation. – Finally, these examples also show how the peculiarities of Heidegger's language use can converge with the pursuit of expressiveness. For 'Dasein', say, becomes the optimal word for his purposes by exploiting in tandem many of the features catalogued by Macquarrie: a recognizably German term is given a neologistic twist; since the latter enriches, rather than abrogating the former, the term becomes equivocal (dialectic); its structural interpretation, drawing support from word-historical considerations,<sup>91</sup> aims to show that the sense of the expression is both grounded in, and expressive of, the constitution of human being as revealed by Heidegger's interpretation.

Finally, as such dialectic use of terms often involves a corrective in the pursuit of 'original' meanings (Macquarrie's (b)), it would seem important to clarify what these are. Despite its frequent invocation, the notion of 'originality' is characterized only once, and briefly, in SZ. The originality of an ontological investigation is there characterized as requiring: (i) the securing of 'a phenomenally suitable hermeneutic situation', which involves finding an appropriate provisional interpretation of a 'grounding experience'; (ii) that 'the *whole* of the thematic entity' is treated; (iii) that the '*unity* of [its] structural aspects' is found. (SZ, 231 f.) This brief characterization nonetheless permits some important clarifications.

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<sup>91</sup> Cf. footnote 48.

Significantly, there is no mention of time. It might seem most natural to suppose that Heidegger was interested in historical originality in the sense of temporal priority, or predating. Accordingly, one might agree, with Charles Guignon, that for Heidegger ‘the *true springs* of the meaning’ which Dasein discloses ‘are historical’, such that authentic being ‘brings about a new relationship to the past and history’, one in which Dasein ‘remembers its historical roots and can find the underlying meaning of what is passed down in the tradition’ by engaging with language at its most fundamental level.<sup>92</sup> But the first requirement on originality clearly echoes Heidegger’s earlier account of formal indication and its understanding of phenomenal grounding experience in terms of originality, i.e. sense-genetic originality, for which priority turns on better indicating phenomenal relationships. In this sense, it becomes clear why – having just interpreted ‘phenomenology’ in terms of its Greek roots – Heidegger could claim, without incongruity, that the ‘history of the word itself’ is of no importance. (SZ, 28) Given his conception of phenomenology and this distinction, it seems clear that the claim of sense-genetic originality is essential, that of historical originality incidental, to Heidegger’s ‘etymological’ claims. So although Guignon’s comments, which look forward from SZ to later writings, remains substantially correct, the accentuation seems wrong. For whatever the importance of temporal priority, there is no reason why this *per se* should be of relevance to phenomenological philosophy. Rather, considering the commitments of SZ at least, it would be less misleading to suggest that ‘the *true springs* of the meaning’ which Dasein is to disclose are phenomenal, rather than ‘historical’.<sup>93</sup> For this reason, establishing historical etymological ‘errors’ on Heidegger’s part would be largely irrelevant to the claims he makes about the content of original meanings. His interest is not in what the ‘groundless’ everyday Greek meant by his words, but with how true those words are to the understanding in which they are grounded. Only for this reason are ‘original’ meanings to form the object of direct examination by hermeneutic phenomenology, rather than by historically accurate philological methods.

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<sup>92</sup> Guignon 1983, 141, 139, 138 – Guignon sees Heidegger as having a three-level conception of language, with authentic Dasein engaging with the ‘deep grammar’ that ‘articulates the roots and origins of our heritage.’ (143)

<sup>93</sup> It is also not clear that Heidegger departs from this view. Still in 1955 his explanation as to why ‘the Greek language is no mere language like the European languages known to us’ is that ‘when we hear a Greek word’, we are brought ‘directly before the subject matter concerned [*vorliegende Sache*] itself, not a mere word meaning first.’ (Phil, 12)

The problematic nature of this notion of originality become clearer when one considers the implications of Heidegger's further two requirements. These have the form of interpretative maxims which, clearly, would be expedient in developing a complete understanding of some interpretandum and would reflect Heidegger's conception of apriority as 'structurally prior'. They also cohere with the idea of full concrete presentations of sense in grounding experiences, since, if these are to be determinate presentations, one would expect them to be structured wholes. These conditions mean, in effect, that 'originality' projects a horizon of interpretation which, just as a Kantian regulative ideal, has the role of guiding Heidegger's enquiry in making sense of phenomena. This would seem to underline the distinctness of the horizons of originality and historicity, so that when, for example, Heidegger proposes a correction to the Aristotelian 'vulgar concept of time' in favour of 'original time' his claim is not, as it may sound, that the latter is older, and so to be found with earlier thinkers, but that 'everyday experience of time' can only be made sense of in terms of what he calls original temporality.<sup>94</sup> But is this the claim? Or is it simultaneously a historical claim? Certainly, Heidegger seems to have been tempted by the idea that sense-genetic and historical horizons should coincide. At least in later writings he relied on this idea as the foundation of a historical quest for original meanings, supposedly justified by the idea that (say) a 'Greek word binds our conversation in a historical tradition. Because this tradition remains unique, it is also unambiguous.' (Phil, 8) Now, *if this were* so, then Heidegger's failing would merely be not to have made clear that, and how, he intended this ambiguity. Failing enough, many would say. Presumably this would be another dialectic use, with the sense-genetic sense of originality as original, the historical sense as (conceptually) derivative. But there are two obvious and deeper sources of concern about Heidegger's appeals to originality and the role they play in his enquiry. The first is the unclarified relationship between 'original' meanings and the history of language. What reason might there be for thinking that the horizons of sense-genetic interpretation and historicity coincide in any convenient way? The second is the attempt to suggest, or

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<sup>94</sup> As its 'condition of possibility and necessity'. (SZ, 332 f.) Aristotle's 'vulgar' concept of linear time is discussed at SZ, 421 ff. Elsewhere Heidegger argues that this concept of linear time cannot be understood coherently in terms of now-points, and that its basic constituents must have some kind of temporal extension, i.e. be 'ecstatically' self-transcending. (Cf. Gp, 330-361)

insinuate, that these 'original' meanings are already part of the language already spoken more generally. In what sense, however, could Heidegger's interpreted original meanings be already 'in the words' of general currency? These concerns, once again, will be returned to later.

### 3. A phenomenological approach to language?

Until now I have been resolutely sidelining the difficulties of Heidegger's position in order to build up a reasonably complete picture of his approach to language. What is the picture that emerges, and what is to be made of it? In broad brushstrokes, the picture is as follows: There are two senses in which SZ might be thought to be presenting a 'phenomenological' conception of language. First, according to its official rhetoric, the term 'phenomenology' signalled nothing other than a methodological commitment to remain true to phenomena. Heidegger's commitment to this emerged in his critique of constituting subjectivity, where the problem of access enforced coherence with empirically familiar phenomena and led to the 'formalization' of Husserl's views into hermeneutic ontology. But with this transformation Heidegger's position retained a phenomenological imprint in a second sense of inheriting from Husserl a framework of conceptual commitments. These included a conception of sign use which Heidegger adopted first as a specific conception of philosophical concepts, but which later shaped his general view of language in SZ. A characteristic feature of this conception of language, as of its Husserlian precursors, is the idea that signs, broadly speaking, can function in two modes: 'properly' and 'improperly'. The putatively proper function of language is that of allowing phenomenal features of the world to be seen, of being conducive to direct apprehension. According to this standard, however, routine language use does not succeed; hence, although it is instrumentally adequate in human life and preconditions more accomplished forms of understanding, Heidegger suggestively conveys his disdain for inadequacy of this 'improper' mode of language use. To function more properly, as Heidegger hopes his own terminology will, language is to aspire to the ideals of expressiveness and phenomenal receptivity underlying his notion of formal indication.

