Subject and World
In Wittgenstein and Heidegger

Ph.D. Thesis
By
Sharon Shatil
University College London
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Wittgenstein and Heidegger both claim that statements, situations and actions are meaningful only within an essentially involved perspective. The concept of ‘involvement’ essentially makes references to purposes, aims and designs, unlike a theoretical attitude, that only makes reference to properties of objects which are either perceivable or causally related to perceivables. Their view contrasts with the traditional conception of meaning, and they point to various problems with it which, I argue, are far from being resolved in post-Wittgensteinian analytic philosophy. Both thinkers agree that for involvement to be meaningful is for it to come under a demand for reasons explicitly for the agent performing it. Heidegger argues that for this to be possible a totality of possible involvements, which he calls ‘the world’ must be presupposed. Such a world, though, can only exist for a subject that is essentially involved in some project on the basis this totality. I argue that Wittgenstein shares this view, if less explicitly, as is demonstrated in the anti-Cartesianism of his conception of meaning and mind.

I conclude that the locus of agreement between Wittgenstein and Heidegger is their conception of human beings as essentially possessing a freedom to be involved in any meaningful practice. This freedom sums up subject, the world and the essential relation between them. This freedom amount to the possibility to enter (and leave) any meaningful practice pertaining to a situation. It is a necessary result of explicitly demanding reasons to enter a meaningful involvement.

What Wittgenstein and Heidegger manage to demonstrate is the limitation of the theoretical attitude—its inherent inability to explain meaning and the structures necessarily correlated with it: the involved subject, and the totality of possible meaningful involvement with entities. This opens to criticism certain current metaphysical and ontological presuppositions and scientific attempts to explain language, mind, and human behaviour.
List of Abbreviations

AK = A priori Knowledge

BPP = Basic Problems of Phenomenology

BT = Being and Time

BW = Basic Writings

CPR = Critique of Pure Reason

LFM = Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics

OC = On Certainty

PG = Philosophical Grammar

PI = Philosophical Investigations

PIK = Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason

PR = The Principle of Reason

TLP = Tractatus Logico Philosophicus

WCT = What is Called Thinking?

Z = Zettel
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Introduction

My aim in this work is to bring together the thought of the later Wittgenstein and Heidegger, two philosophers who worked in different atmospheres with different concerns, and so seem prima facie to be very remote. Throughout their evolving philosophical careers though, both thinkers continuously focus on the phenomenon of meaning, and its necessary and constitutive conditions. The very possibility of anything to possess meaning, regardless of whether meaning bearers are statements, thoughts, actions or events, remains one of their major topics. This similarity is not purely generic however, as I shall demonstrate in the first three chapters, where I trace the claims of Heidegger and Wittgenstein on the foundation of the phenomenon of meaning. I claim they share a view of what these necessary and constitutive conditions are. I will discuss in each chapter one important feature that I argue is part of the views of both philosophers, though they stress different aspects of each feature: the world as an irreducibly relational totality, the subject who essentially exists in such a world, and the dependency of truth on meaning. These three chapter would hopefully present a coherent view of the foundation of the phenomenon of meaning, and its dependency on the essential relation between subject and world, based on these points of agreement.

Exegesis is only part of this work however. Wittgenstein and Heidegger seem nowadays to have suffered a similar fate in different philosophical movements. Wittgenstein’s main claims became milestones of analytic philosophy, at least in the sense that recent theories of language and mind seem no longer naïve about the implications of the private language argument, the rule following considerations and other Wittgensteinian themes explored below. Many themes in Heidegger’s thought have similarly been absorbed into postmodern streams in Europe and America. In this work I will be concerned with the analytic tradition, and argue that the real implications of the arguments of both thinkers are far from being addressed in recent discussions of meaning, thought, truth, normativity and action. At some places Wittgenstein or Heidegger offer arguments, or claims that can easily be reconstructed as arguments, which I describe and evaluate. At other places I supplement their claims with arguments and demonstrations as far as I could provide them. My intent in the
last three chapters is to present a body of arguments for their conception of the phenomenon of meaning in its relation to subject and world, and its implications on truth, normativity and action. I find this conception both in Wittgenstein and in Heidegger, but I provide it with the best argumentative support I can, so that it can stand on its own.

If both are concerned with the foundations of meaning, there is some truth in the claim that both belong in the realms of transcendental enquiry. The definitive quality of transcendental philosophy for my purposes here is using the question ‘how is x possible a priori?’ as a philosophical methodology. But though Wittgenstein is explicitly dealing with what makes it possible for a statement to have the meaning it does in any particular case, this is definitely not one of Heidegger’s explicit main concerns. I believe the basic similarity between them can be established via a closer examination of Heidegger’s notion of ‘transcendence’.

Heidegger uses the term ‘transcendence’ in a somewhat unique way, but is conscious of the way it is traditionally used, from scholastic philosophy onwards. In Heidegger’s terminology, ‘transcendence’ means the same as ‘being-in-the-world’:

‘Because transcendence is the basic constitution of Dasein, it belongs foremost to its Being and is not a comportment that is derived later. And because this primordial Being of Dasein, as surpassing, crosses over to a world, we characterise the basic phenomenon of transcendence with the expression Being-in-the-world.’ (MFL., pp. 166).

Transcendence involves at least two different factors—first, there must be something which is transcended, or passed beyond; then there is that into which access is gained by transcending, or the transcendental. Thus for example in the late-scholastic philosophical use of the term, the categories of the Aristotelian Organon were transcended and the transcendentalss were those propositional elements now known as quantifiers — one, all, every and so on. In Kant the world of experience is transcended, while the categories and ideas of reason are transcendental. Transcendence also involves a third element since Kant introduced it into his system, the entity performing the act of transcending. This entity has been identified ever since Kant with the human subject, as far as it is a transcendental subject. Transcendental
philosophy since Kant has concentrated on what makes human existence possible *a priori* (however this kind of existence is defined), while the naturalist standpoint is that such an enquiry is impossible.

The essential elements involved in the concept of transcendence in Heidegger’s thought are correspondingly: entities within the world as those which are transcended, the world as transcendental, and *Dasein* as transcending. ‘*Dasein*’ is Heidegger’s name for the human transcendental subject—containing whatever must exist for the kind of life human beings live to be possible. In Heidegger’s jargon, it is the kind of Being of human beings.

Heidegger’s treatment of transcendence is a key to understanding his discussion of the relation that must exist between subject and world, a relation which constitutes both entities. Heidegger is unique in the history of philosophy in his position that subject and world are not two separate entities, which may or even must be related somehow. Rather, in his view it is the very relation between subject and world that constitutes them both, and whenever I speak of the relation between subject and world, I intend it to be understood as such, rather than as a relation between two independently existing entities. For Heidegger, the very definition of the subject is ‘having a relation to a world’, and the definition of the world is correspondingly ‘a background totality (of a nature to be explored below) wherein human beings necessarily live’. Heidegger’s discussion moves very rapidly through such concepts as temporality, truth, freedom and ground. I will claim that a basic understanding of transcendence as the constitution of the phenomenon of meaning is possible even if we delay our discussion of these complicated issues to the second part of this work.²

According to Heidegger, human dealings with any entity are based on placing this entity within a background, that encompasses a human life and all the situations which make it up: the ideas, people and events comprising its personal and cultural history, present situation and future plans and designs. Only on this background do particular actions make sense, and one of the basic expectations from any normal functioning human-being is that their actions would make some sense. It makes no

²In this work I will not be discussing Heidegger’s conception of temporality. This is not easy to do since it is a vital concept of his thinking, particularly in his early period. This concept does not figure in Wittgenstein at all and thus does not really belong in a comparison of the two thinkers. Furthermore, my central theme is meaning and the relation of subject and world, which remain a theme of Heidegger’s thought throughout his career, unlike temporality which disappears from Heidegger’s later work almost completely.
difference whether what a person does in a particular moment accords with or
contradicts their character, system of beliefs, past behaviour and the like, whether
they are happy about their actions or not, find them reasonable or not etc. If these
categories apply explicitly to the particular actions of someone, by which I mean that
the application of these categories is open for consideration by the agent performing
them, there must be a way of relating these actions to this background.

This basic fact about human life is in broad outlines what Heidegger refers to
by the term 'transcendence', since any particular human dealing with entities
surpasses any given situation and takes into account a certain whole. The result of this
transcendence is, I believe, the phenomenon of meaning. It is true Heidegger takes
transcendental philosophy to be concerned with the meaning of Being in particular.
Such an enquiry, he claimed, must rest on 'fundamental ontology', an explication of
Dasein—the kind of Being human-beings have. This is because human-beings
essentially possess an understanding of what Being is. I believe therefore it does
justice to Heidegger to claim that the study of human understanding, or the fact that
things have meaning, is the guideline to answer Heidegger's prime transcendental
question, regarding the meaning of Being. I will consider Heidegger's thought
throughout in the light of this interpretation.

'Being' is perhaps the central term of Heidegger's philosophical jargon, and
its meaning is hard to define, particularly given most of Heidegger's work is written
in the hope of raising the question about the meaning of Being. In my view he gives
the best indication of what it means when he discusses Leibniz's law of sufficient
reason, once just after Being and Time in The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic
(pub. 1978, based on lectures given in 1928), and again almost thirty years later in
The Principle of Reason. In both occasions the point he makes is roughly the
following:

When paraphrased... [the principle of reason] means "ground/reason
belongs to Being." Or "Being and ground/reason: the same."... Being
proffers itself to humans in that it clearly furnishes to beings as such a
temporal space-play. (PR, pp. 75).

Being, I take it, is roughly what proffers any kind of existence on an entity, when
'entity' is a generic term, used contra-Quine to apply to fictional and real things alike.
Being provides the background that allows us to understand what an entity is, which is based on placing this entity within a system of grounds defining what it is — a physical entity, a mental one, a mathematical one and so on. Being should not, on the other hand, be confused with Meinong's concept of 'existence', which is applicable to all manner of entities, actual ones being just one sub-class of existence. Actuality is for Heidegger an essential part of Being, but only in the sense that there must be some actual way of dealing with an entity for it to be anything at all, even if it is fictional (reading or watching a play about it for example).

Heidegger maintains that dealings with entities are based on the kind of Being of involvement. Involvement is typical of instruments, entities whose essential properties relate them to designs and purposes. In chapter 1 I discuss involvement in detail, following Heidegger's arguments that involvement is a fundamental kind of Being among others. He claims understanding the Being of any entity necessarily takes the form of an involvement, that exists with this entity, in some activity including means and ends, purposes and designs. In other words, our understanding of what anything is is expressed in us being involved in something with that entity. Meaning, for Heidegger, only exists on the basis of some involvement, and this claim closely resembles the later Wittgenstein's dictum, that something has meaning only inside some meaningful practice.

Dasein, the kind of Being of human-beings, is a separate kind of Being applicable to human-beings alone among all known physical entities to date, but applicable in principle to intelligent androids and aliens, and in practice to many types of things in fiction. I discuss it in detail in the second chapter. A third important kind of Being is the present-at-hand or the extant (depending on translation), which is applicable to entities conceived as stripped of the context of human involvement to which they belong. All entities which figure in the explanans side of scientific explanations are such extant entities. To take an extreme example, even psychology treats its subject matter by cataloguing it, conceiving it as acting under the influence of causes, dispositions, rules and so on. It is regarded as a characteristic of pre-scientific mythical explanations to use anthropomorphised beings, which are capable of understanding, in the theoretical model.

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2 This formulation will have to be qualified a little below.
I will call Heidegger's conception of transcendence 'relational'; it is the basis of a correspondingly relational conception of the subject (by which I mean strictly the referent of the pronoun 'I', regardless of any Cartesian implications inherent in the common philosophical usage of the term). According to this view human beings are what they are in virtue of always existing within a totality of possible involvements Heidegger calls a 'world'. The concept of world must feature in the very definition of the human subject. Correspondingly, transcendental philosophy must explicate the necessary and constitutive conditions that make transcendence or Being-in-the-world possible.

The relational conception of the subject rests on the kind of Being of involvement described above, manifested in purposive dealings with entities according to purposes and ends. The fact an object is a means to an end cannot be inferred from an observation of the object and its physical and causal properties alone. To infer it is a means to a given end, an object with its physical properties must be placed in relation to the properties of other objects and human beings, within a particular context of human designs and purposes for its application. Furthermore, for an end to be chosen, it has to be placed in relation to the properties of objects and human beings and to alternative available ends. Involvement therefore entails accessibility to a totality of possible relations between properties of objects, human beings and their designs and purposes. This totality cannot be analysed as a logical sum of discrete relations, since the single relation between, say, a hammer and a nail already presupposes the existence of such a totality. This will be explained in detail in chapter 1.

Some entities, tools and manufactured things in general, essentially have the kind of Being of involvement, which means that they must be defined in terms of their properties in relation to human designs and purposes. The question remains, can the phenomenon of involvement and the relational totality correlated with it be reduced to objects of a kind other than involvement, or is it primitive and irreducible? This is an ontological question, even in the acceptable sense in which ontology is concerned with determining what irreducible kinds of entities there are in reality. But it is mainly ontological in Heidegger's wider sense, in which ontology is concerned with clarifying what it is to be, and to be a particular kind of entity. Employing this sense Heidegger's main thesis throughout his work is that the kind of Being of involvement is ontologically primary to the extant, non-involved kind of Being, in determining
human existence as a whole. For Heidegger our concept of an extant objects itself is the concept of a limit case of involvement, its breaking down.

In his later period Wittgenstein was always concerned with placing statements that seem philosophically problematic within meaningful practices in which they would actually be used. Since these practices essentially refer to human plans, designs and purposes as well as to the physical properties of objects, I claim this is equivalent to maintaining that meaning is irreducibly relational and involved. Involvement is thus primary with regards to human understanding, which for Wittgenstein means that a meaningful practice is both necessary and sufficient for anything to possess meaning. This seems a rather stronger point than Heidegger's, but for Heidegger, as I will discuss in chapter 4, ontological conclusions include in their scope even logical rules of inference. I believe therefore that the conclusion he would have us draw from his ontological primacy argument is as strong as Wittgenstein’s. In this case Wittgenstein’s argument can be seen as giving support for drawing the stronger conclusion from Heidegger’s ontological claims.

This is therefore the initial point of agreement between Heidegger and Wittgenstein, which I lay out in chapter 1. Though I describe several of their demonstrations of the primacy of involvement in determining meaning, it is mainly assumed at first as a working hypothesis. In the rest of the work I explore what the two thinkers take this primacy to entail. Only in chapter 6 do I provide a systematic discussion of this primacy and argue for its cogency.

The primacy of involvement in determining meaning leads both thinkers to an anti-Cartesian conception of the human subject, as I discuss in Chapter 2. They claim that what is essential and definitive about the human subject is that it can enter any meaningful involvement. Heidegger demonstrates that some involvement for its own sake, which he calls a project, is necessary for human dealings with entities to explicitly demand reasons. Somewhat like Wittgenstein’s claim that justifications must come to an end (which I discuss later). Heidegger argues that since every reason we give also stands in need of another reason, without a project there would not be an explicit reason to be involved in any activity. Having a project, whether explicitly or not, directs all of the human agent’s dealings in the world as long as they explicitly demand reasons.

The project, an initial overarching involvement, is therefore another expression for the relational transcendence of the subject, or its possessing a
conception of life as a whole. For one's life to make sense, one must already find oneself as involved—as existing in a world where things have a value according to purposes and designs. One must perceive success and failure, fulfillment and unsatisfaction, sickness and well-being relative to how one is in the world with respect to other entities. This contradicts a Cartesian conception of the subject, which I understand to be any conception that does not take relational transcendence, or accessibility to a world, to be the essential feature of the human subject. Kant's conception of the transcendental subject and the contemporary supposition that the subject is a mental entity to be explained in terms of consciousness or intentionality are thus Cartesian in this sense.

In the private language argument Wittgenstein shows that meaning could not exist at all for a worldless Cartesian subject, which has only its inner experience accessible to it. Some interpreters believe the private-language argument is based mainly on considerations of the learnability of language, and lead to the conclusion that a community agreement is necessary for the individual to make sense. But I take this argument to lead to a stronger claim, that mental content of whatever kind is neither necessary nor sufficient for anything to possess meaning. Rather than the necessity of a community use, the private language argument as I construe it entails that understanding cannot be explained in terms of possessing any mental content, since it is manifested in entering into an involvement within the world. To understand meaning is hence already to perceive oneself as involved in some activity, which is not a matter of possessing any particular mental content. Since mental content is the only thing accessible to a Cartesian subject, it is impossible for it to understand meaning.

To manifest understanding, for both thinkers, is a matter of behaviour (including verbal behaviour), of interacting with others and with entities in ways that presuppose certain facts and norms to apply necessarily. These norms and facts define the particular involvement or meaningful practice, so that if a normative rule is not followed the result is the breaking down of the context of involvement. In Chapter 3 I discuss Heidegger's claim that truth as correspondence of statements and facts depends on a prior understanding of what these facts could possibly be like, which is necessarily internal to some involvement existing with these facts. For the

\[1\text{I return to the theme of intentionality in chapter 4.}\]
correspondence theory of truth to be logically coherent the fact that p must be
determinable independently of understanding the proposition that p. But the truth of
statements like ‘my computer is slow today’, ‘this man is old’ and so on depend on
the circumstances of their utterance (beyond the obvious context dependency of the
demonstratives appearing in them). Heidegger claims the correspondence theory must
be false since to involvement belongs a notion of truth, which cannot be construed as
correspondence and which is primary to truth where is can be rightly construed as
such.

In *On Certainty* Wittgenstein also argues against correspondence theory,
demonstrating that one and the same statement can sometimes be an empirical
proposition and at other times function as a norm or standard of a given meaningful
practice. To take a statement as normative is manifested primarily in entering
particular meaningful practices in particular situations, rather then in asserting facts of
the world that we acknowledge. Every meaningful practice is defined by such
normative facts and standards, and every statement has a particular truth-value only
within some meaningful practice.

Hence in both Heidegger and Wittgenstein there is an argument that
statements can be true only within an involvement, in which certain facts and
standards are assumed to hold normatively. I call this form of normativity
transcendental necessity, since anything which holds with transcendental necessity is
a condition of a particular involvement, and thus cannot be falsified within that
involvement. I call acting in ways which take for granted the transcendental
conditions of a given meaningful practice in a given situation ‘engagement’ with that
practice in a given situation. I call an engaged meaningful practice and the situation of
its application together the ‘engaged circumstances’ of an application.

In chapter 4 I introduce the ‘primacy of the engaged circumstances’ thesis (or
‘primacy thesis’), which claims that no necessity is stronger than transcendental
necessity. The most important challenge to that claim is logical necessity, which is
supposed to apply in all possible circumstances, rather than depend on a particular
engagement. The view that logical necessity is reducible to transcendental necessity is
found in Wittgenstein and Heidegger alike. Wittgenstein argues that rules of inference
simply constitute possible ways for inferences to be carried out in specific situations.
Our insistence to use them only as “yardsticks” for correct inferences underlies taking
them to hold with a special kind of necessity. If we encountered people for whom
contradictions (for example) could be true in certain circumstances, we may be disinclined to call what they do ‘inferring’, but we could not find any flaw in such practices, which makes them either unworkable or at least admit some falsity into their system. If that is true then the necessity of logical rules of inference cannot be attributed to the nature of either rational thinking or the objective world, and thus hole regardless of any circumstances.

Heidegger discusses Kant’s arguments for the possibility a priori of synthetic a priori knowledge, that is knowledge which is necessarily valid for all entities in the world, though it is independent of experience. Kant believes that the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge ultimately depends on the fact that the subject is a priori related to objects, or intentional. This he calls the problem of transcendence, which he construes as the problem of representations in the subject being related to external reality. Kant concludes that the limits of knowledge are determined by the fact that reality must be a priori accessible to the subject. This exposes for Heidegger the fundamentally Cartesian position Kant still occupies, despite his various objections to Descartes. But if mental content is all that is accessible to the subject, how is it to possess even the concept of an objective world? Berkeley’s position seems far easier to get to given the suppositions of Cartesianism. I discuss Strawson’s argument that “Berkeley’s challenge” to the existence of an objective world can be defeated, to reiterate the point that starting from mental content the existence of an objective world cannot be proven. This substantiates Heidegger’s claim that the possession of the concept of an external world depends on human beings being already involved in some purposive activity within world. Thus relational transcendence into a totality of possible involvements is the ontologically prior intentionality of the subject. Only given the transcendental conditions of a given involvement can the question of the relation between subjective content and objective reality arise. Since Kant’s argument for the objective validity a priori of synthetic a priori knowledge rests on the possibility of that relation, it presupposes engagement in some involvement, of measurement, calculation and so on for example. From this something quite similar to the primacy thesis is entailed, that logical rules of inference only apply with necessity within some involvements (at most, whenever we are dealing with extant entities), or that there are no logical restrictions on possible involvements.

The nature of human understanding, which I will analyse in chapters 3 and 4, is also the subject matter of all forms of theories of meaning. These attempt to explain
the possession of understanding in a theoretical framework. But in order for a theory of meaning to be possible it must be assumed that some theory of meaning is possessed by a subject (in pretheoretical form) in such a way that meaning is determinable once and for all. The very attempt to construct a theory of meaning is inconsistent with the primacy thesis, according to which no meaning attaches to a statement outside some circumstances of application. This is because these are indefinitely many and cannot be provided once and for all. In Chapter 5 I concentrate on Davidson's account of meaning in terms of truth conditions, and Horwich's dispositionalist analysis of meaning as use regularities.

Davidson in places allows for statements to mean almost anything at all in given situation, and thus seems amenable to the conclusions of the primacy thesis. But as he admits, for his explanation of meaning-possessing to be true, there has to be a function, specifiable in advance of any particular circumstances, that maps every statement in a given natural language to a countable set of logical forms. Specifying this function is precisely the role of a theory of meaning for a given language according to Davidson. I follow Wittgenstein's argument that this function cannot be provided, and try to demonstrate it in relations to Davidson's analysis of adverbial and prepositional modification.

I demonstrate that a dispositionalist theory of meaning, such as the one recently offered by Horwich, could not account for any meaningful utterance in a given natural language. Horwich's theory depends on there being some fundamental use regularity which determines the meaning of any meaningful term in a natural language. I claim that Wittgenstein's "family resemblance" argument demonstrates that no use regularity can necessarily underlie all uses of a term in all possible circumstances. I also follow Alexander Miller's argument against Horwich, which I claim is sound though Miller's own examples in support of it are inadequate. I hope that these demonstrations add to the conviction in the truth of one conclusion of the primacy thesis, that meaning is not a phenomenon that can be constituted by a theoretical model or system.

In the last chapter I attempt to draw the limits of theoretical explanation, which complete the argument for the primacy of involvement in determining meaning. It would thus at the same time be the locus of agreement between Wittgenstein and Heidegger. This would answer both goals of this thesis at once—
locate the two thinkers' central point of agreement, which at the same time is their central point of divergence from mainstream currents of contemporary philosophy.

Heidegger points out that inherent to an explicit demand for reasons is the availability of alternatives, whether the decision is in fact causally determined or not. Without having an option available, any deliberation whether to engage in a given meaningful practice would be superfluous. Also, having a reason to do x, say, would be some claim to the effect that doing x is better than not doing x, or doing y. There is thus a preference inherently involved in reasoning, and preference again presupposes the availability of alternatives. This availability means that understanding essentially involves a kind of freedom. Since the object of this freedom is engagement with a given meaningful practice, I call it freedom to engage.

I define freedom to engage as the conjunction of the claim that engagement with any meaningful practice in a given situation cannot be systematically explained (which I call its 'unpredictability'), and the claim it is necessary for the statements, thoughts and activities of human beings to possess meaning. The first claim amounts to there being no function, specifiable in advance, mapping all engaged circumstances to the elements comprising them—human behaviour in relation to others and objects. The second amounts to there being no function, specifiable in advance disregarding the engaged circumstances, mapping human behaviour in relation to others and objects to the meaning of that behaviour. More heuristically, freedom to engage means that whether to engage with a given meaningful practice in a given situation is always an open question for the subject, for which there is no ready-made decision procedure. Facing this question is a definitive characteristic of the subject, which is made available to it through transcendence into a totality of possible involvements, or the world.

For Heidegger the first claim follows from the necessity of the project for all human engagements to explicitly demand reasons. The second follows from the fact that all systems of rules already presuppose engagement with some meaningful practice. Wittgenstein also supplies arguments both for the unpredictability of engagement and its necessity for anything to possess meaning. He argues for the unpredictability of engagement using his machine analogy. A mechanism cannot correct the manner of its own application (at least, the application of any self-correcting subroutines it may possess). There is no way for it to malfunction unless there is an independent conception of what the right working of the machine is
like, independently of the actual working of the machine. A malfunction of a mechanism constituting engagement would not simply be a case of miscommunication, rather a case where a person could not be brought to accept that there is a miscommunication where there is one. Since the workings of any mechanism is consistent with being disengaged from any given meaningful practice, it cannot constitute such engagement.

Since the application of a mechanism is something the mechanism itself cannot constitute, all systems of rules apply only given engagement in some meaningful practice. This is Wittgenstein’s main argument for the necessity of engagement to possess meaning, which is to be found, I believe, in his rule-following argument. I follow McDowell’s interpretation and Glendinning’s recent responses to it, to the conclusion that understanding the meaning of any statement, thought or activity requires placing it within an appropriate context of possible responses in word, thought or action. I demonstrate that this context, though, depends on the engaged circumstances, and therefore that engagement is necessary for understanding.

The main objection to the necessity of freedom to engage for anything to possess meaning would be a demonstration that an explicit demand for reasons can be constituted by a possible mechanism. Such a suggestion is offered by Dennett, in his works on freedom and intentionality. I end with a discussion of Dennett, which I believe cannot account for the possible scope of human reasoning. I also follow Pettit and Smith’s discussion of Dennett, where they claim that the ability to recognise and act according to norms is essential to human belief/desire formation (and by extension action). I claim that since those norms presuppose some engaged circumstances, there are no norms regulating this very engagement. I claim that to be a real alternative to Dennett’s, Pettit and Smith’s view must presuppose freedom to engage.

The first of the characteristics of freedom to engage is a development of the claim that involvement is an irreducible kind of Being. The second amounts to the primacy of involvement in determining meaning. Freedom to engage thus sums up the themes that I found common to both Wittgenstein and Heidegger. Possessing freedom to engage cannot be explained in terms of describing an algorithm to generate it, and is transcendentally necessary for anything to possess meaning. The phenomenon of meaning and the structures correlated with it, particularly the world and the subject, cannot be explained by a reduction to some system of rules, since the function to map them to such a system is missing. Since theoretical explanations presuppose the
availability of such a reduction, theoretical explanation can only go a certain way
towards explaining the phenomenon of meaning and the structures transcendentally
correlated with it.
The Relational Totality

Of the World

A. Heidegger on the Relational Totality of The World

1. The Concept of World and Involvement:

To understand transcendence as equivalent to Being-in-the-world, as Heidegger does, means that the ‘world’ is the transcendental—tha: towards-which the surpassing takes place’ (MFL., pp. 160). I will therefore begin by clarifying this concept. Heidegger distinguishes four conceptions of the concept ‘world’, two of which are derived from everyday or ‘pre-ontological’ use, and two which are systematic philosophical developments of these. Heidegger claims that the term ‘world’ is often used synonymously with ‘nature’, to signify the globe, the physical universe or the whole of material things; on the other hand it can be used to apply to individuals or social groups, as in the phrases ‘the world of a secret age’ or ‘the fashion-world’. To the first sense corresponds a philosophical conception of the world, which according to Heidegger was first found in Aristotle and reached maturity in Kant. According to this conception, the world is the sum-total of anything that could belong in nature. The world signifies the essence of nature, and is therefore determinable a priori, while nature itself signifies what actually exists and is determinable empirically. A philosophical development of the second everyday sense of the term ‘world’ is lacking in tradition, and Heidegger claims it is called For. This would be a philosophical development of the concept ‘world’ in its essential relation to human beings.

Heidegger observes, that when we speak of the world of a person or a social group we do not take that individual or individuals in isolation. Nor do we regard merely their particular surroundings as distinct from them:

‘The importance of the pre-philosophical concept is the relationship
that human Dasein has to things or that things have to humans.' (MFL, (pp. 181).

He then adds, that in fact this conception of the world does not signify any particular relation or assortment of relations that things bear to each other and to human beings. Rather the world always stands for a totality, so that any discrimination between one thing and another is already performed within the world. The world is therefore a totality of relations which are irreducible to their elements—human beings and things surrounding them. I will refer to such a totality as a 'relational totality'. At this point we must return to Heidegger's discussion of the 'ready-to-hand' in *Being and Time* to demonstrate the existence of a domain of entities with which a significant portion of human dealings are concerned, and for which the existence of a relational totality is a necessary condition.

The kind of Being of the ready-to-hand is typical of tools and equipment. Heidegger defines that kind of Being as 'involvement'. In general, this kind of Being applies to any entity which is encountered within the framework of our non-theoretical dealings in the world (BT., pp. 95). We use and manipulate such entities, achieve certain goals with them etc. Every piece of equipment provides us with indefinitely many possibilities of use, because what uses we may make of it depends on other tools at our disposal, on what we want to achieve, and so on. Also, there is no way to determine *a priori* when a process such as coming up with imaginative uses for a piece of equipment would come to an end, hence its use is indefinitely extendible.

These possibilities of use could not be discovered by a simple observation of a particular piece of equipment, nor could they be deduced from such an observation, because of the indefiniteness of a tool's application and its dependency on the circumstances. Furthermore, these possibilities cannot be deduced by observing human subjects and their mental content, since equipment is only understood as such within a context of purposeful action that involves things which are not purely mental and the place of these subjects among them. Even if we combine the two, the mental occurrence of the purpose 'get from A to B' for example, and the physical properties of say a car, a lawnmower, a zebra, a horse etc., are insufficient on their own to deduce which of these is a form of transport and how to use it to achieve the goal—none of the objects mentioned above is a mode of transport if there is an ocean...
between A and B, just as we have no relevant mode of transport to date if they lie in different galaxies.

Heidegger argues that a necessary condition for an existence of an involvement in any activity with any piece of equipment is the existence of a relational totality. This is at least as far as making use of a given tool for a given purpose comes under an explicit demand for reasons. I will assume that we are dealing with activities and purposes that come under an explicit demand for reasons for the person performing them in the entirety of this work.

We can understand Heidegger best, without entering too deeply into the terminology of *Being and Time*, if we consider what is involved in any particular activity of human beings, for example, bolting two steel plates together, as far as any human activity comes under an explicit demand for reasons. One would presumably be engaged in this activity when one is involved in a bigger scheme which requires it, for example the building of a ship. In Heidegger's terminology, the ship is the 'towards-which' of the activity, the immediate enterprise of which it is part. But building a ship in itself does not yet provide a sufficient reason to undertake any activity. One can still ask for reasons to build a ship, and a reason for this could be, that it will increase the military force of a certain state. In Heidegger's terms, that kind of reason would be the 'in-order-to', which is demanded by a 'towards-this' involvement, because it assigns a role to it, thus providing a reason to enter it. But even this kind of involvement does not bring the regression of reasoning to an necessary end, no matter how many 'in-order-to' reasons are supplemented to it. As Aristotle already noted, a practical syllogism must begin with a voluntary act by which agents posit something as a goal which they are committed to achieve for-its-own-sake. Reasons which are capable of bringing the regressor of reasoning to an end, and can at the same time initiate a process of assignment of practical plans or roles, are what Heidegger calls 'for-the-sake-of' reasons. The main difference between Heidegger and Aristotle is that what Aristotle takes to be merely practical considerations, Heidegger takes to be ontological ones— they define the kind of Being of the entities themselves, so that a hammer would not be a hammer without its possible involvements, such as typically hammering. For Aristotle it is rather a component added to an already existing being by a particular will.
Whatever initiates a process of assignment of roles to persons and things, thus defining what they are in a given context of involvement, requires an involvement for-its-own-sake. That means that the kind of Being of involvement requires such an involvement, for the relational properties essential to involvement would be lost without it. At this stage Heidegger introduces the irreducible totality of the world as linked with the 'for-the-sake-of'. He writes:

'The relational totality of this signifying [from the for-the-sake-of to the with-which of involvement] we call “significance”... The context of assignments or references, which, as significance, is constitutive of worldhood, can be taken formally in the sense of a system of relations' (BT., pp. 121).

Hence the for-the-sake-of of the assignments is a unifying background principle for all human activities, only on the basis of which do particular actions make sense. Heidegger calls this whole the ‘project’.

The question remains, whether there is an element of freedom to the involvement in a project or not. Supposing a choice of projects to be possible, it is obvious that there must be more than one possible project actually available to choose from. Choosing one over the other could not be a matter of indifference, since this would be simply random picking of possibilities and inconsistent with the explicit demand for reasons in human action. Intuitively also, a random picking is considered a very limiting case of freedom. Choice with an explicit demand for reasons must be justified on the basis of a preference. That is to say, for there to be a choice of projects there must be a consideration of possible projects. But considering a possibility is at the same time considering all possibilities. There may be ample reasons not to consider various possibilities in various situations: they could be physically unattainable, too expensive, have obvious disadvantages and so on. But that does not contradict my claim, because the mere fact these possibilities are rejected for a reason points to the fact they are, in a sense, being considered and not disregarded per se as a matter of indifference. Hence no matter how many possibilities are being considered, it is always

1 Although their disadvantages may be so obvious they are given no actual consideration.
the fact that all possibilities are considered which justifies a choice, and there is no method of deciding how many possibilities would have to be considered to reach the right choice. It seems to me that this line of reasoning stands behind Heidegger’s assertion that:

‘The totality of the commitment residing in the for-the-sake-of is the world... Whenever and however they are encountered, actual beings always reveal themselves...only as a restriction, as one possible realisation of the possible, as the insufficient out of an excess of possibilities, within which Dasein always maintains itself as free projection’ (MFL, pp.192).

Freedom is thus a necessary property of the entity which acts with an explicit demand for reasons. All entities which are necessarily involved some particular project, or already possess a definitive character and a fixed set of possible ways of behaviour, need not live in a world as a relational totality. The assumption of freedom is thus unavoidable at this stage. But I shall leave the explicit development of this issue till the last chapter.

2. Involvement and Understanding Being

I believe therefore that within Heidegger’s condensed discussion of the meaning of the term ‘world’ there is an argument that an irreducible relational totality is necessary for the kind of Being of involvement, insofar as it is free involvement. Three strategies are then pursued by Heidegger, on different occasions, to widen the scope of the kinds of Being which presuppose the world defined as such. The first is to claim that involvement essentially belongs to the kind of beings humans are. This line is pursued in Being and Time (BT., pp. 120-121). The second is to demonstrate that other modes of Being are derivatives of involvement. In Being and Time Heidegger claims that the kind of Being of the present-at-hand, which is revealed in theoretical

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I believe it is hard to over-emphasise the importance of this point. However, I will delay discussing it systematically until the last chapter, since it requires familiarity with all the themes to be explored in this work. 