The aim of this chapter is to revisit and assess some of the more problematic features of Heidegger's approach to and conception of language. The overarching aim will be to assess the success of his views as a phenomenological conception of language, on the assumption that the principal commitment and principal strength of such a view is

the first of those mentioned above, that of remaining true to phenomena. In doing this, the following sections are organized in parallel to the preceding chapter and take up the problems they respectively left open. So in the first section, the focus will be on some general features both of Heidegger's analysis and its methodological premises. Following this, his treatment of routine language use is reviewed more closely, being compared and contrasted in particular with the later Wittgenstein's views on language. Finally, I return to some of the problems posed by Heidegger's attempts to move beyond routine use to more 'proper' use of language.

### **The general picture: embedment and distribution**

I want to begin by considering two of the problems that emerged in Heidegger's general analysis of the role of language in Dasein. First there was the opacity of the notion of articulacy, especially its distinction from, and alleged foundation of language. Then there remains the question as to whether Heidegger's suggested foundational hierarchy of articulacy-understanding-interpretation is coherent. The initial difficulty, resulting from Heidegger's analysis of the 'there', was that if articulacy is already inherent in understanding, it is not clear how subsequent interpretation can be said to introduce an as-structure, i.e. what it is to be ('as') such-and-such. This problem, as previously hinted, is complicated by the preconditional function Heidegger attributes to routine language use. In one sense, this is helpful to Heidegger's position, for it makes clear how articulacy, in its everyday mode, can be involved in setting up understanding. But, allowing this, it becomes even less clear what work the notion of understanding does in Heidegger's analysis, specifically how this differs from interpretation.

The difficulties with these distinctions are typical of those which arise in relation to Heidegger's existential analysis. Such an analysis, he claims, not only conceptually brings out the 'structure' of phenomena, but also claims 'transcendental "generality"' in uncovering a constantly 'underlying constitution of being'. (SZ, 312, 199) The initial difficulty is that Heidegger says very little about how he intends these claims to be construed. It seems reasonable to suppose, however, that his claims of the form

‘existential A is grounded in existential B’ encompass at least the three following component claims: (1) *distinctness* (A and B are distinguishable); (2) *apriority* (B is contained *a priori* in A); and (3) *foundation* (B is a necessary condition for A). More significant difficulties emerge with Heidegger’s reliance on his unorthodox view of apriority as meaning ‘structurally prior’, and his belief that such structures are amenable to hermeneutic interpretation. He suggests that the latter differs from “‘aprioristic’ construction’ in being bound by the right ‘phenomenal ground’.<sup>95</sup> But this seems clearly insufficient to sustain the claim that structural interpretations are informed by their objects in the way Heidegger often emphasizes they should be.<sup>96</sup> One might say rather that whereas Heidegger recognizes phenomenology as a *basic commitment*, as the need to focus on the right basis or ‘phenomenal ground’, he underestimates its full methodological implications. So when, for example, he embarks on what might be called *structural ascent*, to ‘a priori’ structures, he simply fails to recognize any need to explain how such structural postulates are anchored in manifestable differences, i.e. what kind of phenomenal criteria would allow us to see these structures as being at work. This is a serious and general deficiency of Heidegger’s ‘method’, since it means that, whether or not they are individually convincing, nothing distinguishes his various analytical proposals as ‘phenomenology’ rather than ‘construction’ or mere speculation.

One way of giving the distinctness condition some palpable sense of being ‘true to phenomena’ would be to interpret it as requiring that (1a) one should be able to state (even if they are not) what it *would be* for the existentials in question to be manifested separately. Heidegger would no doubt reject this as too strong a condition. For, if it is applied, the putatively foundational relationship between interpretation (=A) and understanding (=B) collapses. Heidegger, as noted above, not only does not claim that they are manifested separately; he offers no determinate sense in which understanding might be manifested without interpretation. If one ignores the fact that routine language use plays a role (acknowledged by Heidegger) in mediating interpreted understanding to Dasein, it might seem that his paradigm case of hammer use is pre-interpretive. Yet, although this perhaps appeal to our intuitions about prelinguistic competence, to

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<sup>95</sup> SZ, 50n. On Heidegger’s view of apriority cf. p. 19.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. above pp. 27, 49. – This is analogous to claiming that one could never get lost on a journey, so long one starts out on the right road.

apprehend an entity as ‘for hammering’ comprises what Heidegger refers to as ‘circumspensive interpretation’, i.e. is already interpretation. Further, since he holds that other forms of interpretation are founded in circumspensive interpretation, and since there is no sense in which understanding might be manifested without circumspensive interpretation, it is difficult to see how this can be thought of as part of an analysis that is receptive to phenomena. However, as similar reasoning would apply to the distinction between, say, circumspensive interpretation (=A) and articulacy (=B), it is not clear how Heidegger’s putative foundational hierarchy of articulacy-understanding-interpretation can be upheld. In fact, condition (1a) might well be strong enough to collapse many of Heidegger’s ‘analytical’ distinctions, so that, wrongly or rightly, he would no doubt reject it.

Nonetheless, this condition can help in considering the distinction between articulacy (=B) from language (=A). This distinction might be objected to, as by Christina Lafont, as ‘a doomed effort to conceive the phenomenon of “articulation” as categorially distinct from language as a system of signs’ and to treat Dasein as a transcendental medium.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless, it seems to me that ‘articulacy’, or something cognate, can be seen to play a foundational role with regard to language. For, if language is taken, in Heidegger’s sense, as that which has been spoken out or written in public sign use, then articulacy – the ‘articulation of intelligibility’ – will be manifested independently in phenomena at what might be called the *periphery* of language. Two kinds of peripheral case might include purposive behaviour by primates or other animals, in which an environment and entities are ‘circumspensively interpreted’ in a functional manner, or considerations about the conditions of possibility governing the (historical) genesis of sign use. In such peripheral circumstances it seems at least coherent, and perhaps plausible, to think of articulating capacities’ being manifested without language use.<sup>98</sup> But the clearest case would be the introduction of neologistic distinctions or uses to (extant) language, in which, by definition, meaningful relations – Heidegger’s

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<sup>97</sup> Lafont 2001, 67 (cf. 67-73). Note, however, that Lafont follows Macquarrie/Robinson’s translation of ‘Rede’ as ‘discourse’ (rather than ‘articulacy’).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Okrent’s (1988, 148 ff.) subtle discussion of the purposive behaviour of tigers while stalking antelopes. Okrent presents both this and – in Okrent (2002, 202) – an origins of language myth in support of the idea that purposive understanding (Heidegger’s circumspensive interpretation) is primary and can be prelinguistic.



‘significance’ – are divided up in some way not previously found in the realm of public interpretation. Of course, language is involved in conditioning such actions, but the point is that some articulating step(s) go beyond those previously available, and that in this sense (1a) is satisfied.

However, with such a distinction in place, some case can be made for Heidegger’s further claims about articulacy. For any account of the (ongoing) development of language would presuppose something such as Heidegger’s articulacy, in which sense this forms a condition of possibility for the phenomenon of language. The corresponding foundational relationship is, however, one of *piecemeal* foundation, the correct picture of which would be that of gradual accretion, sedimentation, the reiteration and reapplication of structuring capacities, of which public language is the continually evolving result. To be sure, this does not make the notion of articulacy, as Heidegger discusses it, an informative one. One might, for example, miss detail about the psychological capacities that underpin the articulation of intentional relations. But it does permit the claim that in analyzing the structure of intentionality something such as articulacy must feature as a merely structural, but foundationally necessary feature.