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rather than practical involvement, is derived from the ready-to-hand. We could supplement that with his discussion of the kind of Being of works of art in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, and create a comprehensive picture of the dependence of theoretical, practical and aesthetic dealings with entities on the existence of a relational totality. But I think the third strategy he adopts would carry the most conviction if it could be substantiated. Heidegger’s third strategy is to claim that human understanding as a whole presupposes the existence of a relational totality.

Heidegger defines understanding as ‘disclosure’. In understanding a being, *something*, is disclosed, and this disclosure necessarily takes the form of a possibility of involvement (BT, pp. 182-183). Understanding for Heidegger is primarily understanding a possibility in which beings could be. When understanding is defined semantically as the knowledge of truth or assertibility conditions, this view becomes the more conventional one, that knowing whether a fact holds presupposes an understanding of a proposition, which implies knowing it to refer to a possible state-of-affairs. But Heidegger himself objects to identifying his concept of possibility with the “empty” logical possibility:

> ‘The Being-possible which *Dasein* is existentially in every case, is to be sharply distinguished both from the empty logical possibility and from the contingency of something present-at-hand…’ (BT, p. 183).

I believe Heidegger’s main point is that as disclosure understanding first reveals the world in relation to the for-the-sake-of of involvement. In the case of involvement not every logical possibility is a “genuine” possibility. A mechanic, for example, does not usually consider the possibility that the plugs in a car engine turned into snakes. The context of a particular involvement dictates what actual possibilities apply in any particular dealing with equipment. But that only means that when something happens, which is not included in the possibilities defining a particular context of involvement, that context is broken down, and we respond with surprise, shock, inquisitiveness and so on. Hence understanding defined semantically is defined disregarding any particular context.

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3 This will be elaborated in chapter 3.
context of involvement. It contains all cases of possible dealing with the familiar or the ordinary, as well as all possible cases of dealing with the unfamiliar or extraordinary. But the difference between the two, which is essential to any human dealing with the ordinary and familiar, presupposes some context of involvement. Under the semantic definition, this difference can only be dealt with either by limiting the scope of quantification and predication to a specific realm of entities or by making this a problem for pragmatics. The first option makes the scope of quantifiers and predicates depend on the context of involvement; the second presupposes that a semantic account of terms or statements can be given regardless of all pragmatic differences. This is at least questionable since in that case it would be hard to explain, for example, why a mechanic who often checked whether the plugs turned into snakes has not fully grasped the meaning of the term ‘plug’ or the practice of fixing a car engine, assuming no mental disorder.

Under the Heideggerian view on the other hand, the semantic definition of understanding is derived from the definition of understanding as disclosure, when the difference between the ordinary and extraordinary is erased. This is precisely what commonly happens when a context of involvement breaks down, when things go wrong or not as they are supposed to. Since in those cases we no longer know how to account for the course of events, we cease to see that entity as one that has a role in any human involvement, and it becomes simply an object—an extant—a bearer of properties. Heidegger relies on the fact that understanding as disclosure is a conceptually richer notion than the semantic conception, and if it can be shown to be the fundamental one, the semantic conception would become a simple modification of it. This is one token of Heidegger’s argument from ontological primacy, which as we shall see is his main methodological tool.

If understanding is correctly defined as disclosure, it presupposes the kind of Being of involvement, and consequently the totality of possible involvements, or the world. To show the opposite it must be shown that: involvement in something for an explicit demand for reason could be constituted by a logical combination of facts about objects and about agents and their mental content, without assuming involvement. For if involvement could not be constituted purely from these then the relational totality of

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4 This claim was made from a Quinean as well as a Wittgensteinian perspective, and will be discussed.
the world, being a transcendental condition of involvement, would have ontological priority. The objects and agents that remain once any context of involvement is removed would then be modifications of involved entities, as Heidegger maintains.

But we have already seen that uninvolved objects and agents are insufficient to constitute the kind of Being of involvement. This is because no property of either objects or human subjects alone could constitute the possibility a particular involvement, say taking the train. From the physical properties of the train and the human organism, along with its psychological life, it is impossible to infer that humans will use trains to move about, otherwise it would be as it were a result of causal necessity. At most we can deduce it is a physical possibility, but using electric cables to move about is equally a physical possibility. To get to the notion of trains as modes of transport we have to include the relations of human beings to their situation within a particular environment relative to others and objects, and these relations rely on designs, aims and purposes typical of involvement. Such designs and purposes rest eventually on some overall project, and as long as the project is freely chosen it must be chosen relative to a relational totality of possible involvements.

Therefore involvement must be taken as ontologically primitive, or in other words as constitutive of understanding in general and hence also of the phenomenon of meaning. This at least in the sense that the latter presupposes the relational totality of the world which is accessible only through free involvement for-its-own-sake. In what follows, I will demonstrate how much of Heidegger’s discussion of such related issues as subjectivity, truth and necessity draws the consequence of this ontological primacy of involvement.

It might be objected, that for Heidegger ‘possibility’ signifies most of all a possibility of human existence. But that is only partially the case. It is true that in *Being and Time* Heidegger thinks of possibility primarily as an ‘existential’, or as a determinant of a possibility-of-Being of Dasein (as a category is for entities of kinds other than Dasein). But then he goes on to say:

‘Not only is the world, qua world, disclosed as possible significance,
but that which is within-the-world is itself freed, this entity freed for its own possibilities' (Ibid., pp. 184).

Thus any entity is disclosed relative to some possible involvement in which this entity may play a part. Understanding, made possible by the structure of the world according to the system of Being and Time, also reveals this very structure. It is in Heidegger's terminology equiprimordial with the world, so that the two necessarily co-exist together.

The world as a totality of possible involvements always includes more than the actual involvements we do enter, precisely because it is determined by possibilities. This conception of the world lies behind the assertion that the world is the transcendent: 'World, as the totality of the essential intrinsic possibilities of Dasein as transcending, surpasses all actual beings' (MFL., pp. 192). It becomes clear that Heidegger's concept of transcendence is a surpassing of the actual situation to an understanding of possibilities of involvement. The world is most of all a transcendental requirement of understanding as far as it depends on the possibilities of involvement. At the same time it is the world as a transcendental condition which allows any situation to be disclosed as actual in understanding.

3. The World and Nature

The concept of the world as developed by Heidegger from its essential relation to human beings turns out to be something quite different from the world as a totality of entities. Heidegger claims, that it is in fact impossible for entities to constitute a totality regardless of the transcendental structure of the world, to which access is given only to transcending entities, or entities of the kind Dasein. I believe this should be interpreted as a conceptual point, meaning that the concept of a totality of entities only makes sense on the basis of understanding what an entity is. Entities form part of the totality of nature not in virtue of any of their particular characteristics, since no test is available or required to decide whether a particular entity is part of the totality of nature or not. If to belong to nature is to be an entity qua entity, then to conceive of the totality of nature presupposes the transcendental structure of the world in which beings are understood as such, within free involvement in some meaningful activity.
Only on the background of a totality of involvements, that reveals what entities are, we can construct the concept of all entities which actually exist.

Thus the concept of world derived from its essential relation to human beings is prior to the one derived from nature as the sum-total of entities. That of course does not mean that entities cannot exist without the existence of the relational totality of the world, which in turn depends on the existence of human beings. The entire argument relies on understanding as disclosure, and hence it has no implications on situations where nothing is disclosed. As a relational totality, the world, being a transcendental condition of understanding, can have no bearing on the question whether things can subsist independently of human beings, consciousness etc. Nature is independent of the world, but human beings are not. Nature itself remains the same whether a disclosure of nature occurs or not. Entities of kinds other than transcending Dasein can undergo an “occurrence” of ‘world-entry’, while Dasein entities are always already in the world, which Heidegger calls Dasein’s ‘thrownness’—they always find themselves already involved in something on the background of a totality of possible involvements. The world as transcendental condition could not be without the existence of entities of the kind Dasein as the transcending, and vice versa.

Heidegger concentrates on the phenomenon of involvement, and demonstrates that it presupposes the world as a relational totality of possibilities. I believe his view is internally coherent and does present a challenge to the traditional conception of the world as a totality of entities, or even of possible states-of-affairs. However, I did not find in Heidegger a direct criticism of the traditional view, except with regard to its internal lack of clarity concerning the basic concepts it employs. What Heidegger requires to be able to fully substantiate his conclusions is a clearer argument to the effect that the phenomenon of meaning itself would be impossible if we disregard human involvement. This, I shall argue, is precisely what Wittgenstein provides.
B. Wittgenstein and the Notion of a Relational-Totality

The *Tractatus* begins with a discussion of the world, which later plays an important role in Wittgenstein's treatment of the limits of sense, the metaphysical subject, will, religion and ethics. But in his later period\(^5\) there is hardly any explicit discussion of the world as such, nor much on at least the four latter topics mentioned above, mainly because he considered them philosophically-laden terms that should be avoided (cf. PI, p. 97). However, many commentators noticed that a totality of meaningful practices is sometimes referred to by Wittgenstein, usually with the expression `form of life'. In this chapter I argue that Wittgenstein's later views on meaning imply such a necessary totality, and that Wittgenstein was not unaware of this fact. I will claim that a single meaningful practice, which Wittgenstein sometimes illuminates with the help of language-games\(^6\), only makes sense if a totality of meaningful practices is presupposed. Although I will refer to forms-of-life below, I do not intend this to be a thorough discussion of the various interpretations offered for what exactly they are.

The main methodological instrument of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is without doubt the `language-game'. A language-game is roughly a segment of language interwoven with human behaviour and characterised by grammatical perspicuity. That means that the rules governing the way signs function within a particular language-game are clearly and exhaustively defined:

> 'It disperses the fog to study the phenomena of language in primitive kinds of application in which one can command a clear view of the aim and functioning of the words... I will...sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game... I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the “language game”.'\(^7\) (Ibid., p. 5,7).

\(^5\) and especially during the 1940's when his philosophy took final shape.

\(^6\) I take this expression to be a methodological tool in Wittgenstein's philosophy and not something people are commonly engaged with. People do not play language-games, if not for their own amusement, as for example, they take turns in calling-out given words at a given signals from a "conductor", or such like.
I will follow Wittgenstein in calling the composite relation typical of language-games ‘language-in-use’. Wittgenstein argues that language-in-use is a necessary and sufficient requirement for meaning and understanding. It is well-known that he rejects the view that these phenomena are constituted by mental-content, demonstrating that it fails to account for the application of language to human dealings in the world, and yet that without such application statements fail to mean anything. I will discuss the claim that mental content in particular is insufficient to determine meaning in the next chapter. Here I will mention his more general argument against his own early picture theory, that no picture can determine meaning.

In the *Tractatus* ‘A picture is a representation of states-of-affairs in logical space.’ (TLP, p. 2.11). P is a picture of F, where F is any possible fact, iff there is a function systematically mapping any element p ∈ P to any object o ∈ F and included in our ontology. Wittgenstein points out that the meaning of an occurrence of a picture changes given different applications it may have. For example, in the builders language-game of paragraph 2 of the *Investigations*, a picture of an object o is applied such that one builder locates o and brings it to the one who held the picture. The same picture of a slab, say, could also be used by the contractor to choose the right kind of slab, and so on.

Another important Wittgensteinian argument comes from the fact that two-dimensional pictures, for example, require a method of projection to derive the right three-dimensional object from them, and this method cannot be supplied by giving further pictures on pain of an infinite regress. A drawing of a cube can thus be easily projected so as to represent a triangular prism for example (PI, p. 139). Wittgenstein concludes that no systematic mapping of statements, thoughts or actions is sufficient to determine their meaning, regardless of there being some meaningful practice of applying those mappings.

Because language-games are designed to have clear rules of application, the way a name signifies within them, a sign refers, etc. are also clear. Hence Wittgenstein

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7 Ambiguities, if there are any, are also determined by the language-game; i.e., according to the rules of the language-game an expression can have more than one meaning. Alternatively, the same expression can have different roles in different language-games.
concludes that questions about the meaning of terms within those language-games can be answered clearly and definitively, disregarding all other consideration. In the builders language-game itself the meaning of the various words is given as ‘A calls them out;—B brings the stone that he has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call.—conceive this as a complete primitive language.’ (PI, p.2). This demonstrates that a language-game is, as it were, a sufficient unit of meaning, since within it some signs have meaning independently of everything else.

The composite relation of language-in-use cannot be broken further. Thus, human behaviour, even if it includes the use of signs, cannot by itself constitute a meaningful language if it is undetermined in what circumstances a particular use of language makes sense:

‘Let us imagine that the people in that country carries on the usual human activities and in the course of them employed, apparently, an articulate language...But when we try to learn their language we find it impossible to do so. For there is no regular connexion between what they say...and their actions...Are we to say that these people have a language: orders, reports, and the rest? There is not enough regularity for us to call it “language”.' (Ibid., p. 207).

This claim seems to me uncontroversial. If an utterance U under given circumstances C means P, however we construe the fact that U means P, we are committed to the view that whenever the relevant circumstances C apply ceteris paribus U means P. Hence the absence of such a regularity entails the breaking of the relation of meaning between U and P, no matter how we construe it. On the other hand, the arguments against the picture theory and the mental character of meaning demonstrate, that the meaning of signs remains undetermined if it is not related to human behaviour, no matter what else the sign is connected with.

The language-game is a self-sufficient unit of meaning, in the sense that meaning could not be broken-up or simplified further than the language-game—every

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*Although of course within the game itself certain necessary conditions and presuppositions may be defined. For example, the builders language-game might be said to presuppose that one kind of stone...*
single word or meaningful utterance is meaningful only within such a language-game. The composite relation of language-in-use is thus a *transcendental* condition of meaning, without which there could be no meaning to any sign, activity or event, regardless of what they are. I will refer to this as principle T. It may be that Wittgenstein of the later period would reject the formulation of principle T. But as long as it simply means that *only* on the basis of language-in-use can anything possess meaning, I think there is nothing he would disagree with.

The above arguments, along with Wittgenstein's arguments against the mental character of meaning and understanding, are in my view arguments for the fact that meaning is essentially relational and is determined relative to human practices involving the possible use of signs and objects. Human beings are therefore a presupposition of meaning and understanding, but *only* in the sense that the question 'what is the meaning of w?' and ‘what can a user of language do with w in given circumstances?’ are not always separate questions. No relation between the meaning of w and the opinions, decisions or wishes of human-beings is implied here.

When Heidegger discusses the kind of being of involvement, he mainly concentrates on the objects we commonly call tools, equipment, instruments and so on. Although he later goes on to say, that language itself can be understood as ready-to-hand, or as equipment (BT, pp. 204). Wittgenstein, on the other hand, establishes an important similarity between the way we handle tools and the phenomenon of meaning in general. Meaning, like instruments, must be understood as dependent both on human-beings, their purposes and activities, and the things these signs stand for, with the possibilities defining what can be done with them. It is well known that Wittgenstein used the metaphor of instruments to describe the phenomenon of meaning. He frequently asserts: ‘Look at the sentence as an instrument, and at its sense as its employment’ (Ibid., p. 421). Wittgenstein's arguments against the mental character of meaning hence substantiate Heidegger’s

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9 Without, of course, implying an instrumentalist view of language, according to which we invent language uses for particular purposes. Although this may sometimes be the case, all invention, considerations of purposes and so on are themselves meaningful activities. The relation between language and human activities is a condition of meaning, and is hence presupposed whenever an activity or a sign possesses meaning.
claim, that the Being of any entity is understood fundamentally in terms of involvement.

If language-games are self-sufficient minimal units of meaning, then meaning presupposes human-beings acting within their world. It is thus typical of any language-game that a certain purpose must be attached to any particular application of it, since without it there would be no reason to start its application in any particular case, nor to stop applying it once started. In other words, a particular meaningful practice defines what to do in order to act correctly, not when or why to act in a given manner. The fact language-games are played for a reason entails that a full understanding of any language-game can only be achieved on the background of the totality of practices of language-in-use. We can understand a particular language-game, say the builders language-game of paragraph 2, independently of anything else. That is implied in the self-sufficiency of the language-game. But without understanding how building is interwoven into the entirety of the builders’ lives, the purposes it serves and its importance within their community, they would appear more like ants than humans—they lack any choice in what they do, nor can we make any sense of why they do what they do.

Rhees has already noted the problem, discussing Wittgenstein’s assertion that ‘It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle’ (PI., p. 19). Rhees writes:

‘The trouble is not to imagine a people with a language of such limited vocabulary. The trouble is to imagine that they spoke the language only to give these orders on this job and otherwise never spoke at all. I do not think it would be speaking a language.’ (Rhees, 1970, pp. 76).

Newton Garver concentrates on this point to support his claim that Wittgenstein’s use of the expression ‘form-of-life’ is such that there is a single human form of life characterised by the ability to use language. Garver notes that Rhees’ problem persists even if we do not interpret ‘form-of-life’ to refer to a single language-game, but also if it refers to different spoken languages as a whole:

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1 A claim made by many, and which Garver calls the ‘standard reading’ of this expression.
'There is no interesting sense in which I must imagine different forms of life when I think of French and German... It is, on the other hand, very easy to imagine a whole series of families, each speaking a different language, in which the patterns of the lives of the family members and their relations to one another ... are barely distinguishable.' (Garver, 1994, pp. 246).

I shall refrain from evaluating Garver’s position in detail. For my purposes it is sufficient to note, that in case it is clear to all participants what meaningful practice they are following, the participants need not know anything beyond the meaning of that particular practice to be able to follow it. In this sense we can imagine a language-game to be a ‘whole primitive language’. But as long as such language-games are played for a reason, speakers go in and out of them in a succession that must itself make sense, given their purposes, intentions, habits etc. In that case we must presuppose a totality of meaningful practices on the background of which a participant can decide to follow any particular meaningful activity.

If we accept Garver’s suggestion that the expression ‘form-of-life’ refers precisely to a single relational totality of language-in-use, then it is the name for a transcendental condition of meaning. But even if we disagree with Garver’s interpretative suggestion, it is still the case that the difficulties he and Rhees noted point to the fact that a particular meaningful practice presupposes the totality of language-in-use if it is to be entered for a reason, which is an essential part of human life as it is.

Thus Michael Kober, who believes there are many human forms-of-life according to Wittgenstein, still argues that to any particular form of life, shared by a particular community, corresponds a ‘world-picture’. He describes this notion as ‘The intuitive, practical rather than discursive sharing of views exhibited in customs or institutions somehow overlapping, supporting or supplementing each other.’ (Sluga and Stern (ed.), 1996, pp. 419). Kober claims that the world-picture corresponding to any form of life is a certain totality which cannot be broken further, precisely because indefinitely many meaningful practices within the form-of-life already presuppose it. For example, the claim that the earth is round.
...is embedded in several of our practices: our accepting pictures of
the earth from satellites, using globes, looking for flight paths, detecting
the form of the earth’s shadow during lunar eclipse, listening to tales
from trans-world travelers...’ (Ibid.)

adhering to this world-picture also precludes indefinitely many other practices, such as
searching for the edge of the world, or for the black moon “Lilith” supposed to explain
lunar eclipses, and so on. In a way it effects the totality of what a form-of-life such as
ours take to be meaningful, not discrete “bits” of individual meaningful practices. If we
are inclined towards Kober’s interpretation, at least this much can be said regardless of
the particular form-of-life to which we belong—to any form-of-life corresponds a
world-picture of some sort, on the background of which do particular practices make
sense to its members.

Hence we can find in Wittgenstein an implicit claim that the particular meaning
of any self-sufficient segment of language-in-use already presupposes the totality of
language-in-use, that is a precondition of the phenomenon of meaning. The totality of
language-in-use, although analysable into separate independent segments, is a
presupposition of the meaning of any sign.

I believe therefore that within Wittgenstein’s discussion of the phenomenon of
meaning there is a similar view to Heidegger’s, that meaning presupposes a totality
which is relational and underlies human purposive involvement. Only on the
background of such a totality can a particular sign have meaning and a particular
human activity make sense, and this totality cannot be broken to its components
without the phenomenon of meaning in general being lost.

Another similarity between Wittgenstein and Heidegger is that the irreducible
relational totality of the world enters the consideration along with the free purposive
action typical of human dealings in the world. Because in Wittgenstein, as well as in
Heidegger, meaning is defined essentially with relation to human behaviour, free
purposive action is not a component that is added after entities or signs already have
meaning. Both therefore challenge the traditional view, according to which purposive

11 Although (again) not explicitly found in Wittgenstein as it is in Heidegger.
or “practical” considerations are external to the consideration of the meaning of signs activities or events.

The main difference between these two thinkers is that what for Heidegger is an explicit topic under discussion in many of his works, is for Wittgenstein part of his main methodological principle in dealing with the question of the foundation of meaning. Heidegger’s discussion can therefore prove helpful in bringing to the fore the presuppositions of Wittgenstein’s methodology, but I believe that Wittgenstein ultimately provides better argumentative support to his claims about the foundation of meaning, although this will have to be demonstrated in full in the next chapter. All the themes that will be discussed in the rest of this work have been mentioned here in a rough and schematic fashion— the human subject, normativity, logical necessity, freedom and theoretical perspectives on meaning. My purpose here was to introduce the centrality of involvement to both thinker’s discussion of these topics. The rest of this work is an in-depth exploration of each of those themes.
The Relational Subject

A. Heidegger on Dasein

1. Dasein as the Kind of Being of Human Beings

Transcendence is the subject’s understanding of Being, manifested in its unique capacity to enter freely into possible involvements within the world. Correspondingly, the essence of any entity is given by role it plays in a possible involvement. But if so, then to be a transcending subject, an entity which understands and acts on the basis of such an understanding, is essentially to have available a totality of possible involvements, or to be-in-the-world. This is a relational conception of the subject, since the subject is conceived as Being-in-the-world, and cannot be defined without reference to its relation to a world. According to this conception, the subject possesses characteristics contradicting the traditional view, which stems from Descartes’ conception of the ego. I will argue, that both Wittgenstein and Heidegger hold the relational conception of the subject, which is expressed in their various arguments against the Cartesian view. I will try to show that again Wittgenstein’s arguments against the Cartesian picture lend strong support to the claim that Heidegger’s view of the subject is indeed the correct one.

Heidegger’s discussion is intended to show the ontological primacy of the relational conception over the Cartesian non-relational one, or that the Cartesian ego is a derivative mode of the subject defined relationally. Heidegger is thus mainly concerned with revealing the element of reasoned preference involved in adopting the attitudes which are typical of the Cartesian subject. According to Heidegger human beings can limit
themselves (not necessarily consciously) to some subset of their possible involvements, that is associated with Cartesian entities, activities such as cognition, intuition, etc. and derivatives of these. But this limitation happens necessarily on a background of other possible involvements, over which the Cartesian ones are preferred for some reason.

Wittgenstein, on the other hand, focuses on the phenomenon of meaning itself and argues, that the Cartesian conception of the subject fails to account for it. If the Cartesian conception of the subject was correct, human-beings would not be able to understand the meaning of signs, activities or events. If Wittgenstein’s arguments are sound, they substantiate Heidegger’s claim, that adopting a Cartesian attitude does involve an element of freedom.

At the outset of Being and Time Heidegger defines Dasein to be the kind of entity to which an understanding of Being essentially belongs: ‘Dasein is in such a way as to be something which understands something like Being’ (BT, pp. 39). Heidegger often equivocates between using ‘Dasein’ as the name of an entity – human beings – and of a kind of Being which this entity has, as when he writes: ‘Dasein is the kind of Being which is in each case mine’ (Ibid.). I will reserve the term ‘Dasein’ to refer only to the kind of Being that human beings have (and sometimes as a shorthand for the complex expression ‘entities of the kind Dasein’), and ‘human beings’ to refer to the entities themselves.

As we have seen, an entity with an understanding of Being necessarily acts in a way that is ultimately grounded in purposes desired for their own sake. Whatever circumstances have to hold in order for such a purpose to be achieved, they would constitute a form of involvement with particular entities. Hence entities of the kind Dasein live for the sake of some possible forms of involvement they may (freely choose to) have with entities in the world. These possible forms of involvement are available to Dasein on account of the understanding which define it as a kind of Being, so that entities of the kind Dasein can have a free involvement with entities within the world. It follows that entities of the kind Dasein live for the sake of their own possibilities, and that it essentially understands its own Being:

‘In determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of
a possibility which it is itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands' (Ibid., pp. 69).

‘Dasein’ is a technically defined notion, even if the sort of involvement which defines it definitely plays an important role in human life. This is not surprising given that Heidegger develops his analysis of Dasein’s involvement in *Being and Time* in view of everyday human dealings in the world. I believe this raises the question, is Dasein really the kind of Being of human beings? In other words, is it true to claim, that:

‘Transcendence is rather the primordial constitution of the subjectivity of the subject. The subject transcends qua subject; it would not be a subject if it did not transcend.’ (MFL pp. 165)

The question therefore becomes: is the essence of the human subject rightly defined as Being-in-the-world?

The only viable alternative to Heidegger’s conception of Dasein is the non-relational conception of the subject, as an entity independent of the world, even if necessarily co-existing with it. Such an entity could be defined by listing possibilities which it essentially possesses, such as cognition. In the course of his explication of his conception of Dasein in *Being and Time* Heidegger discusses this alternative, which goes back at least to Descartes. Heidegger claims against it that it fails to adequately clarify some of the basic terms it employs, for example ‘thought’ and most importantly ‘Being’. However, the fact that the meaning of these terms, or even of indefinitely many others, has been assumed in advance without adequate clarification does not entail that the Cartesian conception is necessarily wrong. Nevertheless, I believe that an argument against the Cartesian view of the subject can be constructed from Heidegger’s discussion of Descartes and Kant in *Being and Time* and other places.

This argument is another important instance of Heidegger’s argument from ontological primacy. The argument attempts to establish, that for Dasein the opposing non-relational conception of the subject is a possible derivative mode, but a non-relational subject cannot provide the basis for the kind of free involvement typical of Dasein.
Coupled with the fact that human beings are involved with entities in the way Dasein is defined to be, this argument substantiates the conclusion that Dasein as transcendence into a totality of possible forms of involvement is the correct conception of the essence of the human subject. Heidegger argues against the possibility of constructing the phenomena of the world starting from a non-relational conception of the subject in several places. I choose to concentrate on his discussion of the traditional problem of the external world.

2. The Cartesian Ego and Realism

Heidegger discusses Kant's attempted proof of the existence of the external world, and tries to demonstrate that it fails. He claims Kant's argument, if successful, proves the existence of a necessary connection between two different kinds of entities that are taken to exist independently, namely the changing mental perceptions in the subject and the persisting things or objects that are perceived. 'Independence' here means strictly that what the subject is can be defined without a necessary reference to anything outside it.

According to Kant, for perceptions to be present a perceiving subject is necessary, while objects can persist in time unperceived. Kant argues for this claim by showing that even the internal consciousness of a continuous time could not be formed directly on the basis of the changing perceptions which are immediately accessible to the subject, and hence this consciousness presupposes a relation to things which persist independently of our direct perception of them. Heidegger argues that even if we allow this we have only proven a necessary connection between two kinds of entities that are (directly or indirectly) accessible to the subject, and in no way the existence of a reality "external" to that subject. Persistence without direct perception is as much a mode of accessibility to the subject as persistence only in direct perception, since both are equally coherent with the identification of persistence with perceptibility (BT, pp. 248). The difference can be reduced merely to a difference in the modes of perceptibility—in the case of object, intersubjectivity and persistence through time apply, in the case of sense perceptions, they do not. Indeed, if we understand Kant's proof in this way, then it might contradict a sceptical-empiricist view of the kind Hume offers at places, but even an extreme idealist as
Berkley could agree with it*. Proving the existence of the external world from a worldless starting point is what I will refer to henceforth as defeating Berkeley’s challenge.

I do not wish to enter into a discussion of Heidegger’s Kant interpretation more then absolutely necessary at this stage, so I admit from the start that a less evidently Cartesian view of Kant could be given and has been given by various people. I would rather discuss the conclusion Heidegger draws from his argument, which seems premature even if we concede everything he claims. He asserts that:

‘The ‘problem of Reality’ in the sense of the question whether an external world is present-at-hand and whether such a world can be proved, turns out to be an impossible one...’ (Ibid., pp. 253).

This conclusion only follows from a generalisation of Heidegger’s argument against Kant, which must demonstrate in effect that realism becomes an impossible thesis to prove starting with a conception of the subject as separate from the world.

I believe Jean-Luc Marion’s development of the essential differences between Heidegger’s conception of Dasein and Descartes’ ego cogito provides the key to such a generalisation. Marion observes, that Descartes’ ego is defined as a kind of substance, which is distinguished from all other (imperfect) substances by its essential activity – that of thinking. As such the ego imposes a restriction on everything outside itself, as far as it is to be aware of it. Accessibility to the subject is restricted to cogitata -- whatever we can be cognisant or immediately conscious of:

‘...with the ego cogito the everything else only has the status of cogitatum because I am limited, qua ego, to the cogiare. By contrast, on the basis of Dasein, the Da imparts upon everything else nothing less but Sein, being. There where the ego invites thought or rather lets itself be thought...Dasein

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1 I return to this theme when I address Heidegger’s discussion of Kant again in chapter 4.

2 Although it is arguably the case that under the wide definition of Cartesianism in operation here, Kant remains within the confines of Cartesianism. After all, the transcendental subject of pure apperception is defined without reference to a totality of possible forms of involvement, as the unity of representations in one consciousness.
And the ego of certainty it gives being by determining the manner of Being of other beings... (Macan, 1998, pp. 84).

Hence for a being of the kind of Descartes' ego the existence of an external reality, if it is not a contradiction in terms as Berkley thought, is at least ultimately grounded on the definitive activity of the subject. Accessibility to the subject must therefore determine the Being of all entities, as far as any knowledge of them is at all possible.

This points to an important difference between the Cartesian ego and Heidegger's conception of Dasein. While, as we have seen, Dasein has its own Being as an unresolved issue, the ego is completely certain of its own Being as a thinking substance. And the ego grounds the existence of anything else by reducing it to entities of the level of certainty it has of its own cogitata (Cf. Ibid., pp. 86). This result is not limited to Descartes' metaphysical view of the subject. It would be of little interest to us if it did. One of Descartes' own major interests, and definitely his most important contribution to the history of thought, is the method he aimed to establish. Descartes' methodology, it is generally held, lies behind modern logic, epistemology and science. In What is a Thing? Heidegger discussed the essential relation of these to mathematical thinking, and of the latter to its Cartesian presuppositions.

Heidegger quotes three of the twenty-one methodological principles Descartes gives in his Rules for the Direction of the Mind:

Regula III: "Concerning the objects before us, we should pursue the question, not what others have thought, nor what we ourselves conjecture, but what we can clearly and insightfully intuit, or deduce with steps of certainty, for in no other way knowledge is arrived at.

Regula IV: "Method is necessary for discovering the truth of nature."...

Regula V: "Method consists entirely in the order and arrangement of that upon which the sharp vision of the mind must be directed in order to discover some truth. But we will follow such a method only if we lead complex and obscure propositions back step by step to simpler ones and then try to ascend by the same steps from the insight of the very simplest proposition to the knowledge of all others." (in BW, pp. 300)
3 This in effect is Kant's own conclusion as well, as I will discuss further in chapter 4.
We may focus on three main points evident in these rules: i) the supremacy of the question of knowledge and the doubt connected with it; ii) insistence on a single method for justification of knowledge; iii) this method must originate from a single simple principle of certainty. Heidegger claims it is principle iii) which is the most fundamental of the three, and he notes that the axiomatic structure i) refers to is typical of mathematical systems, and is found in the original Greek definition of the mathematical:

'To the essence of the mathematical... belongs the axiomatic, the beginning of basic principles upon which everything further is based in insightful order' (Ibid).

With Descartes, therefore, a quasi-mathematical axiomatic structure is accepted as the form of any enquiry after knowledge. In other words, mathematics determines the formal methodology of metaphysics, as it becomes primarily concerned with the question of certainty. Such a methodology necessarily involves a search for the basic principles of all knowledge, not of a particular realm of knowledge to which a particular set of axioms belongs, as it was with Aristotle for example (cf. Metaphysics, IX). Without it, as Descartes observed, the whole structure of human knowledge can rest upon false premises.

A prerequisite of such a principle is that it would be the ground of any possible principle whatsoever. It is the principle of the possibility of an axiomatic structure as such. It is thus the principle of any possible determination (and hence knowledge) that something is the case, and since Aristotle this principle has been understood as the general form of the proposition. Propositions are elements of assertive thinking, hence they already presuppose the possibility of thought as such. Descartes concludes that the general form of a proposition presupposes an entity that has thinking as its essential activity. Using Aristotelian and subsequently Cartesian terms, thinking would have to belong to its substance, which means it is by definition the Cartesian *ego cogito*. Descartes demonstrated, that a subject which asserts can necessarily assert its own existence. Hence the methodological principle calling for a quasi-mathematically sound body of certain knowledge, based on certain first principles and a method of deduction which preserves
truth, is the only one open for the Cartesian subject. It is the only way in which it can
come to know any fact external to its mental states.

There are thus two necessary and sufficient characteristics to any activity open to
the Cartesian ego: The understanding of truth in terms of certainty defined as
impossibility of doubt; and grounding the existence of any object, or the truth of any
assertion, back upon principles with such a mode of certainty. If this conclusion is correct,
then as far as epistemology and transcendental idealism conform to these characteristics
they would be open to the Cartesian ego. Arguments for the existence of an external
world, which rest upon epistemological or roughly Kantian grounds, are ultimately
grounded in a subject defined independently of everything else in the world. They are thus
incapable of defeating Berkeley's challenge— to point to an entity whose essence is not
determined by its mode of accessibility to the subject or the thinking substance, which is a
paraphrase of naive realism.

The non-relational subject is in fact even more confined than that. Since the mental
life of the Cartesian ego is non-perceptible from the second perspective, the ego itself is
inaccessible by perception. However, perception is precisely the ultimate ground of all
knowledge for the ego, and hence the subjectivity of others cannot be grounded beyond
doubt, can never reach the level of certainty one has of one's own subjectivity. Heidegger
touches the issue of the problem of other minds in passing, probably because for his
conception of Dasein the problem (much like the problem of the external world) cannot
even arise. One can recognise the Dasein of others by perceiving their involvement with
things they encounter in their surroundings, because free involvement is definitive of
Dasein, or in other words involvement which possesses an explicit demand for reasons:

'Theoretically concocted 'explanations' of the Being-present-at-hand of
others urge themselves upon us all too easily; but over against such
explanations we must hold fast to the phenomenal facts of the case which
we have pointed out, namely, that Others are encountered environmentally'
(BT, pp. 155).
If we add essential solitude to the ego’s confinement to mental objects we can conclude that the non-relational conception of the subject leads necessarily to transcendental solipsism, or the view that truth is ultimately grounded in the ‘I’ alone, even if the existence of the external world and other minds can be so grounded. But if the Cartesian ego cogito is essentially a transcendental solipsist, then the existence of anything external to the subject essentially cannot be known with certainty. Such certainty is only achieved by reduction to worldless mental content which the ego can know with certainty. Hence, though it required a more elaborate proof than Heidegger gives in Being and Time, I believe his claim that without assuming the existence of the world in advance it could not be proven at all is correct.