Looking at the context of Lafont’s objection to the distinction between articulacy and language will bring out more substantive issues. In her *Heidegger, Language, and World-Disclosure* Lafont ambitiously parallels Heidegger’s developmental trajectory to that of the analytic tradition’s ‘linguistic turn’, two movements, she suggests, characterized by arrival at the ‘insight that language plays a “constitutive” role for our relationship to the world’. Accordingly, her exposition and critique of Heidegger turn on the idea that language itself, qua system of signs, is world-disclosing, such that Dasein comes to share in ‘a language that accomplishes world-disclosure’. (Lafont 2001, 25) On this reading, Heidegger had incipiently recognized the constitutive role of sign use in disclosing the world; yet a lack of full appreciation of, and even resistance to, the consequences of this insight led, Lafont claims, to two major failings in SZ. First, Heidegger did not identify ‘the true source of Dasein’s distinctive status’, namely ‘the sign-structure’ which ‘is and remains the essential core of being-in-the-world’. (Lafont 2001, 22) This was linked, secondly, with a failure to recognize that the work’s ‘transcendental strategy’ is

‘constantly undermined’ by the ‘specific character of the sign-structure’. (Lafont 2001, 23) The disclosure of language, Lafont reasons, cannot be founded in Dasein, because the disclosure of Dasein is itself founded in language. The result is a ‘crucial challenge to transcendental philosophy’ insofar as Heidegger’s conception of ‘*factual Dasein* [...] undermines the assertion of a *founding relationship* between ontological structures and their ontic embodiments.’ (Lafont 2001, xiv, 18) – Such as a founding relationship between articulacy and language.

One exegetic point should be highlighted.<sup>99</sup> Although he speaks of understanding being ‘harboured’ or ‘deposited’ in language (SZ, 167 f.), Heidegger does not speak in SZ of language ‘disclosing’. Presumably this is because, for him, to disclose just is to be as Dasein is, so that he would wish to avoid suggesting that language shares all Dasein’s features – such as being characterized by care, understanding the world, projecting its own future, mattering to itself etc. Of course, one can speak of language as disclosing the world (much as a clock tells the time), and it may also be that Lafont intends her use of the term to differ from Heidegger’s. Nonetheless, one should bear in mind that a central feature of Heidegger’s own account is that language plays a role within disclosure, i.e. within a more comprehensive phenomenon. However, while allowing for this potential difference, I want to suggest that the ‘constitutive’ view emphasized by Lafont is not only exegetically inappropriate to SZ, but also relies on assumptions about the nature of language which it compellingly criticizes.

The first point of difference is that Heidegger resists the semiotic conception of language which Lafont centres on. Although his definition of language as the ‘spokenness of articulacy’ is about public sign use, Heidegger does not think it philosophically illuminating to think of language, as Lafont does, in sign-system terms. His attitude is rather to insist on the irreducible *phenomenal embedment* of language. The relations between different kinds of signs, he acknowledges, can be ‘easily formalized’, as can the instrumental relations comprising the world, but such formalizations ‘basically say nothing’ because they ‘level off the phenomena to such an extent that the proper phenomenal content gets lost’. (SZ, 78, 88) Clearly, he does not think such ‘formalizations’

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<sup>99</sup> Lafont’s detailed reading of Heidegger’s views on language raises many exegetic points, but I will not be attempting to address these here.

impossible, but does (repeatedly) deny that they provide philosophically revealing insight about the phenomenal basis from which they abstract. For this reason, Heidegger rejects reductive attempts to conceive of language in terms, say, of ‘symbolic forms’ or ‘categories of meaning’, and even dramatically suggests that analysis of language in terms of ‘present-at-hand word things’ ‘shatters’ language. (SZ, 163, 161) In any event, he is emphatic that language is not to be grasped reductively and systematically in terms of one of its aspects, such as the semiotic one.<sup>100</sup>

The significance of this view can be seen with regard to the idea of linguistic idealism. According to Lafont’s extensive reconstruction of Heidegger’s development, the inchoate constitutive view of language found in SZ was to mature fully in Heidegger’s later writings. When it did, she claims, the result was a form of ‘linguistic idealism’ due to an ‘absolutization of the world-disclosing function of language and a corresponding misinterpretation of its designative function.’<sup>101</sup> Presumably, according to the ‘constitutive’ view of language that Lafont is relying on, it at least makes sense to think of the disclosive and designative functions of language as potentially coming apart, even if it would be wrong to suggest they do. However, it is not difficult to appreciate that this sort of possibility parallels precisely the difficulties that had led Heidegger to a critique of constituting subjectivity and ultimately to its replacement with a form of agency as ‘being-in-the-world’.<sup>102</sup> The effect of Heidegger’s insistence on the phenomenal embedding of language, just as with the subject-object split, is to challenge the coherence of suggesting potential separation. His challenge, say to Lafont, would be to explain in phenomenal terms what mode of being language, a sign system, is supposed to have that might permit the *possibility* of its being pared apart from lifeworld manifestations. In other words, if one respects the phenomenal embedment of sign use, the charge of incoherence is redirected: Just what is ‘linguistic idealism’ supposed to be? What could it be for the disclosive function of language to lose its grip on designation? Just how does language come unhooked from the world? The answer, of course, is that it doesn’t. The

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<sup>100</sup> SZ, 166, 163. – This is not a position which the later Heidegger deserts. In the *Letter on Humanism* he still emphasizes that language cannot be understood in terms of its ‘sign character’ and ‘perhaps not even’ in terms of its meaning-related or ‘significative character’. (*Bedeutungscharakter*; BH, 326)

<sup>101</sup> Lafont 2001, xvii. Her ‘general hypothesis’ is that ‘Heidegger’s linguistic idealism is problematic not so much by dint of being linguistic [...], but by dint of the strong a priori status that linguistic world-disclosure is supposed to have over and above any possible experience’. (Lafont 2002, 186)

<sup>102</sup> Cf. above p. 13 ff.

problem is rather that Lafont's version of the 'constitutive view' seems to admit the coherence of this possibility. Heidegger's embedded conception, however, does not.

These differences can be construed at a more basic level by considering Lafont's reading of Heidegger's historical situation. She credits him with having made the epochal transition from a philosophy based on the paradigm of consciousness to one focusing on language itself. On this narrative, the constitutive view overcame the view of language as an instrument, a correlate of 'philosophy of consciousness' that takes language be a tool for representing 'pre-linguistic' content. (Lafont 2001, 2) Such a reconstruction appears to suggest a basic disjunction between two 'essential cores' of intentionality, as though this were constituted *either* in the mind, *or* in language. However, this misses the real significance of Heidegger's formalization of Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness into hermeneutic ontology. For common to both alternatives is the attempt to impose an inside-outside topology on intentional relations, i.e. to conceive of something – mind or language – as a *medium of intentionality*, as that 'within which' meaningful relations are constituted. But it would be a Pyrrhic victory for Heidegger's critique of transcendental subjectivity, if mind-world dualism were simply replaced by language-world dualism. Heidegger's 'Dasein' is not just a label change, but a quite different concept from that of constituting subjectivity, the underlying significance of which (I suggest) is to provide a *distributed view of intentionality*. Although actualized understanding is borne by individual agents – referred to as 'Dasein' – there is never any suggestion that all of intentionality is 'in', or the correlate of, one such agent. Rather, as Heidegger and Lafont both recognize, language mediates humanly relevant understanding through time and between agents.

So although Heidegger's supposed methodological commitment to phenomenology is problematic, conceiving of language as phenomenally embedded and as part of the distributed phenomenon of disclosure do look like the right kind of conceptual framework needed in remaining true to actual linguistic phenomena. It can also be seen how Heidegger's claim that language's mode of being is so badly understood might be motivated by a commitment to preserve phenomenal integrity. The crux would be that a theory of language which reduces its phenomenal basis, taking a single aspect – such as

sign use – as its ‘essential core’, simply fails to provide a philosophically illuminating account of how language is, what processes and phenomenal relations it is involved in. – Incidentally, against this background one can better understand why the distinction between articulacy and language looks like a hankering for ‘transcendental philosophy’. If this means commitment to the postulation of some medium, some entity, that does the making possible of other phenomena, then Heidegger’s talk of ‘articulacy’ as an *existentiale* will look like a relapse into habits borne of philosophy of consciousness. But, if transcendental claims can be thought of as conditions of possibility, necessary foundational conditions, without being bound to the postulation of such a medium, then such talk of ‘articulacy’ does not automatically fall back on the paradigm of constituting subjectivity. Irrespective of its success, the corresponding *task* for Heidegger’s analysis of Dasein is to understand, among other things, the two-way processes in which language and human understanding make each other possible. Overcoming the notion of transcendental subjectivity does not therefore mean dropping transcendental claims tout court, but merely involves them in a more complex foundational dynamics.

### **Normal language use**

Heidegger’s view of routine language use, as previously seen, is ambivalent. On the one hand, he is cognizant of its presuppositional function for disclosure and its instrumental adequacy in everyday human life. On the other hand, these positive features are almost grudgingly conceded by Heidegger, who leaves his reader in little doubt as to his disdain for the everyday state of understanding. In this section the aim is to consider more closely Heidegger’s handling of day-to-day language use. I begin by considering what might seem an appealing line of criticism, namely that Heidegger’s ‘instrumentalist’ conception of routine language use somehow conflicts with the ‘constitutive’ function of language. In clarifying how this concern is misdirected, the proximity between the positions of Heidegger and the late Wittgenstein emerges, which, given their divergence over the importance of instrumental use in relation to philosophical use of language, will then provide the basis for a critical comparison of their views.

The description of Heidegger's conception of routine language use as an 'instrumentalist' conception might appear problematic in ways hinted at by Lafont's focus on the constitutive importance of signs. The concern, roughly, is that an instrumentalist view might fall foul of the basic claim, one attractive to post-linguistic-turn philosophers, that language is more intimately bound up with meaning constitution, or somehow closer to mind, than mere instruments could be. Given his thesis of the primacy of purposive understanding, the immediate response would be to view Heidegger as claiming that *because* the entities nearest to our mind are instruments, this makes them constitutive of all meaning and mental states. To give this initial response some credence, it will be instructive to consider Guignon's view that in SZ Heidegger was 'torn between two incompatible views of the nature of language', which he terms the 'instrumentalist' and 'constitutive' views of language. On the instrumentalist view, he explains, 'language is regarded as a sort of tool – one type of equipment which contributes toward making up the intelligible world', with 'our ability to use language' being 'grounded in some prior grasp of the *nonsemantic significance* of the contexts in which we find ourselves.' (Guignon 1983, 117) Conversely, the constitutive view – which 'can be found in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*' (PI) – focuses on 'linguistic structuring of the world', the fact that 'language generates and first makes possible our full-blown sense of the world'; it further 'maintains that the mastery of the field of significance of a *world* [...] presupposes some prior mastery of the articulate structure of a language.' Guignon clearly believes that Heidegger's stronger commitment was to the 'constitutive view', but what he thinks generates tension is Heidegger's talk of words 'accruing to' significations, which Guignon claims is 'clearly the intimation that there could be a fully articulated sense of the world derived from our ordinary participation in contexts of significance prior to or independent of the mastery of language.' (Guignon 1983, 118-9)

These concerns can be addressed in three steps. First: What looks problematic about Heidegger's position is that it seems to admit the possibility that the entire realm of significance be constituted prelinguistically. Insofar as language is required for a 'full-blown sense of the world', such a commitment would clearly indict Heidegger's conception of language. Exegetically viewed, however, there is no clear textual evidence

either for attributing a claim this strong to Heidegger, or for ruling it out.<sup>103</sup> So there is at least some scope for a charitable – or rather: cautious – reading that better concords with the positive function Heidegger affords routine language use. Second: The form of a more cautious reading, drawing on the idea of piecemeal foundation of language in articulacy, has already been sketched. If Heidegger’s notion of articulacy is understood in this way, then the difficulty problem Guignon suggests clearly does not arise. Third: A challenge emerges to Guignon’s opaque and unnecessarily strong linking of the ‘constitutive’ view with ‘prior mastery’ of language. This relies – as Lafont’s concerns did – on the idea of language as a medium of intentionality, as though it made sense to think of language in abstraction from its phenomenal embedment. Yet, in what sense is ‘mastery’ of language supposed to be *prior to* understanding of the world? Surely the only plausible claim is that language is apprehended (one might say ‘equiprimordially’) *in* understanding the world.

It is also extremely doubtful that any purchase on a stronger claim to the ‘constitutive’ function of language can be attributed to Wittgenstein, Guignon’s paradigm author. What might seem to suggest some stronger sense is Wittgenstein’s dictum that ‘language itself is the vehicle of thought.’ (PI, §329) Yet, although it is true that, for Wittgenstein, a third-personal focus on language, or its ‘grammar’, was to supersede first-personal speculation about the psychological medium of mind, it is also true that he held – no less than the early Heidegger – that language is to be conceived of as phenomenally embedded, as the ‘spatial and temporal phenomenon of language’ not a ‘non-spatial and non-temporal non-thing.’ (PI, §108) A language, Wittgenstein held, is a correlative aspect of a ‘form of life’ comprised by a particular constellation of ‘language games’, i.e. activities with a sign-using aspect. (PI, §§241, 23) The point on which to focus is therefore that human *practices* are (in part) constituted by the use of language, for which reason Guignon is surely right to insist that we could not have a ‘fully blown’ sense of the world without language. However, this is because, if language use is involved in the very structure of the activities that make up human life, successful execution of these practices is clearly *inseparable* from understanding the language deployed in them. So this (surely correctly) in no way licences a claim that any ‘*prior* mastery’ of language is

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<sup>103</sup> Note that Guignon speaks only of ‘intimation’.

brought to these practices. Nor does it in any way exclude language's being grasped purposively, instrumentally, in realizing such practices. Indeed, the pragmatic texture of the language-game conception of language is underlined by Wittgenstein's own forthright declaration that 'language is an instrument. Its concepts are instruments.'<sup>104</sup> Against this background, it is far from clear why the instrumental and constitutive views should be thought mutually exclusive. Unless some further case is made for this (implausible) claim, it would be both more reasonable and exegetically more elegant, with both Wittgenstein and Heidegger, to suppose that these views are complementary.

A dialogue with Wittgenstein's later views can serve further in clarifying the strengths and weaknesses of Heidegger's conception of language in SZ. The basis for a purposeful comparison is provided by the close kinship of their positions. First, as already noted, both agree in having a philosophical conception of language bound by its phenomenal character, rather than appealing to an abstractive or reconstructive standpoint. They also converge in the claim that the basic character of language is instrumental, and make this the basis of a distinction between day-to-day language use and, as it may be put, philosophical language use. They differ, however, in the way this distinction is drawn and in their contrasting evaluations of everyday use. Whereas Heidegger demarcates routine use – or 'idle talk' – as a *mode* of language use, Wittgenstein's everyday use seems intended to pick out a stock of standard conceptual resources deployed in mundane practices. And whereas Heidegger yearns to 'break the spell of everyday talk and its concepts' (GM, 414), in Wittgenstein's later philosophy 'ordinary language' is not merely 'all right' (Wittgenstein 1958, 28), but the panacea for resolving or eliminating philosophical problems. Despite these differences, Heidegger's 'routine use' and Wittgenstein's 'everyday language' both focus on the pragmatic or instrumental functioning of language, so the dialogue between their positions can be developed by asking what reasons there are for their differing assessments of the pragmatic aspects of language. Two questions will provide some orientation: What might be wrong with day-to-day language use? What might be wrong with going beyond this?