Furthermore, if the non-relational subject is necessarily a transcendental solipsist, it is hard to see how it can come to define itself in terms of possible involvement with entities, which is diametrically opposed to its essence. In fact, of course, it is far more common in philosophy to take the subject to relate to entities by way of propositional attitudes, a disinvolved contemplation of states-of-affairs which determines its truth-value and modality. However, an entity which is freely involved with entities within-the-world must define itself in terms of possible forms of involvement, as I have argued in chapter 1. In order to be freely involved with entities an entity of the kind Dasein must understand itself in terms of possibilities preferred for-their-own-sake; thus it must be already essentially related to the totality of such possibilities, which is thus constitutive of that entity. The subject could not be constitutive of this totality in turn without an obvious logical circularity. If it is correct that free involvement presupposes access to the totality of the world, then a subject capable of such involvement cannot be the ultimate ground of this totality itself.

The activity of willing has often been added to thinking in the essence of the subject in an attempt to solve this problem. But unlike cogitation, where the subject is independent of its cogitata as the one conscious of them, an act of will is determined with necessary reference to states-of-affairs within-the-world, so that one can only want what one knows to exist and be available. Because the notion of will is bound up with free rational choice, it could be shown to depend on the relational conception of the world.
presented in the last chapter. As already essentially relational the will cannot be invoked to explain how a non-relational subject achieves the form of involvement with entities typical of Dasein.

To complete the argument from ontological primacy we have to show, that starting from the Heidegger’s conception of Dasein the theoretical attitude typical of the non-relational subject could be established as a possible mode of involvement for entities of the kind Dasein. It is not difficult to demonstrate this, because in order to be able to enter into an involvement with things freely Dasein must necessarily have the ability to detach itself from any particular involvement, and as a limit case to avoid any form of involvement, at least with a particular group of entities. Dasein can exist in the midst of things it is aware of without an involvement with them, and in that sense be indistinguishable from the non-relational subject. But for Dasein it is always just one possibility among many, and the one farthest removed from its essential properties.

I believe therefore that the argument from ontological primacy successfully establishes that the human subject cannot be defined without its relation to a world, a relation it can only have on the basis of transcendence. A Cartesian philosopher determined to maintain her conception of the subject is forced, by the conclusion of this argument, to claim that human involvement with entities simply cannot be justified, requires a leap of faith or something to that effect.

I believe that Wittgenstein’s discussion of the Cartesian conception of the subject takes care even of that last desperate escape of the Cartesian. By concentrating again of the phenomena of meaning, Wittgenstein attempts to demonstrate, that a Cartesian conception of the subject fails to account for the phenomenon of meaning at all, and is hence confined to total senselessness.
B. The Anti-Cartesianism of Wittgenstein’s later-period

1. The Private Language Argument:

It is well known that one of Wittgenstein’s major concerns in his later period, and the centre of much of his philosophy of psychology, is to claim that language, meaning and understanding could not be mental-contents. He then goes on to show that, on the contrary mental states are distinguished from everything else in the world on the basis of the unique features they possess, as determined by the way we use terms referring to mental concepts. The mental and the material, or the subjective and the objective do not constitute essentially different domains of reality. Correct manipulation of signs is where all essence is expressed (PI, p. 371).

On various occasions Wittgenstein demonstrates that having a mental object or image is neither necessary nor sufficient for constituting the phenomena of meaning and understanding. I will begin by discussing his arguments against the necessity of mental objects, and then move on to discuss his arguments against their sufficiency for constituting the phenomena of meaning.

Mental objects are unnecessary because when we infer that a sign has a particular meaning, or that a person understands that meaning, we make no reference to mental-objects, but rather to the way that sign is used in actual circumstances alone. In the opening paragraphs of the *Investigations* Wittgenstein deals with an argument for the necessity of mental objects, resting on the fact that understanding a name is independent of whether the object it refers to exists or not.

It seems the meaning of a name is the object it names, as Wittgenstein himself claimed in the *Tractatus* (TLP, p. 3.203), and also that the meaning of a name is independent of the existence of this object in the world. Therefore the name must refer to a mental representation of the worldly object. In reply Wittgenstein describes a situation in which the sign ‘N’ is used as a name for a tool in the builders language-game (which he
introduces in paragraph 2), and the tool it refers to has been broken. He then asks when it would be right or wrong to say that the name lost its meaning. He observes that the way to answer this is to ask:

'what will B do? Well, perhaps he will stand there at a loss, or shew A the pieces. Here one might say: "N" has become meaningless. But we could also imagine a convention whereby B has to shake his head in reply if A gives him the sign belonging to a tool that is broken.—In this way the command "N" might be said to be given a place in the language-game even when the tool no longer exists, and the sign "N" to have meaning even when its bearer ceases to exist.' (PI, p. 41).

What this shows is that the way a name is correlated with the behaviour of those who know how to use it, is the only criterion of deciding the meaning of a term, and that although a name may refer to an object simply as a "tag" in some circumstances, it can function differently given others. If the way the sign N is used is given, we could measure B's mastery of the language-game involving N by his ability to respond correctly in each case in which it has meaning. In proof of this, Wittgenstein claims that even a sign which does not refer to any object in the world might have meaning if there is a convention determining how to respond to its use in given circumstances. For example, producing a sign for a non-existent tool might be a kind of a joke among the builders (Ibid., p. 42).

That leads him to his famous conclusion that 'for a large class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word “meaning” it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in language.' (Ibid., p. 43).

Barry Stroud discusses another possible argument for the necessity of mental objects to constitute meaning, relying on the inten tional character of the mental and of meaning alike. Some mental-states as well as signs refer to things or states-of-affairs, while material things and states-of-affairs do not, though they may be causally connected with them. Signs taken simply as physical facts are therefore meaningless, and we have to assume a mental background or "accompaniment" of the sign to give it meaning. Stroud argues that a mental image attached to a meaningless sign would still not provide a clear criterion for its meaning. A mental image or picture could be in principle fully represented
by a material one, and is hence on a par with the sign it is supposed to give meaning to. Thus *ex hypothesi* it cannot provide sufficient criteria for constituting or understanding meaning (Sluga and Stern (ed.), 1996, pp. 300).

But even if mental objects cannot constitute meaning by themselves they might still be necessary for the constitution of meaning. If intentionality is indeed an inherently mental phenomena, it may still be the case that the meaning of signs must be mentally represented in order to refer. Stroud cuts his discussion short by presenting a Wittgensteinian argument for the insufficiency of mental-objects to establish the phenomenon of meaning. But I believe that Wittgenstein does deal with this argument for the necessity of mental objects.

Wittgenstein asks us to imagine a person identifying a sensation by a sign “S”, first, without being able to provide a particular use for this sign, then, once this use is provided. In the first case, even if we assume there is a mental object correlated with the sign, we have no way of knowing anything about that mental object. However we define it, would bring it under a category for which we have use in our language. That move could only be justified if such use of the sign S makes sense, but criteria defining that are missing *ex hypothesi*. Thus even characterising the object referred to by S as ‘mental’ begs the question in this respect:

> What reason have we for calling “S” the sign for a sensation? For “sensation” is a word of our common language...So the use of this word stands in need of justification that everybody understand.—And it would not help either to say...that he has something—and that is all that can be said. “Has” and “something” also belong to our common language...’ (Ibid., p. 261).

On the other hand, let us suppose that the sign S is given a use in language. For example, it is shown that whenever a person has the sensation S that person’s blood-pressure is rising. In that case, even supposing that the person constantly fails to recognise the mental-object correlated with S, or even that there is no such object, we can define the meaning of the sign according to the place accorded to it in a particular language-game with the term ‘sensation’. It would be related to the meaning of ‘high
blood pressure', perhaps the way the sensation of heat is related to a certain high scale of temperatures:

'And what is our reason for calling “S” the name of a sensation here? Perhaps the kind of way this sign is employed in this language-game.—And why a “particular sensation,” that is, the same one every time? Well, aren’t we supposing that we write “S” every time” (Ibid., p. 270).

I believe this allows us to conclude, that the use a sign has within a system of signs gives it its intentional character, or that the rules determining the circumstances in which it is used properly allow it to relate to states-of-affairs. The fact that signs can refer to non-existents and that signs are intentional does not substantiate the claim that mental-objects are necessary conditions of meaning, or that meaning implies more than can be included in descriptions of the use of signs.

Wittgenstein’s claim that mental objects are insufficient for constituting meaning is widely discussed in connection with his rule-following and private-language arguments. In brief, Wittgenstein demonstrates that no expression of a rule can guarantee its correct application. Whatever reasons we have to apply a certain formulation in a particular way, there might be reasons just as compelling to apply it in another way. Hence any expression of a rule cannot in and of itself clearly define the way the rule is to be applied. Further or more elaborate expressions of the same rule could not supply that clear definition either, for that would lead to infinite regression. In other words, even given that the expression of a rule represents a mental object, it would still not supply us with clear criteria for its correct application, which is necessary to establish the meaning of that expression:

'Say I want someone to... raise his arm. To make it quite clear, I do the movement. This picture seems unambiguous till we ask: how does he know that he is to make that movement?—How does he know at all what use he is to make of the signs I give him, whatever they are?—Perhaps I shall now try

4 I do not wish to enter into a fully developed discussion of this widely know aspect of Wittgenstein’s philosophy. I shall therefore try and confine my description of Wittgenstein’s arguments to those details that most interpreters take for granted. Although I do not necessarily assume that my claims have actually been made by someone.
to supplement the order by means of further signs, by pointing from myself to him, making encouraging gestures, etc. Here it looks as if the order is beginning to stammer.' (Pl, p. 433).

The rules of application themselves cannot be mental-objects because they cannot be private in the sense of being accessible only to a particular mind. If they were they would again fail to provide any criteria for the correctness of the application. If any person’s mental contents provide the criterion for the correct application of a sign, then by definition that person cannot go wrong in applying that sign, in the same way that no-one can be wrong about their own mental contents. But that would mean that any way that person applies the sign is by definition correct. There is no way of distinguishing the case of understanding the rule from the case of thinking or believing the rule is understood. An incorrect application has simply not been defined. The sign can mean everything, and therefore means nothing:

'...if everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there could be neither accord nor conflict here. And hence also 'obeying a rule' is a practice. And to think one is obeying a rule is not to obey a rule. Hence it is not possible to obey a rule 'privately': otherwise thinking one was obeying the rule would be the same thing as obeying it.' (Ibid., p.201-202).

Another problem with the application of a rule being a mental-object is that the application is in principle infinite. We usually need to specify the conditions under which our actions come to a satisfactory end, since we are in principle able to go on indefinitely. If the application of a rule is a mental-object, then it is an infinite mental-object. In that case, anyone who mastered the rule of addition for example, would have to know immediately the answer to any possible addition by intuition, because they would be directly acquainted with it: '[But] you don’t want to say that you thought of the step from 1000 to 1002 at the time—and ever, if you did think of this step, still you did not think of other ones... What is the criteria for the way a formula is meant? It is, for example, the kind of way we always use it, the way we are taught to use it.' (Ibid., p. 187,
But if the rules of application cannot be reduced simply to mental entities and are essentially publicly verifiable forms of involvement with entities, then mental-content is insufficient to determine meaning.

Having rejected that mental-objects are either necessary or sufficient for constituting the phenomena of meaning and understanding, Wittgenstein goes on to reject the relevance of mental-objects even to the meaning of mental phenomena by demonstrating how the meaning of mental phenomena terms is established by public criteria for correct application as well. This is a move from a general proposition to a special one included under its scope. Hence the relation of mental-objects to mental phenomena cannot but be a contingent relation, because no reference to a particular mental object is required for the statement ‘I thought of you yesterday’ to be true. It might be for example, that my mental images while uttering the statement was of a blurred image of my friend, the book I want to ask him for (this is why I thought of him), or of the words we last said to each-other, and so on. What is not contingent is that mental-contents like images, memories etc. can be helpful within possible practices involving mental concepts, as well as the concepts of ‘meaning’, ‘understanding’, ‘explanation’ and so on. Thus, it is psychologically proven that anagrams, rhymes and images can improve people’s memory. These techniques are often taught to people who have to use their memory a lot in special courses. But those mental-contents cannot be used to determine that meaning.

One conclusion to be drawn from Wittgenstein’s argument against the relevance of mental-objects to meaning, is that the Cartesian definition of the subject is internally incoherent in the same way the notion of a private language is. Hans Sluga claims, that this is ‘since the language which the subject of the first two Cartesian Meditations speaks cannot be an external language – for it is accepted that we may be confused and deceived about everything external…’ (Sluga and Stern (ed.), 1996, pp. 342). More generally, if the subject and anything it is possibly aware of could be shown to exist independently of public criteria of meaning which presuppose the existence of the world, then a private language would be possible, and vice versa. This is because the Cartesian subject can only be immediately aware of its own mental content. If the Cartesian subject could come to understand meaning, then mental entities are at least sufficient to constitute meaning, and
that I have taken to be rejected by the private-language argument. I believe therefore that Wittgenstein’s arguments against the mental character of meaning and understanding provide the missing argumentative support for his and Heidegger’s denial of the Cartesian picture of the subject.

Hans Sluga notes that this is what enables Wittgenstein to reject both Cartesianism and its behaviouristic alternative. Wittgenstein’s argument would be an argument for behaviourism, if it is presupposed that signs simply represent states-of-affairs in the world. Rejecting the relevance of mental-objects to the meaning of signs leaves material or observable states-of-affairs the only possible referents of mental terms. But:

"Wittgenstein’s argument is really directed against assumptions that the mentalist and the behaviourist share, that is, the assumptions that the subject must be conceived as an object and that any meaningful noun or pronoun in our language must be a name or a description of an object... [Wittgenstein’s] position is best described... as antagonistic to certain common philosophical viewpoints. Thus, we can say that he is anti-Cartesian, anti-Russelian, anti-Freudian, antiobjectivist and antibehaviourist in his thinking about the mind, without being able to identify anything positive from which these negative conclusions might be thought to derive." (Ibid., pp. 141).

I believe though, that Sluga is drawing a hasty conclusion here, from the fact that it was indeed one of Wittgenstein’s major concerns to demonstrate the inadequacy of many philosophical accounts of what the subject is, and from Sluga seeking Wittgenstein’s view mainly in the sections where Wittgenstein discusses the non-referential use of the pronoun ‘I’. But Wittgenstein’s “positive” view of subjectivity could be found, I suggest, in the fact that human-beings are essentially participants in any meaningful practice, or players of any possible language-game, the properties of which have been discussed in the previous chapter.
2. Human-Beings and Language-games

Human-beings as possible players of any language-game cannot be disembodied subjects, since certain physical fact about the physical organism *homo sapiens* must be taken into account in establishing the practices associated with the meaning of signs. That we eat, sleep, socialise, have the senses we do, have certain capabilities of movement in our arms and legs, all determine in some way the shape of human practices associated with meaning. On the other hand, they are not simply physical-biological entities. One fact of their nature—their ability to use language—allows them to take part in indefinitely many practices. We use language to invent new forms of language-in-use, and in poetry, prose, rhetorics, but also science, technology and colloquial jargon we make use of this ability for a variety of reasons and purposes. Also, among the possible purposes of drawing a limit are stepping over it, widening its scope, etc., hence what constitutes the limit of sense may completely change under different purposes.

These considerations lead to the following conclusions. First, human-beings as the users of language cannot be conceived as disembodied subjects, nor as physical-biological entities, nor as a combination of both. By themselves mental-contents and physical-biological behaviour cannot constitute the phenomenon of meaning, and so if human-beings are taken to be such composite entities they would be incapable of understanding meaning (outside perhaps a limited ability to respond to particular signs). Human-beings may share important characteristics with animals or Cartesian subjects. But as far as human activities involve understanding, they are fundamentally different from these (actual or hypothetical) entities.

Second, the nature of human-beings cannot be given independently of the various activities in which they partake, along with their relative importance, the purposes they

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5 Where we presuppose that human-beings are the only intelligent beings there are. Of course, there are limits to how much human-beings can differ in their nature, as individuals, groups and as a species. There are, in other words, cases in which we would be hesitant to call an entity human even if it used a language: depending on the circumstances, it may be an animal, a monster, a mutant, an alien, a ghost and so on. And there are cases in which an entity that did not use language could be called “human” on biological grounds, as are Swift’s “Yahoos” or the humans from “Planet of the Apes.” But as far as the nature of an animal is decided on the basis of its characteristics observed by zoologists, human-beings can
serve and so on. Their common ability to use language makes it possible to distinguish human-beings from any other kind of entity. But it means that, collectively and individually, they can be totally different from each other. They can differ by way of the sense they make of a situation in front of them. This difference is manifested in their overall behaviour, and thus it is a difference in their nature, in accordance with the way zoologists determine the nature of an animal: 'It is sometimes said that animals do not talk because they lack the mental capacity. And that means: "they do not think, and that is why they do not talk." But—they simply do not talk. Or put it better: they do not use language—... Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.' (ibid., p. 25) What it is to be a subject is hence determined essentially with relation to the totality of language-in-use opened to that subject.

It is precisely the fact that human-beings live within a meaningful totality of language-in-use which is, contra Sluga, their "positive" defining sense according to Wittgenstein. This definition appears nowhere in his writings in the later period. Like the relational totality of the world, Wittgenstein's positive view of subjectivity is determined within his methodological principles of examining actual language-games. I argued that human-beings defined as such are a presupposition of Wittgenstein's explication of the phenomenon of meaning.

In all the points mentioned above Wittgenstein's conception of human-beings as language users agrees with Heidegger's conception of Dasein. Since Heidegger is explicitly concerned with the concept of transcendence, his conception of Dasein is explicitly designed as an alternative to the Kantian transcendental subjectivity, which is non-relational. While Wittgenstein's discussion is transcendental at least in the sense that it accords with principle T, and focuses on the necessary and constitutive conditions of meaning.