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<sup>104</sup> PU, §569. – Cf. also his likening of words to tools. (PI, §§11, 17, 23)



The first question – what might be wrong with day-to-day language use? – must be addressed to Heidegger’s disdainful account of everyday ‘inauthentic’ Dasein. This might not initially look like a view about language. Nonetheless, it becomes one, since Dasein’s everyday state is induced by, and standardly manifested in, routine language use, so that the characterization of everyday disclosure in SZ correlatively becomes a view about speakers’ awareness of language. This emerges, to recall, in its view of everyday disclosure as bordering on ‘merely verbal knowledge’ (SZ, 5), as ‘empty intending’: knowing what to say in given circumstances, but lacking actual(ized) awareness of ‘what is talked about’. Overcoming the deficiencies of routine use means, on this view, to grasp linguistic forms as adumbrating the full phenomenal (intentional) context to which they are appropriate, to see the world as articulated in the optic of language.<sup>105</sup> This ideal of transparency, to be pursued by processes of interpretation, informs what might be called Heidegger’s thesis of *strong disqualification*: Measured against the ideal of ‘proper’, full awareness of one’s intentional situation, everyday demands of pragmatic adequacy are supposed to strike us as superficial, and thus ‘improper’. – There are obvious signs of tension in this view, which, although not as such inconsistent, does issue mixed signals. For circumspective interpretation of the world, which Heidegger presents as ontologically primary, is now disqualified as ‘improper’ against the standard of an understanding for which it is a condition of possibility. Further, despite his verbal allegiance to the phenomenological maxim, there is no evidence that Heidegger elicits this (Husserlian) conception by paying attention to the actual character of everyday language.

But these signs point to more substantial concerns about the consistency of Heidegger’s disqualification: Is the difference between proper and everyday disclosing correctly understood in terms of a difference between merely verbal and actual understanding? And can everyday understanding be said to lack awareness of ‘what is talked about’? Consider Heidegger’s view of signs as instruments that ‘show primarily that “in which” one lives’ (SZ, 80), namely ready-to-handness, along with his claim that such instrumental relationships are understood and responded to by circumspection. Note, first, that this means that circumspective understanding (of course) entails some awareness of ‘what(ever) is talked about’. Further, Heidegger himself details how the

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<sup>105</sup> When word meaning functions properly an object is seen ‘properly in its articulatedness.’ (GAP, 37 f.)

appropriate grasp of a car's indicator signals is not contemplatively 'staring' at this 'showing thing', but keeping out of the car's way, being aware of the danger etc. (SZ, 79) But to function in this way, circumspection must be operating 'in real time' and so cannot be straightforwardly disqualified as lacking actualization. Finally, given his instrumentalist conception of signs, Heidegger's attempt to present everyday language use as consisting merely in knowing 'what to say' is at best elliptic. For knowing what to say means knowing what it is expedient to say. This in turn entails that the grasp we have of words encompasses understanding of what they can be used for, and – again – awareness of those features of a situation ('what is talked about') that make their use expedient. – So the answer to the two above questions must surely be 'no'. Even accepting Heidegger's general picture of everyday language use, his characterization of its inadequacies seems inconsistent. Circumspective everyday understanding involves actualized awareness of what(ever) is talked about and is not accurately characterized as merely verbal, or empty intending.

A further reason for dissatisfaction with Heidegger's disdain towards routine language use is its reliance on the application of double standards. For the disqualification of routine use as 'empty', relies on his two-tier conception of signs' instrumentality: rather than admit the propriety straightforwardly suggested by an instrumental view of language, a heterogeneous general standard is invoked to suggest its inadequacy. But shouldn't the proper, 'fulfilled' use of sign-instruments turn on precisely those factors that make them pragmatically adequate? Surely it should. The problem with Heidegger's position as a view of language is not that it is wrong, since this propriety can be accommodated by the basic instrumental character he attributes to signs. What is unsatisfactory is that it finds routine language use lacking by misapplying, to practical matters, a reflective or contemplative ideal of showing how the world is, one shaped by Heidegger's earlier view of philosophical concepts as formal indications. Now whereas the latter is importantly modified by SZ's instrumental view of routine use, this feature is more or less place holding: Heidegger concedes the preconditional function of day-to-day language use, but doesn't seem to think it important to fill out details. The result is a distorted picture of linguistic phenomena. Guided by an ideal 'philosophical' picture of the functioning of concepts, Heidegger is led not only to an inconsistent and misleadingly

pejorative treatment of routine use, but also to ignore what, by his own account, would comprise most use of language. For these reasons, to lay any claim to be getting the phenomenology of language right, and indeed to comprehend the presuppositional role of instrumental language adequately, Heidegger's view would have to integrate, and be corrected in the light of, some account such as Wittgenstein's that centres on the pragmatic importance of language. Would this, however, mean accepting the extremely passive attitude Wittgenstein adopts towards the presuppositions of everyday language? Are these, as Wittgenstein claims, "“Ur-phenomena”" in which philosophical understanding is grounded and of which we can observe only that '*this language-game is played*'? (PI, §654)

What, in other words, might be wrong with departing from day-to-day language use? According to Wittgenstein, we run the risk of misunderstanding. Philosophical problems, he assures us, occur when language stops being instrumental, runs idle, when we depart from those 'normal cases' of everyday contexts of action in which 'the use of words is clearly prefigured'. (PI, §§132, 142) Such problems are misunderstandings, or confusions, which result from the inability to 'survey' the 'use of our words', not knowing one's 'way around' the rules for using language. (PI, §122-3) Wittgenstein is particularly insistent that such confusions are due to a tendency to be misled by our forms of expression or representation. Typically, we misunderstand our 'linguistic forms' by reifying the objects they portray to us, these forms, as Wittgenstein puts it, send us on a 'chimera hunt'.<sup>106</sup> Wittgenstein characterizes his own philosophical investigations in terms of two countermeasures. First, the antidote to such misunderstandings is to stick with 'everyday thinking', to recover words from metaphysical to ordinary usage. (PI, §§106, 116) Second, he sees therapeutic investigations such as his own as allowing our 'usual linguistic forms' to be 'easily surveyed'. Acquiring an 'overview' [*übersichtliche Darstellung*] is to be of 'fundamental importance' in allowing relationships to be seen and thus 'mediating understanding'. (PI, §132, 122)

Wittgenstein's comments are, of course, views specifically about the use philosophers make of language, the kind of use Heidegger aspires to. However, his

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<sup>106</sup> PI, §94, cf. §§93, 100,104, 109, 111 etc.

objections to such use reveal an underlying conception of language, of what makes it reliable, and where it fails to be so. Heidegger's position, however, can challenge this underlying conception on two scores. First, if one accepts Wittgenstein's apparent premise that linguistic forms of expression are inherently to be distrusted, how does adherence to everyday language help? This is far from obvious, since Wittgenstein seems to think neither that the forms of everyday language are intrinsically surveyable, nor that the grasp we ordinarily have of these suffices to keep (philosophical) confusion at bay. This, presumably, is why he (just as Heidegger) emphasizes the need to understand what already lies open before our eyes. (PI, §89) But if the mediation of philosophical investigations is required to yield an overview of 'everyday' language, surely this should work for language generally. The view relied on by Wittgenstein is that established 'normal' use of terms provides maximal disambiguation of linguistic forms. (PI, §142; cf. §85) But it would be quite arbitrary to assume that this is the only, or even the best, means of such disambiguation. Surely any suitably developed framework of interpretation does just as well, and relies on the same kind of ('rule-following') subjective capacities? Wittgenstein's preference for everyday language seems to be a product of his attraction to the picture of philosophers running up against the 'limits of language'. (PI, §119) In cases of doubt, beyond the securities of everyday use, his challenge is to come up with 'particular circumstances' in which one would use a given sentence.<sup>107</sup> But this challenge is either artificially constrictive, if interpreted to mean mundane practical dealings; or empty, since the particular circumstances involved might be a philosophical, or otherwise esoteric, discussion. – Such problems bring out the advantages of Heidegger's conception. For he can concur with Wittgenstein that needs-driven instrumental deployment of linguistic means is the default mode of language use, and that this provides the basis of 'normal' uses of signs. But he need not agree that instrumental use provides any basis for delineating 'limits' of meaningful language.<sup>108</sup> This means he can, and of course does, positively embrace the idea that linguistic signs

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<sup>107</sup> PI, §§117, 514. This demand occurs frequently in *On Certainty* (e.g. §§10, 348, 351, 413, 622).

<sup>108</sup> Indeed, Heidegger once warned against such false prisons: 'talk of inexpressibility can easily create the impression that one has really seen into inexpressible dimensions. [...] Where one positively succeeds in uncovering new phenomenal connections [...] this misguided theory of expression is superfluous.' (AKJ, 19)

have a more general function in showing us how the world, including practices involving everyday-instrumental language use, is structured.

The second challenge Heidegger can pose results from the further question: why should Wittgenstein so inveterately distrust linguistic forms of expression? Perhaps this is due to biographical factors, such as contemporary linguistic scepticism, or forms part of the confessional mission of the PI in overcoming his earlier picture theory of meaning.<sup>109</sup> But, whatever the cause, it seems fallacious to suppose that linguistic forms could have only a pernicious effect on philosophical activity. For the fact that forms of expression *can* be misleading away from ‘normal’ use does not mean that they are generally so. In fact, Wittgenstein does, very peripherally, consider what it is that makes the choice of an expression suitable. The choice between terms, he says, is like choosing ‘between similar, but not identical pictures’, as if ‘according to fine differences in their smell’; words can have a ‘familiar face’, leading to the ‘feeling that it has absorbed its meaning’. (PI, 46n, 186) He even adds that much could be said about such ‘fine aesthetic difference[s]’, that all the word’s ramifications might be explained, and that ‘it is not over with the initial judgement, for it is the *field* of a word which is decisive.’ (PI, 186) But, given such comments, there seems no reason not to engage the forms of expression inherent in natural language in a positive manner, as Heidegger’s expressive use does. For, if we are sensitive to differences in the physiognomy of words, surely this means being sensitive of fine syntactic differences between words and in their morphology. Furthermore, if these fine differences are marking distinctions that might be spelt out by fuller interpretation of the word’s ‘field’ (as Wittgenstein seems to acknowledge), then surely these syntactic differences, appropriately interpreted, can assume a positive role in mediating understanding, including philosophical understanding. In view of this, Wittgenstein seems to oversee a means which would be expedient to his aims. For, insofar as a philosopher’s aim is to keep an overview of the ways we use language, the inherent formal richness of the latter can be an important means both of disambiguating and

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<sup>109</sup> According to the picture theory of meaning in the *Tractatus*, logical form provided a self-interpreting basis for the showing of sentences. But the later Wittgenstein seems to have discovered, and been particularly troubled by, the inherent ambiguity of pictures and hence of linguistic imagery. (Cf. PI, 9n, 46n(b), in contrast to Wittgenstein’s Notebook entry of 29/9/14.) Self-critical treatment of this theme (at §§140-1) also launches the rule-following considerations. – On the likely relevance of linguistic scepticism in *fin de siècle* Vienna for the *Tractatus*, cf. Janik/Toulmin 1996, 121 ff., 165 f., 182ff.

rendering transparent patterns of use.<sup>110</sup> This does not mean adopting an ‘uncritical’ attitude towards language – of course, words *can* lead us astray – but it is to keep an open mind as to whether, in given situations, the pictures bound up in language are doing positive rather than negative work.<sup>111</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is, I suggest, that Heidegger’s and Wittgenstein’s conceptions of language might both benefit from the complementarity of their views hinted at to begin with. On the one hand, Heidegger attaches too little importance to instrumental use of language, and needs a Wittgensteinian corrective; on the other hand Wittgenstein attaches too much importance to the practical binds of such use, and lacks a positive account of the features of language exploited by Heidegger. For it is by no means implausible to suggest that day-to-day language use fails by some standard, without compromising its instrumentally adequacy, and an interesting feature of Heidegger’s two-tier conception of signs’ instrumentality is that it has the potential for a more equitable handling of the difference between routine and more expressive language use. To realize this potential, the insights underlying Heidegger’s untenable strong disqualification would at least have to be reformulated in a weaker thesis. Allowing that routine language use requires actualized understanding and sufficient knowledge of the applicability of words generally to say things appropriate, speakers can nonetheless have a more or less elaborate understanding of ‘what is talked about’. So a *weak disqualification* would simply be that instrumentally adequate language use is undemanding in that it generally requires no more than a superficial understanding of what is talked about. The next step, addressed below, would be to clarify the basis on which instrumentally adequate language use is held to fail, how expressive use, say, is set apart from, or goes beyond merely routine use.

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<sup>110</sup> In terms perhaps congenial to Wittgenstein: what could better signal such relations than those forms already open to view in the language we use?

<sup>111</sup> Although it would be dogmatic to think that the articulations of linguistic expressions must always reflect phenomenal relationships (cf. PI, §131), it would be no less dogmatic to think that they never do so. Either generalization would simply short-circuit serious consideration.

## **Beyond normal use**

In overcoming the supposed failings of routine language use Heidegger had advocated both the expressive use of language and the pursuit of original meanings, two commitments which led him to rely heavily on common etymological and morphological features of words and which invite the charge of ‘word play’. In the following I begin with some general considerations, before going on to outline why expressiveness does, whereas originality does not, seem to bring out the kind of phenomenal features that ought in turn to form the object of a phenomenally appropriate understanding of language.

The general concerns that result from these commitments are nicely focused by two questions posed, but left open, by Macquarrie. First, are his arguments ‘not made to rest on the peculiarity of Heidegger’s German? [...] Does he lend plausibility to his position [...] by an arbitrary choice of terminology?’ Or again: ‘What are we to say of a philosophy which is so closely bound up with a particular language – and indeed with a highly individual exploitation of that language – that it scarcely allows itself to be expressed in any other?’ (Macquarrie 1992, 55, 56) Although they will be explored in the sequel, two points are worth noting immediately. First, there is some tension in these questions, since, if Heidegger’s expressions so resist reformulation and *do* in fact lend his position plausibility, then this would seem to suggest that his choice of terminology is not ‘an arbitrary choice’. Further, it is important to be clear that the fact that ‘Heidegger’s German’ is highly particular does not make it ‘individual’ in a personal sense. Rather, as the possibilities he deploys and develops lie in the language and are potentially available to anyone, the plausibility, if any, his views acquire by being expressed as they are must be seen as an objective function of a historically conditioned linguistic situation.

Nevertheless, what are we to say ...? The suspicion that Heidegger’s position seeks to gain plausibility though its mode of expression is motivated by what I previously described as the attempt to dialectically integrate his (locally attuned) terminology into established use, i.e. the attempt to suggest that these meanings are already bound up in those of established usage. Nonetheless, a key temptation to be resisted is that of saying

too much. We might begin by saying merely that it is well expressed, that Heidegger (say) succeeds in finding optimal terminology for the views he advocates. Insofar as these views are correct, or we hold them to correct, we might drop the qualification ‘of his views’ and agree that this terminology provides a particularly apt way of talking about the phenomena in question, one which makes (correct) insights readily available, palpable, or immediately visible. This, *of course*, has no bearing on our freedom to challenge Heidegger’s views. We might equally well concede that his position is well stated, optimally expressed even, yet qualify ‘but wrong’. In this case, we might agree that Heidegger has given his words a highly particular meaning, but think that to speak in his way is misleading. In other words, there is no reason to suppose that appropriacy of expression lends Heidegger’s (or any other) position more, or indeed less, plausibility than it intrinsically has.

Macquarrie’s problem – what we are to say of a philosophical position that is so intimately linked with the particular terminology used to express it – then assumes a new dimension. For if one agrees that optimal expression does not bear on the acceptability of a position, it might seem natural to conclude that expressiveness is just not a philosophically interesting virtue and merely a matter of style. Heidegger, however, is clearly committed to some stronger claim on its behalf. To begin with, according to his general conception of language and the function of signs, their key purpose is to allow the world to be seen. But this view of language is attuned to the conception of knowledge that Heidegger adopts from Husserl: given the distinction between improper and proper intending, it is only consistent to conceive of language as ideally being conducive to ‘fulfilment’, or direct verification in the general sense of phenomenological vision. It is then also consistent to attribute the ideal of expressiveness an important role in good philosophical practice. However, Macquarrie’s question emerges from the way this desideratum interacts with Heidegger’s further commitments to the situatedness of disclosive agents. The hermeneutic situation into which Dasein, as Heidegger puts it, is ‘thrown’ is one conditioned by a natural language. Correspondingly, expressive representation depends on the syntactic materials available in that language – its lexical stock and grammatical norms – to secure or induce awareness of phenomena. The underlying problem is therefore not that Heidegger’s position (let us suppose) is well



expressed, but that its view of expressiveness as a philosophical desideratum implicitly commits him to the importance of particular languages.<sup>112</sup> In this light, Macquarrie's question may be construed as voicing the general concern: what are we to make of a philosophical position that asserts or entails the importance of particular languages?