They both offer a relational definition of the subject, so that human-beings can be defined a priori only as a necessary condition of the existence of meaning, and so as display an indefinitely large variety of behavioural traits which is capable of change and evolution, in which they may be actively engaged.
necessarily existing within a totality of meaningful relations to things. Of course, Heidegger's conception of Dasein includes much more than what was discussed here. Heidegger's final (and hence most fundamental) understanding of Dasein is in fact as temporality, and I cannot see how Wittgenstein could accept that. But it is still an open question how much of Heidegger's discussion of the essence of the human subject is in agreement with or at least bears on Wittgenstein's thought.

C. Disjunctivism and the Relational Conception of the Subject

It is worth-while at this point to consider a recent view in the philosophy of mind which rests on quite similar criticisms against the Cartesian picture of the mind, to the ones I presented above. According to John McDowell for example, if mental-states remained the same regardless of how things are in the external world, the representational relation between mental-states and the world would completely break down. If mental appearances are essentially separate from the world, it becomes problematic how we can describe or individuate a particular such appearance in terms of objects belonging to external reality. For example, it becomes problematic how one can say that one has the visual experience of a chair standing in the corner, if it is at the same time totally unrelated to the external fact of a chair standing in the corner. McDowell writes:

'This makes it quite unclear that the fully Cartesian picture is entitled to characterise its inner facts in content-involving terms—in terms of seeming to one that things are thus and so—at all...In disconnecting experience from the external world, the fully Cartesian picture makes it problematic how the items it pictures can be anything but dark.' (McDowell and Petit, 1986; pp. 152,158).
McDowell wishes to maintain Descartes' insight that the subjective realm is a 'region of reality'. In other words, McDowell accepts that there are determinable facts about appearances—that things appear to be thus-and-so to someone. But in order to reach the full Cartesian picture, he claims, a further condition must be imposed on the kinds of facts which belong to the subjective realm. I.e., that they must all be infallibly known from the subject's own point of view and totally transparent to introspection (Ibid., pp. 148). This condition, he argues, is necessary if we want to hold the complete autonomy of the subjective realm from external reality, or in other words, that the truth of facts about the subjective realm should be determined irrespective of external reality.

McDowell rejects that further condition. In its stead, he holds that a single fact about appearances may either be a case of external objects being present in one's experience, or a mere appearance. This is the core of the disjunctivist position on perception. This view is hence externalist about perception. 'Of facts to the effect that things seem thus and so to one, we might say, some are cases of things being thus and so within the reach of one's subjective access to the external world, whereas others are mere appearances.' (Ibid., p. 150). If this is correct, then the subjective realm contains more facts than those which can be known infallibly and are open to introspection. One has no privileged position on which of the two disjuncts holds one perceives, since that depends on the state of things in the world. But since facts determining what disjunct holds in a particular case, determine what mental-state a subject is in, this view '...makes it possible for you to know the layout of my subjectivity better than I do in a certain respect, if you know which of the two disjuncts obtains and I do not.' (Ibid., p. 154)

As a result of the disjunctivist account of the subjective realm there is no longer a clear demarcation line between the subjective and objective realms. In particular, infallible and fallible knowledge no longer belong exclusively to one or the other. The two possible disjuncts belong in the subjective realm, but our knowledge which holds at any given moment is (at best) fallible, just as facts pertaining to external reality. In that case, even if a Cartesian forces us to agree that we may never know which of the two disjuncts holds in

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6 This causes perhaps some distress for his attempt to reject the existence of internal objects. But I will leave that question untouched.
any particular case, we are not forced to lose our grip on the external world completely: ‘Even if we make the admission, it does not go beyond the ancient sceptics’ renunciation of knowledge of external reality. There is nothing here to exclude the ancient option to live comfortably in the world without aspiring to know it.’ (Ibid., pp. 150).

Although McDowell is somewhat unclear about how much of the Cartesian picture he accepts, the subject can definitely still be defined as an entity which thinks in his picture. I take it in broad terms to mean that a particular kind of activity, to which perception, conception and rationalisation belong, constitutes what it is to be a subject. Disjunctivism comes down to claiming that the existence of certain objects and states-of-affairs within the world sometimes function as constituents of thought. In other words, to be ‘external’ means to be an object of an external experience.

This contradicts the relational conception of the subject, which maintains that the subject is constituted essentially with reference to a world in which it is involved with entities. McDowell promises to bring back the world within the reach of subjectivity without moving to a full-blown relational conception of the subject. If McDowell’s disjunctivism is able to constitute involvement, from a conception of the subject which makes no essential reference to a world, then my arguments against the Cartesian picture of the mind do not support a relational conception of the subject. My claim that if a relation to a world is not assumed in advance, the world cannot be brought within reach of the subject, would be false.

McDowell renounces the demand for infallible knowledge as the basis of the mind’s relation to external reality. The stress of his argument is on the metaphysics of mind he is offering, according to which external reality itself is an object of experience. He wishes to separate it from the epistemological problem of knowing how to distinguish the two possible disjuncts. His claim is that there is no direct inference from the epistemological problem to a particular conception of the mind.

But surely, to make sense of this conception of external reality, as well as the notion of two different mental-states that are phenomenologically indistinguishable, one has to offer some criteria of distinguishing between them. McDowell’s definition, that in the one case it is an external fact being present to one’s experience and in the other it is
not, cannot function as a criterion. We are looking for criteria to call a fact ‘external’. McDowell’s criterion simply begs the question.

This is a problem for the epistemological task of distinguishing the two disjuncts. As Glendinning and De Gaynesford have recently argued (Glendinning and De Gaynesford, 1998) that because McDowell retains the Cartesian assumption that experience is inherently first-personal, he is left with no way to answer such a challenge:

‘The sceptic’s conclusion is only that, in every case, one must suspend judgement as to which [disjunct holds]. And our view is that McDowell’s adherence to the traditional conception of human subjectivity leaves him without the resources for answering such a question.’ (Ibid., pp. 29).

But it is, contra McDowell’s response, also a problem for the metaphysical model itself. Without such criteria there could be no justification for ever calling anything an ‘external experience’, and we may doubt whether we understand this term at all. As an experience we never know we had, it falls neatly into Wittgenstein’s arguments against the sufficiency of mental content to constitute meaning mentioned above, which McDowell also wants to accept.

This may become clearer if we consider a typical case of having an experience, for example, seeing red. Consider a philosopher who claimed that every case of seeing red is either a case of perceiving something red or something of a different colour, which merely appears as red. If we are not given any criteria for distinguishing the two cases, we cannot refute the claim (it is in fact unclear what would refute or verify it), but at the same time we cannot take this distinction seriously. It is in fact unclear what ‘taking it seriously’ would entail, if for all intents and purposes it appears as if it is red. Now consider the same fact is explained to a colour-blind person who cannot distinguish red and green. The problem disappears, since obviously nothing stops that person from learning, say, that grass is green, as long as she relies on the truthful judgements of others as criteria. Hence no matter how McDowell may respond to the epistemological challenge presented by Glendinning and De Gaynesford, the need to provide criteria of distinguishability between
the two possible disjunctions is necessary for his view, that the world is an object of a kind of experience, to even make sense.

I believe that there are strong restrictions on what can possibly serve as criteria for distinguishing the disjunctions from each other, without this view collapsing to the relational conception of the subject. I do not know, however, whether McDowell has reasons to object to this or not. First, the above considerations imply that these criteria cannot be merely fallibly known, since they must provide the means to know which of the disjunctions holds at a given moment. Second, McDowell has given us nothing to contradict the Cartesian assumption that only facts of appearance and analytic truths can be infallibly known. Yet the force of the sceptical argument is precisely that the existence of external reality does not follow from those. I will discuss these two points in turn.

It is a common interpretation of Wittgenstein that criteria provide defeasible evidence for certain states-of-affairs, but if we give fallible criteria for a mental-state to be a case of presence of the external world, then it may be the case that these criteria are met while we are actually having a mere appearance. Such criteria would hence fail to escape the Cartesian sceptic's challenge. McDowell, who wishes to maintain that our experience of criteria does not fall short of experiencing the facts these criteria are for, expressly rejects this view. McDowell in fact acknowledges that externalism of any sort is inconsistent with the notion of fallible or defeasible criteria:

'The idea of a fact being disclosed to experience is in itself purely negative: a rejection of the thesis that what is accessible to experience falls short of the fact in the sense I explained, namely that of being consistent with there being no such fact.' (McDowell, 1982, pp.472).

The problem McDowell sees with the idea of defeasible criteria is precisely that they would not yield defeasible knowledge, but actually no knowledge at all:

'But since 'criteria' are defeasible, it is tempting to suppose that to experience the satisfaction of 'criteria' for a claim is to be in a position in which, for all one knows, the claim may not be true. That yields this thesis: knowing that someone else is in an 'inner' state can be constituted by being in
position in which, for all one knows, the person may not be in that 'inner' state. And that seems straightforwardly incoherent.' (Ibid., pp. 457).

Regarding the second point, as we have seen, McDowell opts for accepting the argument, but claiming there is nothing in it preventing human comfortable living in the world. Our comfortable living in the world indeed seems the most promising place to look for criteria to establish the sense of the difference between the two disjuncts. In the case of external reality we expect, for one thing, a spatio-temporal continuity. I can, for example, be quite certain that I am perceiving my room where I am sitting (as opposed to merely hallucinating), since I remember more or less what things are in it, I remember having left it in the morning and later coming back to it, the chair holds my weight, and so on. On the other hand, if I have not slept for three days, and then I think I see a movement but there is nothing there when I look more carefully, I am prone to assume it was a mere appearance. In this situation there are also clear criteria for distinguishing reality from illusion.

But comfortable living in the world cannot provide the required criteria without it raising the question, whether everyday human activity does not in fact presuppose a relational conception of the subject, as Wittgenstein and Heidegger have argued. In particular, if we try to distinguish reality from appearance relative to the role these concepts play in meaningful human practices, we may in fact be proving too little by pushing disjunctivism rather than the relational conception of the subject. If this is the case, then disjunctivism cannot rely on meaningful human practices without first accounting for the phenomena of involvement with entities, which a Cartesian is unable to do.

Since the disjunctivist metaphysics of mind still conceives the relation of mind and world strictly in terms of experience (albeit a "direct" experience of the world), and since that was the point of weakness for the Cartesian position, it is hard to see how it can escape the failure of the Cartesian conception to account for involvement. The latter is never available to experience alone without presupposing a prior context of possible involvement.
If disjunctivism is to remain essentially different from the Cartesian conception of the subject as well as the relational conception I am offering, it is hard to see what it can possibly rely on (if the arguments for the dependency of involvement with entities on the totality of the world are correct). McDowell’s criticisms of Cartesian philosophy of mind are quite correct. But it seems to me an impossible task to bring the world in, without relying on human meaningful practices, which in fact presuppose a concept of the world as a background totality of possible involvement. This in turn substantiates the relational conception of the subject rather than the disjunctivist one. Outside that background, if external reality is a constituent of subjective facts, this only means that Cartesian scepticism is now cast over a class of subjective facts as well as on external reality itself.

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7 There is of course evidence that McDowell in fact wishes to rely on meaningful human practices to distinguish the disjuncts. This would make his views sympathetic to Wittgenstein in particular. See for example McDowell, 1982).
Transcendence, Truth and Necessity

A. Truth, Correspondence and Uncovering

In my examination of Heidegger’s concept of transcendence so far, I argued that transcendence is a composite relation between human subjects and a world they live in. To be a subject is to necessarily exist within a world, a totality of possibilities of involvement, not of entities. The relation of transcendence is thus essential to the concepts of both world and the human subject.

In that relation, beings as a whole are transcended or surpassed. The world, conceived as a totality of possible meaningful involvements, is that towards which the transcendence takes place, or the transcendental. For Heidegger meaningfulness is the manifestation of understanding beings in terms of their Being. Hence to transcend is to understand the Being of beings. Heidegger writes that:

‘Being and the structure of Being lie beyond every entity and every possible character that an entity may possess. Being is the transcendens pure and simple... Every disclosure of Being as transcendens is transcendental knowledge’ (BT, pp. 62).

Since the Being of an entity is revealed in possible meaningful involvements in which it has a role, the structure of Being is the world— the totality of possible involvements.

As I argued, the understanding of Being, which is definitive of human beings, depends on the world or the structure of Being. The understanding of Being is therefore made possible by the structure of Being itself. Hence Being and the transcendental are
roughly equivalent to necessary conditions of understanding beings, manifested in meaningful dealings with them on the basis of an involvement in which they have a role:

'...in thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech' (BW, pp. 217).

Heidegger also accepts the traditional view, that understanding implies knowledge of the truth-conditions of assertions, within the context of their use. Hence the conditions of understanding are at the same time the conditions of the truth of assertions. The point of divergence between Heidegger's thought and mainstream contemporary views on truth lies in his radically different conception of truth. Heidegger believes that the truth of assertions ultimately rests on their meaning, in a way that contradicts the common view that the truth of assertions rests only on how things are independently of any human involvement. Heidegger thus comes into conflict with any form of a correspondence theory of truth, but not, interestingly enough, with any form of realism, roughly a view that there are objective facts independent of any human construction. Heidegger can achieve this if truth is successfully shown to rest on involvement, in which the statement of fact has a definitive role. The involvement itself is possible only on the background a mind independent world.

Since Aristotle truth has been conceived in terms of a correspondence between thoughts or propositions and reality. This correspondence has been defined in various ways, and has been taken to hold between the internal and the external or between separate modes of givenness such as concepts and perceptions. But essential to all these ways of defining truth is the idea of a certain coordination between a system of signs representing thoughts on the one hand and states-of-affairs in reality on the other. This coordination determines when statements about these states-of-affairs are true and false.
Formally truth is conceived as a function between couplets of signs and states-of-affairs to truth values.

Correspondence theory distinguishes the subjective occurrence (thoughts or propositions) from the objective facts it represents. It shares with the Cartesian view of the subject the presupposition that the subjective realm is essentially independent of the world, in order to avoid logical circularity. For example, the fact it seems to me to be raining must be logically independent of the fact it is raining, for there to be a genuine problem about how these two facts are related. They would be clearly independent if someone, say, put a video screen and speakers outside my window to deceive me into believing it is raining. But if there are situations, like walking down the street sober at broad daylight, where it would seem to me to be raining iff it is raining, then in these situation the problem cannot even arise.

Heidegger employs his typical strategy against the presuppositions of correspondence theory, which is to show that it fails even to address many of the fundamental issues concerning the concept of truth. If we take a Tarskian disquotational schema, ‘p’ is true iff p’, to represent a typical correspondence-theory account of truth, then Heidegger asks what determines whether-or-not p. To avoid circularity in its definitions a correspondence-theory of truth must presuppose, that the possibility of existence of any state-of-affairs p is independent of the meaning of the sign ‘p’. But p being the case, if it is to be determined at all, must be a possible meaningful occurrence in some involvement within the transcendental structure of the world. In that case whether p and how this is determined depends on the meaning of ‘p’ in Heideggerian terms, or its place within a context of involvement. For example, the proposition p: ‘the British Museum is 120 meters long’, let alone q: ‘the British Museum is 20 meters too long’ depend on indefinitely many involvements, as well as how things are in reality—involvement in measuring according to the metric system, in designing buildings to satisfy certain functional and aesthetic criteria and so on. These determine the meaning of the statement that p, since they provide us with the means to ground it, establish its truth. For the same reason, it is also involved in determining whether or not p.
This is not necessarily an argument against realism (a la Dummet), since it does not contradict a conception of meaning in terms of truth-conditions. All that is claimed is that for an assertion to have any truth-conditions whatsoever presupposes some context of involvement. Heidegger adds that this context itself includes some notion of truth. The understanding of the entities involved must be taken for granted by way of agents' interactions with them, for one to be involved in a particular meaningful endeavour.

To distinguish this kind of truth from the truth of propositions Heidegger calls it ‘uncovering’. To uncover an entity is to be dealing with it in a way which manifests understanding of its place within a possible meaningful involvement. Because the object of human understanding is the Being of entities, uncovering could also be said to uncover the Being of entities as disclosed in the understanding.

To say that an assertion “is true” signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself. Thus truth has by no means the structure of an agreement between knowing and [its] object in the sense of a likening of one entity (the subject) to another (the object). Being-true and Being-uncovering, is in turn ontologically possible only on the basis of Being-in-the-world. This latter phenomenon, which we have known as the basic state of Dasein, is the foundation for the phenomenon of truth (BT, pp. 251).

One important feature of uncovering is that while a particular involvement is underway, the roles it assigns and hence the truths it uncovers are already presupposed. The truth it uncovers thus cannot be false while a given involvement is underway. Propositions expressing uncovered facts can only be false outside the particular context of involvement which takes them for granted. They can turn out to be false either from outside that context completely (from another context), or when the particular context breaks down, and things behave in ways that contradict the possibility of a particular activity. While building a bed it cannot be doubted that the mattress will dissolve through the wood, and if that happened, the whole activity of building bed would fundamentally change. Importantly for Heidegger, this object before us would cease to be a bed and will
become an extant—a bearer of properties divorced from any meaningful involvement. On the other hand, one may construct a wooden platform to check the hypothesis that mattresses do not dissolve through wood. In this case this fact is not taken for granted any more, the experiment would yield results whether it did or not. It is striking though that although someone performing such an experiment would perhaps do exactly the same as a person building a bed, he would actually be operating in a different context of involvement, solely on account of taking different things to be true as part of the activity.