One might say that it sounds obvious and correct. But philosophers are often troubled by the threat of linguistic relativism, the worry that some truths are better expressible in one language than others, or even that some truths can only be expressed in certain language(s). Is Heidegger committed to such a view? I suggest, yes and no. Both in his theory and practice he is committed to the idea that the choice of appropriate expression – even within 'particular' languages – is important in (re)presenting the world. This might found a weak thesis of *relative inexpressibility*, in the sense that, say, German is amenable to presenting concisely some relationships that require lengthy or periphrastic explanation in English (and, of course, vice versa). Reinvoking Smith's talk of the 'constituent jokes' in Heidegger's 'word play', a suitable analogy would be that the jokes can still be somehow conveyed, but by the time they have been explained they are no longer funny. So too with Heidegger's use of morphological anchoring: in translation its point becomes relatively difficult to convey; it can be explained, but not seen directly. In this sense, there might be genuine loss, but there seems no reason to suppose Heidegger was committed to a strong thesis of *absolute inexpressibility*, so that some language(s) might in principle fail to express such-and-such.<sup>113</sup> The question is just one of efficiency, whether the route to insight is direct or circuitous.

Assuming that *these* differences are philosophically benign, it is difficult to see what greater problem particular languages are supposed to pose. The two extremes to which one might incline are perhaps to assume either that intelligible relationships are delimited by syntactic patterns, or that syntactic differences between languages are but superficial manifestations of a subcutaneous basis of commensuration. So, for example, one might assume either that 'conceptual schemes' mediate the limits of sense, or that

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<sup>112</sup> For the 'sign to fulfil its function as purely as possible, i.e. to acquire the character of the ready-to-hand and the aspect of conspicuousness, the sign is always produced from what it already available. This "materialization" of the sign' has to 'guarantee constant general accessibility.' (PGZ, 285)

<sup>113</sup> The difference would be that to express some things concisely the invention of new expressions would be required, which is also the rationale for Heidegger's taking an unusually large number of liberties with – or 'doing violence' to – established German. (SZ, 311, cf. 38 f.; cf footnote 108.)

some ideal description of the way the world is (its ‘logical syntax’, say) is latent in the various manifestations of natural languages. From Heidegger’s perspective, which emphasizes the phenomenal embedding of language over reductive reifications, these challenges are not credible by default. The burden of explication lies rather with those who would take linguistic relativism to be philosophically problematic: for on what assumptions do such concerns turn? In order to deflect the charge that these are artificial worries built on fictive suppositions, it must be shown how such assumptions are rooted in phenomenal facts. Until this challenge is met, there is no reason to suppose that the world is, or fails to be, monolingual in any philosophically interesting sense.

Heidegger’s emphasis on expressiveness is closely linked with a further view that would disenamour him to most contemporary philosophers of language: the importance of words. As I have attempted to clarify, this is no accidental feature of his position and corresponds to the expediencies of expressive use. In fact it is no distortion to say that on Heidegger’s view the highly deliberate use of word forms which this requires is part of the *proper* use of language. But is commitment to such fine-grained formalism tantamount to (philosophically reprehensible) ‘word play’? Or might this somehow be said to comprise ‘proper’ language use?

On both counts there is something to be said in Heidegger’s favour. To begin with, it should be reasonably clear that one *can* rely on the structure of words, or word groups, to signal phenomenal relationships in the way Heidegger does. It should also be clear that any attempt to do so will be dependent on the syntactic constitution of the particular language we are using and the way its articulations present the world to us.<sup>114</sup> Although one might recognize that this can be a feature of discerning language use – where we intend certain connotations, along with the avoidance of others – what is less obvious is that such morphological relationships do any work in normal language use. To clarify the content, scope, and relevance of such features, it is therefore helpful to parallel

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<sup>114</sup> This is the kind of difficulty with which translators – especially translators of Heidegger – are only too familiar: in translating words in one way rather than another, one is often faced with a choice between different kinds of morphologically anchored imagery, none of which seems to capture quite the sense of the original. (Cf. above p. 50-52)

Heidegger's views with Saussure's conception of language as system of differences.<sup>115</sup> Although Saussure acknowledges the 'fundamental principle of the arbitrariness of the sign', for each language he distinguishes that which is absolutely, or 'radically arbitrary', i.e. 'unmotivated', from those signs which are 'relatively motivated'. (Saussure 1972, 180 f.) Whereas, he explains, the use of the term 'dix' to mean '10' or 'neuf' to mean '9' is unmotivated, use of 'dix-neuf' to mean '19' is relatively motivated and correspondingly less arbitrary. Using this distinction, Heidegger's morphological anchoring can be characterized as relying on and exploiting those features of the differential manifold of language that are relatively motivated. Such features have a dual importance. The first is simply that they are objective features of the sign system, reflecting the fact that natural language is comprised of richly structured signs. But in addition, as Saussure highlights, by implying syntagmatic and associative connections, the point of relatively motivated semiotic features is 'limitation of the arbitrary', it 'is nothing other than the mechanism in virtue of which any term whatever lends itself to the expression of an idea.' (Saussure 1972, 182) In other words, by imposing constraints on the arbitrariness of signs, such differences within the sign structure are an essential aspect of the representational functioning of language. This can be seen in a simple way by considering that there are limits to the interchangeability of signs. Words such as 'microscope' and 'telephone', for example, surely could not be interchanged and still 'make sense'. This does not mean that these nouns could not have been otherwise, but it does mean that established uses of linguistic forms put considerable constraints on what they might have been called, especially in this example, where these noun describes something about the character of what they refer to.<sup>116</sup>

Against this background it becomes clearer how Heidegger's expressive use coheres with his general philosophical position. To begin with, there are three senses in which this might be said, as opposed to instrumentally adequate routine use, to constitute

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<sup>115</sup> Saussure 1972, 166. – There is clear proximity between Saussure's view of language as a 'domain of articulations' (Saussure 1972, 156) and Heidegger's view of it as the manifestation of the existentielle *Rede* (articulacy).

<sup>116</sup> An obvious parallel would be Frege's (1994, 41) 'Morning Star' (*Morgenstern*) and 'Evening Star' (*Abendstern*). Note that as singular terms with sense, these terms are not interchangeable in the way the naming terms 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' are. – On the tool analogy, word-instruments might take a number of different forms, but (as with other tools) the form of a word will often determine what it can be used to do.

proper use of language. First, the highly deliberate use he makes of words that are locally attuned to his interpretations merely amplifies and intensifies the mechanisms underlying – i.e. constraining or determining – all language use. Secondly, the syntactic and semantic features he exploits are those proper to the particular language (German) of his own hermeneutic situation. Thirdly, in attempting to reinvest semiotic distinctions with meaningful motivations, Heidegger's use is proper in the sense of deploying available linguistic means in a way that makes as much sense as possible. – Such features are what one should expect within the framework of his philosophical commitments. It agrees with the functional determination of language as 'allowing ... to be seen', since, both in taking up and extending established language, he maximally exploits the possibilities presented by its sign structure as a means to disclosing or understanding the world. It also concords with his view of disclosure as historically situated, since, for all its many divergences, his philosophical use of language takes an actual state of natural language as its outset. One might say, that this accepts the 'facticity' (cf. SZ, 56, 168) of language, meaning that, in analogy to Dasein, language is always a product of past disclosing and its own history.

Significantly, all of these features are consonant with the idea of remaining true to the character of language as an embedded phenomenon. To many contemporary philosophers, especially philosophers of language, this might seem to be an artificial or feeble virtue, an excuse for the lack of a systematic theory of meaning or suchlike. After all, isn't Heidegger straightforwardly anachronistic, and lacking the commonplace that sentences are the primary vehicle of meaning? What gives this commonplace its air of self-evidence is presumably the dominance of Fregean semantics and the concomitant idea that the 'semantic value' of words can be understood only as a function of their role in sentences. Semanticists of this genre are attracted to the ideal of systematic theory of language along 'mathematical' lines, and accordingly conceive of language in terms of ordered pairs (say, of sentences and meanings), of concepts as functions, with variables and arguments. Wouldn't it be nice, the ideal goes, if language were a perfectly ordered calculus? Whatever the virtues of such semantics, it would be wrong to think that Heidegger's own views were developed in ignorance of the possibility of such an

approach to language.<sup>117</sup> Rather, just as the late Wittgenstein, his objections focused on the philosophical value that such an *approach* would have in understanding the way language actually is. After all, in what sense would having a semantic model of language comprise understanding of the phenomenology of language, the role language plays in human life, or about the way language mediates understanding of the world? The strong objection for a phenomenologically sensitive view would be that such an approach falls at the first fence, that talk of functions, variables, semantic values etc. simply fails to make contact with linguistic phenomena, and so fails to elucidate them philosophically. A more conciliatory view to take would be to see a complementarity rather than a conflict of interests, since whatever philosophical view of language one has, it will sooner or later have to match up with its phenomenal basis to be convincing. But what emerges with Heidegger, in contrast to Wittgenstein's detemporalized pragmatism, are two interrelated features of language which a phenomenologically adequate, and so ultimately any, philosophical conception of language ought to account for. (i) The *fine-grained nature of linguistic signs*. Any attempt to model the compositional character of language, of 'meaning', ought to reflect the fact that the way words mean, what they can be used to mean, is a product of relatively motivated morphemic features resulting the evolution of language.<sup>118</sup> (ii) The historical character of language, or what one might call the *temporality of language*. Since language is an ongoing product of its past being, one ought to explain how its past carries over into its present.

This is not to suggest that Heidegger has satisfactory answers to these questions, as becomes clear in considering the relationship between the rich structure of linguistic signs and the historical development of language, a link which becomes particularly salient when, as Heidegger puts it, new signs are 'instituted'. In the fertile field of informatics, for example, there is no mystery about the emergence of new terms such as 'computeracy', 'e-mail', 'modem' and how these reflect the phenomena to which they

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<sup>117</sup> Borgmann (1978) provides an informative survey of Heidegger's views on language. There is an oft-cited reference to Frege's 'On Sense and Reference' in a 1912 review by Heidegger. (Cf. Borgmann 1978, 5)

<sup>118</sup> Which implies, for example, that much of language is subject to quite different constraints than the paradigm of names or extensionalist designation suggests. It also has the 'untidy' consequence – one perhaps accommodated by Heidegger's two-tier conception of signs' instrumentality – that linguistic signs have expressive potentials beyond that required in everyday use.

refer.<sup>119</sup> The fact that newly-coined terms such as these transparently ‘make sense’ in the context in which they arise lends some plausibility to the idea of lived sense becoming sedimented in the structure of signs, and so to that of language quite literally having its history inscribed in it. It was this Diltheyan idea of ‘objectifications of life’ that recurred in Heidegger’s view of recoverable original meanings’ being bound up in linguistic forms. In discussing Heidegger’s view of originality, I suggested that two problems remained unsolved. First, why should an interpretative horizon, guided by the regulative maxim of originality, coincide neatly with the historicist horizon of recovering past meanings? Second, in what sense, if any, could Heidegger’s interpreted original meanings claim to be ‘in the words’ of general currency? Now, if construed in a very simple way, call it *simple preservation*, the Diltheyan model of objectification of meanings would provide the kind of answer to both questions that Heidegger seems to need. Thus, the respective first uses of terms might be thought of as laying out – in Guignon’s (1983, 139) apt phrase – a ‘primal text’, a skeletal substructure of original articulations that remain present in later language. If some such unitary matrix of sense did pervade the forms of established language, then it might seem plausible, firstly, that suitable interpretation could follow the signs, retracing the paths of language back to their initial sources; and, secondly, that these were the hidden original senses of everyone’s words.

But to assume that first uses, or first users, have a monopoly on laying out the sense structure of language is surely an oversimplification of the temporality of language, one about as reasonable as assuming that the issue price of a share fixes its true value, that the internet can be used only for military purposes, or that molecules can be involved only in that process in which scientists first discover them. It seems obviously preferable to view linguistic forms as polyvalent entities, with any number of appropriate uses, uses even in which they are particularly expressive.<sup>120</sup> The result looks like a dilemma for Heidegger’s method of ‘original’ interpretation. Without the assumption of simple preservation there is no reason to think that the horizons of orderly interpretation and

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<sup>119</sup> ‘Modem’ is perhaps the least obvious, until it is realized that this names a device which modulates and demodulates digital signals to permit data transmission via an analogue carrier wave.

<sup>120</sup> Merleau-Ponty (1969, 17 ff.) characterizes this nicely in terms of the way ‘living’ or ‘speaking’ language constantly takes up possibilities sedimented in the past of ‘spoken’ language.

historicity coincide, so that there is no reason to think that interpretation uncovers the primal text of linguistic structures. Yet, even with this assumption, there is equally little reason to think that hermeneutic interpretation has the right kind of methodological constraints to substantiate the claim that it is recovering meanings once meant, rather than projecting new meanings into old terms. In either case, the effect is that the method of original interpretation has no real grip on the historical horizon of language, as Heidegger's equivocal use of the term 'original' seems to suggest it should.

Although he does little to disambiguate his use of the term suitably, Heidegger would presumably reject this as impacting on historical originality, but failing to engage with sense-genetic claims to originality. Hermeneutic interpretation ought then to be construed as interpreting out the underlying ('original') structure of meanings inherent in current language, and in this sense as consistent with the idea of radicalizing understanding of one's own factual situation. Mindful of the fact that, in Saussurian terms, relatively motivated features are objective aspects of the sign system, this would again support the idea that Heidegger's original interpretations capture what is somehow already in the words we all use. The crux, of course, is how this 'somehow' is interpreted, especially since Heidegger is clear that seeing the world in the optic of original meanings plays no role in everyday life. The question is whether any stronger claim can be made than that these are possible interpretations of words, and indeed whether such a claim could be thought of as being 'true to phenomena'. In Heidegger's sense, of course, this would be relatively simple, since his notions of phenomenal content and apriority seem to invest any plausible interpretation with the right kind of inherence to make them 'original'. However, given the lack of appropriate methodological constraints, mentioned at the start of the chapter, there seems to be no compelling reason to think of Heidegger's dialectic or 'original' meanings as being motivated or criterially regulated by any more general phenomenon than his own theory. Rather, it would seem more phenomenologically sound to suggest that greater attention to the actual nature of linguistic phenomena would have led Heidegger to the insight that the idea of originality is one simply imposed on language, a recipe for inventing unity of meaning where none is otherwise found.

From the standpoint of a phenomenological conception of language, one which aims above all to remain true to phenomena, this might be seen as a dividing the honours between Heidegger and Wittgenstein. On the one hand, Heidegger's approach to expressiveness correctly reminds us that language is not just a matter of humdrum everydayness, and brings out features which a full philosophical understanding of language ought to accommodate. On the other hand, Wittgenstein's approach looks more steadfastly phenomenological on the issue of 'originality', which is surely just one more attempt to impose artificial order on the motley of language. One more attempt, that is, to patch up a 'torn spider's web with our fingers'. (PI, §106)



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