What constitutes truth as uncovering is the meaning of a particular possible activity, the way it is related to the totality of possible involvements. It is derived from the transcendence of the human subject into a world, which makes the particular context of involvement possible, and hence cannot be construed in terms of correspondence. As long as we are engaged in a particular involvement, the truth of certain facts is made necessary, since they are presupposed by the possibility of the activity. If Heidegger argues convincingly, that uncovering is already presupposed by any form of correspondence between assertions and states-of-affairs, it would entail that truth as uncovering rather than correspondence is the more fundamental or primordial phenomenon of truth. I will claim below, that Heidegger’s primordial truth as uncovering should be taken as a definition for normativity which is non-Cartesian and assumes the relational conception of the subject. This would justify the fact, that uncovering possesses a stronger modality than truth, since involvement in a given practice makes its uncovered facts necessary.

According to Ernst Tugendhat (Macann, 1992, vol. III, pp. 80) Heidegger’s argument against the conception of truth as correspondence is developed in three stages. First Heidegger claims that this conception presupposes a prior act of disclosure, or understanding entities in terms of possible involvements in which they have a role; then he extends the concept of truth to any case of disclosure; finally, he demonstrates that any act of disclosure is grounded in the phenomenon of the world. Since the first chapter dealt with the last of these stages, it is the first two on which I intend to concentrate here.

Tugendhat observes, that in his treatment of truth in Being and Time Heidegger moves gradually from the formulation ‘a true proposition uncovers the state-of-affairs as it is in itself’ to the formulation ‘a true proposition uncovers the state-of-affairs’. Yet
Heidegger does not justify this move. With this final move though, Tugendhat claims, Heidegger steps beyond the traditional view, in that he attempts to ground the possibility of correspondence (Ibid., pp. 83).

Tugendhat believes that this move signifies a transition from a ‘static’ to a ‘dynamic’ conception of truth. Under the traditional static conception, the meaning of an assertion represents a possible state-of-affairs, that is verifiable independently of the assertion itself. We cannot therefore simply say that an assertion is true if it means the state-of-affairs in question, and we have to add ‘as it is in itself’. Under the dynamic conception of truth as uncovering, an assertion does not represent a state-of-affairs, but lets it be perceived. Uncovering has to be understood on the background of it opposite-covering up. An assertion brings a possibility out of its covers, and since the possibility is recognised on the basis of the assertion, there is no point is adding ‘as it is in itself’ here:

‘The assertion is true if it uncovers the entity, for, if it is false, it does not uncover the entity at all but ‘covers it up’ or ‘conceals’ it. It therefore already lies in the nature of uncovering as such that it must be true if it is really an uncovering’ (Ibid., pp. 84).

Tugenhat claims, that this account is unsatisfactory with regard to the difference between meaningless and false assertions. By deleting the phrase ‘as it is in itself’ from the definition of truth, Heidegger’s account does not provide the means to deal with that traditional problem, which provided the intuition to distinguish understanding from judgement in the first place. Tugendhat asks ‘How is [truth as] aletheia to be distinguished from [truth as] apophansis? Heidegger gives us no answer to this question because he, in distinction from Aristotle... does not explicitly distinguish the broad from the narrow meaning of uncovering’ (Ibid., pp. 84). However, Heidegger tells us that:

The pointing-out which assertion does is performed on the basis of what has already been disclosed in understanding or discovered circumspectively’ (BT, pp. 199).
I believe therefore that Tugendhat’s account of Heidegger’s conception of truth is inadequate. As we have seen, Heidegger’s conception of understanding and meaning is grounded in the world, which belongs with the kind of Being of involvement, or as it is referred to in the passage above, with circumspective concern. Hence Heidegger provides a clear distinction between truth as *aletheia* (uncovering) and *apophansis*, which actually belong to two distinct kinds of Being. The former depends on an act of disclosure of entities that have definitive roles within a particular involvement, the latter entities we can systematically represent in a verifiable way.

The possibility disclosed in understanding defines the truth and falsity of our understanding, or right and wrong courses of action. For example, a disclosure of a rock as containing a statue determines the correct course of action of the sculptor, and a disclosure of the same rock as potential building material dictates the correct course of action of masons. Truth defined as ‘uncovering’ determines activities that take part within a particular involvement and under specific assigned roles.

Tugendhat’s attempt to define the truth of assertions as uncovering is therefore misguided. If assertions mean the same as propositions, then Heidegger never denied their representational character. He never disagreed with the definition of the truth of propositions as correspondence beyond arguing that it is derivative of another, hence more comprehensive, conception of truth. In so doing he contradicts the correspondence theory of truth. His argument is that whether an assertion corresponds to the fact depends on how the assertion is to be grounded, which itself depends on a particular involvement in which it has a role:

‘to say that “circumspection uncovers” means that the “world” which has already been understood comes to be interpreted. The ready-to-hand comes explicitly into the sight which understands.’ (BT, pp. 189).

The explicitness stressed in that claim means that interpretation is the ‘working out of possibilities projected in understanding’ (Ibid.). The understanding of entities in terms of possible involvements in which they have a role is expressed by actually working out
some such possibilities in human dealings with entities, with a particular project in mind. Thus for example, understanding an object as a bottle of wine made of glass is manifested in handling it with care, bringing it to the table at dinner, opening it and pouring its content into glasses and so on. Any such actual dealing does not engulf the totality of possible involvements in which that entity can have a role, but (as long as it done with an explicit demand for reasons) manifests an understanding of that totality:

.'The circumspective question as to what this particular thing that is ready-to-hand may be, receives the circumspectively interpretative answer that it is for such and such a purpose.' (Ibid.)

Whenever one is dealing with an entity for a particular purpose, one manifests a prior understanding disclosing the Being of that entity, which makes one's dealings at all possible. But if the Being of any entity is disclosed in interpreting it in some actual dealings with it, then the only way to ground the truth of an assertion is to place it within the relevant involvement determining the Being of its subject matter:

The assertion which is expressed is about something and in what it is about it contains the uncoveredness of these entities. This uncoveredness is preserved by what is expressed. What is expressed becomes something ready-to-hand within-the-world which can be taken up and spoken again. (BT, pp. 266).

In other words, assertions mean anything only on the basis of some involvement in which they have a defined role. If their role is to be true or false, the involvement must determine how to go about deciding this. In other words, them being true or false must also have a role within the involvement, which determines to some extent human dealings with them. Assertions or propositions can correspond to the facts only once there are forms of justification determining what the fact are, which depend on involvement. Since involvement possesses its own kind of truth, namely uncovering, the facts which an
involvement uncovers must be taken for granted for any assertion within this involvement to correspond to the facts. On the basis of this argument I believe Heidegger is justified in claiming that uncovering is a more primordial phenomenon of truth, and that the correspondence theory of truth is therefore incorrect.

Correspondence theory in effect limits language to propositions, and human subjectivity to the Cartesian *ego cogito*. The Cartesian subject is only directly aware of its ideas and perceptions, which it is essentially capable of arranging in logical and causal order. As we saw in the previous chapter, language for the Cartesian subject is restricted to a representation of these arrangements of perceptions/ideas and truth to the correctness of this representation. All these reductions must happen together. Truth as uncovering has the same ontological primacy over truth as correspondence, that Heidegger’s conception of Dasein has over the *ego cogito*. What Tugendhat calls ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ conceptions of truth thus belong to cognition and involvement respectively.

Tugendhat claims, that Heidegger’s definition of truth as uncovering implies there must be in the world of circumspective concern a difference corresponding to that between true and false assertions, but that Heidegger does not even see the problem:

‘The question is no longer one of determining whether it is possible to find, in the realm of circumspective concern, a difference corresponding to that between the true and the false assertion. Rather, simply because it uncovers, concern is in general characterised as a mode of truth.’ (Ibid., pp. 88).

I will therefore turn to clarify Heidegger’s phrase ‘a mode of truth’, to inquire whether this is a substantial objection.

Uncovering is manifested in an active interpretation of a disclosure of an entity in a certain way. What can therefore be a meaningless or a false uncovering of this type? It seems to me that a ‘meaningless uncovering’ is self-defeating, since it means that nothing, no-being, has been disclosed, or that no disclosure has occurred. It is manifested in not knowing what to do, and hence doing nothing. While a false uncovering (or covering up)
means that an involvement assigns a role to an entity that is not made possible by that entity. In that case a false uncovering means the same as failed uncovering, an uncovering that does not achieve its purpose, breaks down, malfunctions etc. If, for example, what we took to be a bottle of wine turns out to contain coloured water, it would manifest itself in surprise when we taste it, which may be followed by inquiring how this happened, making sure it is the bottle we actually bought and so on. The involvement in drinking wine with this bottle is thus broken down. A covering up is still based on a disclosure, for the dealings with entities based on it were aiming at some purpose, and hence a meaningful one. The term ‘False’ used in the expression ‘false uncovering’ means something very similar to ‘apparent’, ‘unreal’ and so on.

It seems a problem for my account that there is an asymmetry between true and false disclosures, which is unique to Heidegger’s account, and intuitively unjustified. While a disclosure of possibilities has in a sense already happened whenever we are dealing meaningfully with things, false disclosure can only be manifested in time, when the involvement we were in breaks down. This asymmetry does not exist if we define truth as correspondence, in which case true is correct and false is incorrect representation. Furthermore, this problem does not exist under the pragmatic definition of truth as ‘that which works’ and falsity as ‘that which fails’, in which case both truth and falsity are revealed over time.
1. Asymmetry:

The answer is that this asymmetry is only apparent. This is because understanding, according to Heidegger, makes human involvement in the world meaningful or intelligible. Hence any actual dealing with things, whether successful or failed, presupposes a prior act of disclosure of a possible involvement, merely by being intelligible. Heidegger leaves no room for the idea of a false disclosure, simply because, as Tugendhat explained in the quotation above, a false disclosure is not a disclosure at all, but a closing up. Tugendhat believes this is precisely the problem with Heidegger’s account of truth, since it allows absolutely no room for falsity. But if we can speak, with Tugendhat, about a real disclosure, it must be possible to speak of a correspondingly apparent disclosure as well. An apparent disclosure leads to a certain intelligible activity just as a real disclosure does. But being merely apparent, it eventually leads to failure, and the breaking down of the involvement. It has the same status as a mistake or a false belief.

A mistake can always happen, but one never intends it to happen, or else it would not be a mistake. Similarly, though an indefinite number of our beliefs may be false, we never intend to hold a false belief (though we may be pressurised into pretending we do), nor do we hold false beliefs as false, for then we would not believe them. Heidegger’s conception of truth includes no asymmetry, but is rather symmetrical in the same way that making a mistake and being right, or holding true and false beliefs are symmetrical.

It might be objected, that Heidegger challenged the Platonic distinction between appearance and reality, which under my interpretation is reintroduced at the level of disclosure. However, the distinction between false and true disclosure is not a difference between two independent realms of Being so to speak – the mental and physical – as they are with Plato and the philosophical tradition after him. False or apparent disclosures assign roles to entities just like true ones do, but if these are based on a merely apparent disclosure these roles will break down in failure. An apparent disclosure is therefore revealed to be apparent in failure, or in other words the failure is precisely where an apparent disclosure is really disclosive.
2. The pragmatic conception of truth:

It has been suggested by a number of philosophers that Heidegger, especially in his early period, expounds a view very similar to pragmatism. Within the scope of this discussion I cannot go into this question in detail. I will therefore take it that pragmatism defines the truth and falsity of assertions as dependent on whether they lead to success and failure respectively, with regard to socially-based procedures. Contrary to correspondence theory, the pragmatic theory claims both truth and falsity possess a temporal dimension, since success and failure are revealed over time. Within Heidegger's conception of truth it also possesses a temporal dimension for it is revealed in involvement.

But in fact the pragmatic definition of truth does not solve the problem Heidegger finds in correspondence theory, since success and failure only make sense on the background of some notion of the purposes or goals that were meant to be achieved. Following Heidegger's discussion of the correspondence theory, we may ask how it is that purposes and goals are present to us in themselves at all. As I argued in chapter 1, purposes are only accessible on the background of the world, and hence within some involvement. But if any involvement uncovers a prior disclosure, then the truth of the disclosure is rather the preconditions of any successful or failed procedures. Within the temporal procedure, a disclosure of some sort has already happened. Real disclosure is manifested in working within a particular involvement, while apparent disclosure is manifested (as such) in a failure and the breakdown of the involvement. The manifestations possess a temporal dimension, but the understanding they manifest is a-temporal in the sense of being the condition of the possibility of its temporal manifestation.

If we interpret Heidegger in this way, then worldly procedures which depend on any particular involvement presuppose some truths to be uncovered that cannot be false. Their falsity is revealed only when the procedure fails in some way. In other words, if people are engaged in it, its possibility of taking place is certain, and understanding that

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1 Cf. for example (Ockrent 1988).
possibility is a necessary precondition of this engagement. Truth conceived as such allows no room for falsity while the activity it is uncovering is underway.

Truth as uncovering uncovers possible ways of being involved in the world, not the correctness of representations. Hence it is not manifested in assertions but in a particular real interpretation, when a real interpretation means an activity which is underway, and is hence both meaningful (discloses an entity as something in involvement) and true (uncovers this entity’s possibilities). Real interpretations avoid the need for a distinction between the meaning and truth of an activity, and between their respective contraries, because the fact they are underway guarantees their meaningfulness as well as their truth. Their truth would be challenged when the activity breaks down, and their meaning cannot be challenged at all, but is a possibility of involvement that has been disclosed. This mode of truth thus lacks the characteristics which would justify Tugendhat’s objection.

The truths that a real interpretation uncovers hence form conditions of what I called engagement in a particular activity, practice or procedure in a particular situation, such as making an insurance claim after a fire and the like. These procedures are meaningful and hence based on some involvement. The facts that the insurance company aims to give away as little as possible, but that it is also trying to appear cordial and take minimum hassle dictate the dynamics of the involvement (on the background of other practices, of legal liability, contracting, monetary exchange and so on). Such truths could only be falsified outside the involvement, in our example when someone, say, refuses to negotiate, turns to threats etc., or as I will refer to it, in disengagement from the procedure or practice. As long as engagement in a particular practice is presupposed, the facts it uncovers hold with necessity.

Heidegger’s comprehensive reply to the question how we come to recognise entities in themselves is, that entities reveal themselves as such not in perception but in involvement. Every state-of-affairs verifiable through perception is grounded on a possible involvement in which the entities comprising that state-of-affairs have a definitive role. The truth and falsity of assertions is grounded on real interpretations of possible involvements. ‘Grounding’ here means, that the meaning of the entities which are represented or referred to in an assertion is understood within possibilities of involvement.
The world or the structure of Being is maintained by Heidegger to be transcendental, because it is a precondition of understanding and truth.

This is what transcendental conditions are taken to be since Kant. But Heidegger presents a radically different picture of the transcendental from that of traditional (including analytical) transcendental philosophy. Truths that are transcendently constituted are revealed in involvement, and a particular context of involvement thus determines that some propositions cannot be false. Truth as uncovering is primordial in two ways over truth as correspondence: first, the meaning of assertions depends on forms of involvement in which entities are uncovered; second, within any involvement truth as uncovering possesses a normative dimension, since it cannot be false as long as the involvement in question has not broken down.

**B. Wittgenstein on Certainty and Action**

The fact that some truths are taken for granted, not because of any correspondence with states-of-affairs but on account of the meaning of various human practices is also stressed by Wittgenstein. But Wittgenstein prefers to reserve the term 'truth' to cases in which it would make sense for a proposition to be false as well. Those truths that are guaranteed by the meaning of a practice Wittgenstein calls 'certain', in an objective or logical sense. I will argue that the relation between meaning and certainty in Wittgenstein entails very similar conclusions to the ones entailed by the relation between meaning and uncovering in Heidegger, at least with respect to the points I mentioned above. From the claim that involvement in the world is fundamental to meaning, results the claim that propositions can only be true or false within certain meaningful practices. If so then they must presuppose certain norms and facts made necessary (in a way yet to be determined) by these practices.

I believe Heidegger refrains from discussing directly the relation between uncovering and certainty, perhaps because he associated certainty with the epistemological demands of the Cartesian subject. But to speak of a more "primordial" truth, and in
particular a truth that cannot be false is counterintuitive. Especially since it results in reducing the more familiar definition of truth to a secondary position.

Wittgenstein was concerned to demonstrate that the truth of assertions is always internal to some meaningful practice, but that for every meaningful practice there are certain facts that must be taken for granted if it is to be engaged in. To engage, for example, in building a house one must assume that bricks do not turn soft, that cement sticks bricks together, that the laws of mechanics apply etc. There is no way to list those requirements once and for all, nor for any of them to occur to anyone engaging in building a house. Rather, their actions would not have the sense they do without presupposing these and indefinitely many other facts. Thus Wittgenstein claimed that ‘...it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are in deed not doubted’ (OC, p. 342). That is, there are certain ways of action which lie beyond being justified or unjustified.

This claim has been interpreted to imply a form of linguistic Humean scepticism concerning meaning on the one hand, suggesting that meaning cannot be known with certainty at all2; and a (radically reformed) Kantian realm of practical reasoning, which grounds maxims of actions independently of epistemic considerations on the other. I will mention Paul Johnson’s Kantian interpretation of Wittgenstein below3.

Wittgenstein claims that certain ways of action which are definitive of a particular meaningful practice, lie beyond justification and necessarily hold as long as engagement in that practice is presupposed. One argument he provides in support of this claim is that ‘Justifications by experience come to an end. If it did not it would not be justification.’ (PI, p. 485). Consider this: to know that a certain empirical proposition p is true, we need to justify or give reasons for our belief that p. Any justification or reason we may give, itself includes a proposition q, which to avoid circularity we must assume is not logically dependent on p. To know that q is true we then have to be able to justify it in turn, and so on. If this were the case, then any point at which we stop justifying our beliefs would be

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2 See for example (Kripke, 1982).
3 In many ways Johnson’s interpretation of Wittgenstein points to major differences between the latter’s philosophy and Kant’s. I restrict the use of the adjective ‘Kantian’ to the way I characterised it above.
arbitrary. We never provide a sound justification for any proposition. Hence, for any justification to be sufficient, there must be certain propositions that do not stand in need of justification. To avoid being arbitrarily selected, these propositions must be of a kind that does not require justification, and for which none can be given.

Wittgenstein discusses a special case of such propositions, that are indistinguishable from empirical propositions if we do not know their application. They could even be empirical propositions under specific circumstances. But in others they are used differently. The difference lies in the fact that exempting them from doubt, and hence from the need for justification, is a requirement of the possibility of a certain meaningful practice:

'I want to say, propositions of the form of empirical propositions, and not only propositions of logic, form the foundation of all operating with thoughts (with language)...' (OC, p. 401).

Wittgenstein’s words here can mean either of two things, depending on how we understand the quantifier ‘all’. First, it may mean that some empirical propositions are exempt from doubt for all operating with thought to be possible. Second, it may mean that for any operating with thought there are some empirical propositions that cannot be doubted. There are places where Wittgenstein seems to be taking the first alternative, as when he writes about the statement ‘I know that this is my hand’: ‘What we have here is the foundation of all my action.’ (Ibid., p. 414). Even about this statement, however, Wittgenstein remarks: ‘But on the other hand one can imagine cases—even if they are very rare ones—where this declaration is not superfluous, or is only superfluous and not absurd.’ (Ibid., p. 460). I believe Wittgenstein meant the second alternative, according to which it is a matter internal to any particular meaningful practice which facts and norms it takes for granted. Below I will attempt to demonstrate Wittgenstein’s argumentative support for this claim. Here I intend to give only a few examples that point clearly towards this interpretation: Wittgenstein claims that talking to someone in English precludes the doubt that they speak the language, that playing chess precludes the doubt that the pieces change place of their own accord, and that in the language-game ‘when I call you, come in
through the door', there cannot be a doubt whether there is a door (see p. 345-6, 391).
These doubts though, if they occurred outside the particular context mentioned, would be quite normal and certainly would not rob us of our ability to make judgements at all. I believe Wittgenstein provides a good summery of his view when he claims:

'I want to say: The physical game is just as certain as the arithmetical. But this can be misunderstood. My remark is a logical and not a psychological one.' (Ibid., p. 447).

The truth of such propositions is not self-evident or conceptually different from the truth of "ordinary" empirical propositions, and so they cannot bring the line of justifications to a logically necessary end. That means that knowing them in a way that implies having a justification for believing them, does not involve different procedures of proof from the ones used to establish an "ordinary" empirical proposition. For example, to know whether there is a door to a room we may go and look. But the truth of such propositions is a necessary condition of particular meaningful practices, such as the one involving the statement 'when I call you, come in through the door', as long as it does not break down.

The mere fact that we perform our actions successfully, that the course of events is within the rough boundaries of our expectations, provides the only "justification" we need for the truth of such propositions:

'Would it be correct to say that it is a matter of induction, and that I am as certain that I shall be able to continue the series as I am that this book will drop on the ground when I let it go[?]...To that I reply that we don't need any ground for this certainty either. What could justify the certainty better than success?' (PI, p. 324).

In that sense these propositions are different from hypotheses we act according to but may discover to be false in the normal course of our activity. Signs which may function as
propositions are used in different meaningful practices so that their truth is assumed for the practice to have sense:

‘... That is, we are interested in the fact that about certain empirical propositions no doubt can exist if making judgements is to be possible at all. Or again: I am inclined to believe that not everything that has the form of empirical proposition is one. (OC, p. 308).

From these claim Paul Johnson concludes, that according to Wittgenstein there are bodies of beliefs and attitudes corresponding to such propositional signs, that are exempt from doubt. These beliefs and attitudes constitute the foundations of the way we act, and because they are not given to justification, there is no way to establish their truth other than our satisfaction with the course of events.

Johnson relies on the fact that reasons do not logically entail actions. In the lack of such entailment, he claims, R can be a reason for an action A only if someone has in practice decided to do A on the basis of R. ‘Hence in understanding human action one eventually reaches the bedrock of a reaction, for at some point the giving of reasons comes to an end, and we are faced with the fact that the individual acted as he did ’ (op. cit., pp. 80).

According to Johnson, after we have been given the reasons for a particular action, we may still be perplexed, or we may come to understand how these particular considerations could lead someone to act as they did, and we may even identify with the action taken. But whatever the case may be, apart from a particular person’s reasons for a particular action they took, nothing can provide the means of justifying an action (Ibid., pp. 81). It follows from these claims that those reasons for which a person cannot provide any further justification no longer stand in need of justification for that person, and if someone else still required justification there is no further way of communication between them.

The process of practical reasoning Johnson describes is thoroughly subjective – it is validated only by the fact that it played a role in a particular person’s decision making...
process. If this is correct, then it is a necessary condition of propositions that (as the "bedrock" of action) are practically exempt from doubt, that they are believed by a particular person.

This claim indicates, in my view, a misunderstanding of Wittgenstein. It runs against the conclusions I drew from Wittgenstein's private language argument, since it makes a particular person's understanding of a statement an authority on the statement's meaning. Furthermore, it is contradicted by Wittgenstein's claim, that we do not know propositions to be true at all, in circumstances in which they are indubitable, and that peoples' subjective states do not play any role in determining the certainty he is interested in. Clearly, if we cannot possibly know these propositions to be true, we cannot come to believe they are true either. Wittgenstein's denial that we can know them amounts therefore to the claim that these propositions cannot constitute attitudes or beliefs at all.

Wittgenstein explicitly argues against the idea that "bedrock" propositions form beliefs or attitudes. He claims that if we understand propositions like (K) 'I know that this is my hand' to mean (C) 'I believe with certainty (I am absolutely sure) that this is my hand', then it asserts nothing philosophically interesting at all. C, as Johnson agrees, only tells us something about the person who asserts it. At most, according to Wittgenstein, it asserts that this person is unprepared to believe otherwise or accept anything as proof to the opposite. It is concerned solely with how a person decides to act, and not with the truth of his beliefs at all: 'If someone says that he will recognise no experience as proof of the opposite, that is after all a decision. It is possible that he will act against it.' (OC, p. 368). If the meaning of K is equivalent to C, there are no limits to what a person might believe with utmost subjective certainty. The decision to believe is the only justification for the claim K expresses. Hence propositions of the form of C cannot be used as necessary conditions of engagement in any meaningful practice, because if they were, this meaning would depend on a particular person's decision, which is what the private language argument rejects. Moreover, such propositions are unable to bring justifications to an end which is not arbitrary. We could decide to be certain about any fact, and exclude it from the need for justifications. The activity of justification would become redundant, for we can always stop it at will, even right at the beginning.
K cannot express subjective certainty like the one C expresses. On the other hand, we have no way of objectively justifying K as well. Though many reasons may be given for how ones know that this is one's hand, none of them are known with more certainty than this very fact, or could be better justified. Thus, Wittgenstein concludes that all claim to knowledge with regard to facts such as the one K expresses knowledge of is entirely empty:

'...how is [the assertion that he knows what things are like] distinguished from the assertion that he is sure that things are like that? There is no subjective sureness that I know something. The certainty is subjective, but not the knowledge. So if I say “I know that I have two hands”, and that is not supposed to express just my subjective certainty, I must be able to satisfy myself that I am right. But I can’t do that, for my having two hands is not less certain before I have looked at them than afterwards.’ (OC, pp. 245)

The only way to escape the conclusions of this argument is to establish that K is “objectively” certain, which means that it is excluded from the possibility of doubt, or that doubting it is meaningless. If we can as much as understand how it could be doubted, and since we cannot justify it by any means more certain then it is, we are left with no way to establish its truth. It therefore must have precisely the same status as a logical truth, except for one important difference. Logical necessity could be defined as being beyond doubt under all circumstances, while propositions like K are only necessary given that some meaningful practice applies in particular circumstances (in the case of K itself, circumstances need only be ordinary or unexceptional ones. This is the reason why it seems so fundamentally true, why doubting it seems to throw doubt on every judgement). I will call this kind of necessity transcendental necessity. Given that the relevant meaningful practice applies though, nothing distinguishes K’s transcendental necessity from a logical one—its negation is meaningless. In other words, such propositions belong to the logic of these practices.
‘With the word “certain” we express conviction, the total absence of doubt, and thereby we seek to convince other people. That is subjective certainty. But when is someone objectively certain? When a mistake is not possible. But what kind of possibility is that? Mustn’t mistake be logically excluded?’ (Ibid., p. 194).

As Wittgenstein notes, the consequences of someone uttering both C and K are practical. What follows from them is that a person will ‘act with a certainty that knows no doubt, in accordance with [her] belief’ (Ibid., p. 360). Ascription of C or K to other people will similarly depend on the way they act. But in the case of C this is due to the person, while in the case of K this is due to the meaningful practice itself, and therefore the particular person and their attitudes do not enter the picture. Wittgenstein claims that what K expresses is roughly: ‘This doubt isn’t one of the doubts in our game. (But not as if we chose this game!)’ (Ibid., p. 317). Hence C is beyond doubt as any sincere first-person statement, which could be made false by the person who asserted it simply by a change of mind. If anything prevents us from just changing our minds about C, it is its relation to K, which is beyond doubt because it belongs to the logic of the many activities involving our hands, or it belongs to logic while we are engaged in these activities.

Doubting any part of the logic of an activity is equivalent to doubting that this activity is at all possible, and the best way to refute that is probably to act in a certain way. Hence propositions like the one K expresses knowledge of do not represent facts at all, but possible patterns of meaningful human behaviour. The surface grammar of K itself is one of the reasons of the misunderstanding I have been discussing. If K is taken to claim knowledge of a fact then we need an explanation for the special epistemic warrant of this fact, to account for the certainty with which we hold it.

I believe this is the main upshot of Wittgenstein’s later treatment of certainty. The meaningful practices of asking for justification do not apply to propositions expressing fundamental presuppositions of particular meaningful activities. It is hence a sign of misunderstanding even to ask for our epistemic warrant to hold any such proposition to be true. We require epistemic warrant for claims about the world. But transcendentally
necessary propositions do not have a prestigious epistemic position, when they are used to represent facts in the world. The assertion ‘the engine is working’, said while sitting at home, requires a test of some sort to be verified, just like any empirical proposition. But while driving on the motorway with the car responding to the gas pedal, requiring any epistemic warrant for its truth is a sign of misunderstanding the concept of an engine—the normal explanation would explain what an ‘engine’ is as a word in English, like ‘it is the very thing which drives the car’, rather than a detailed explanation of what an engine actually is. It is hence a misunderstanding of the meaningful practice involving ‘engine’ and ‘car’, not of how things are in the world.

Precisely because some statements can be used to express either a transcendentally necessary or an empirical fact in different meaningful practices, it cannot be anything in the logical form of the assertion that distinguishes its application as necessary or empirical. Rather, the structure of the meaningful practices, the particular situation, personalities and purposes all determine what must be presupposed by the meaning of the practices involved. Although we cannot tell whether an assertion p expresses an empirical proposition or not regardless of the particular circumstances, Wittgenstein believes it is true of any meaningful practice that it takes some things as transcendentally necessary. If that claim is correct, then transcendental necessity is one of the transcendental conditions of meaning. It applies in any instance of meaning regardless of circumstances. Wittgenstein’s main argument to that effect is that for anything to be true or false, some propositions must be assumed transcendentally necessary.

Wittgenstein takes for granted that to know whether a proposition p is true or false, we must be able to test or justify it in some way. This does not commit Wittgenstein necessarily to a verificationist view of meaning and truth. It is no more contentious then the claim that knowledge must rest on grounds, or that accepting certain propositions as facts comes under an explicit demand for reasons. Any theory of truth could be used to supply an account of the situations under which the claim that p is justified. Since the activities of justification, testing, giving grounds etc. presuppose that some propositions need not be justified, the fact any proposition can be either true or false presupposes that
certain facts are transcendentally necessary. In particular, those facts which determine how statements made within the meaningful practice are to be grounded or justified.

Although all true propositions require grounds, these grounds themselves do not always require grounds. A famous example would be justification by induction: though past experience justifies us in making predictions, induction itself has not so far been adequately justified by other means. It is a way of grounding various conclusions, or as Wittgenstein would have it, of various meaningful practices. Thus every proposition that can be justifiably known ultimately presupposes a norm or practice of grounding that is itself beyond being justified or unjustified:

“I Know” often means: I have the proper grounds for my statements. So if the other person is acquainted with the language-game, he would admit that I know. The other, if he is acquainted with the language-game, must be able to imagine how one may know something of the kind... If the true is what is grounded, then the ground is not true, not yet false. (OC, p. 18, 205)

Such facts and norms, as I stressed above, do not belong in the class of propositions for which justification is needed. We do not need a justification for them, for they provide the foundation of a possible meaningful involvement, not of a belief.

‘Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end;—but the end is not certain propositions’ striking us immediately as true, i.e. it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.’ (Ibid., p. 204).

Wittgenstein’s intuitions regarding certainty follow Heidegger’s discussion of truth closely. In both cases the fact that assertions have a truth value in the first place is shown to presuppose the necessity of a different class of statements. The truth of such statements is a transcendental requirement of the possibility of certain meaningful practices. It hence
cannot be false as far as those practices do not break down, in which case statements lose their meaning, or gain another. Holding those statements to apply necessarily is hence a sign of understanding certain meaningful practices and is manifested in action, just as in Heidegger primordial truth cannot be false because it is manifested in active interpretations based on a disclosure of a possibilities involvement:

'The truth of my statements is the test of my understanding of these statements. That is to say: if I make certain false statements, it becomes uncertain whether I understand them.' (Ibid., p. 80-81)

If my conclusions are correct, then Wittgenstein is suggesting that the logic of all meaningful interactions contains transcendentally necessary statements, and we can no more doubt them than any logical statement. There is therefore, I believe, no Humean scepticism implied in Wittgenstein's view of meaning, because transcendental necessity is no less obliging than a logical one, with respect to the meaning of any utterance within a meaningful practice. But there is no Kantian form of practical reasoning implied by Wittgenstein either, because unlike Kant's practical reasoning, Wittgenstein's transcendental necessity does not ground beliefs or subjective maxims of action at all. If transcendentally necessary propositions provide the basis of practical reasoning according to Wittgenstein, it is not because we choose to hold fast to them, but because not to hold fast to them is the same as not understanding their function in a given meaningful practice.

I believe Wittgenstein's discussion of certainty brings Heidegger's condensed discussion of truth as uncovering "down to earth", since certainty is precisely the kind of truth that belongs to any meaningful involvement. Hence both thinkers demonstrate that certainty is a transcendental condition of meaning and is a presupposition of the truth and falsity of any proposition. Also it becomes clear through Wittgenstein's discussion how Heidegger's primordial truth is meant to replace the Cartesian demand for certainty. Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Descartes all agree that if p is certain then it should be logically impossible to doubt that p. But while Wittgenstein and Heidegger see a variety of necessary conditions holding in different meaningful involvements, Descartes's subject can
only accept as necessary what it can deduce with certainty from itself alone, regardless of any worldly circumstances. Their divergence from the Cartesian conception of certainty is hence immediately related to their divergence from the Cartesian conception of the subject, and the ontological primacy of the kind of Being of involvement
The Primacy of the Engaged Circumstances

A. Wittgenstein on Logical Rules of Inference

In the previous chapter I distinguished between logical and transcendental necessity, such that logical necessity is supposed to hold true in all possible circumstances, while transcendental necessity presupposes some particular engaged circumstances, by which I mean a meaningful practice and the context (taken as widely as needed) of its application. But if the truth conditions of any statement depend on the engaged circumstances of its utterance, then whether a particular statement expresses a logically necessary proposition is determined relative to the engaged circumstances. If so then the very notion of a logically necessary proposition becomes questionable. This is not to deny that there are tautological propositions, but that any proposition, tautological or not, can be necessarily true regardless of some engaged circumstances. If I am correct, Wittgenstein in his later period had quite a radical view of logic, on which very little has been written. Heidegger too is known to have held radical and disparaging views on logic in general and modern logic in particular. Here I will argue that there are some fundamental similarities between the perspectives of Wittgenstein and Heidegger on logic. I will try to show that they pose considerable questions on the foundations of the contemporary conception of logic in general, and in particular, on the existence of logical necessity as defined.

I will argue for the conclusion, that taking logically necessary truths to be truths at all is a mere equivocation, as far as the truth of any proposition is supposed to depend on how things are in the world. Rather, the truth of logically necessary statements, as with transcendently necessary ones, depends only on the meaningful practices in which speakers are engaged—no change in the world must be presupposed for them to be considered false.
The claim that tautologies are true (and contradictions false) in all possible circumstances is *prima facie* false if the possible circumstances include ones in which terms are used differently. Obviously, it may be objected, the sense of the tautological statement will have changed in such circumstances. But that is a truism as long as this sense is simply defined by tautologies being always true (or contradictions false). A statement would then be tautological iff, according to a particular practice of inference or calculation, it always comes out true. This is not denied by Wittgenstein's claims as I understand them, since a tautology is then necessarily true (and a contradiction false) as a definitive character of a practice. An affirmation of a contradiction for example, is a sure sign of a mistake in the application of the practice. In other words, there would then be no way of telling what tautologies (or contradictions) are independently of the fact that they are always true (or false). That has nothing to do with how things are independently of the practice.

To ground the commonly accepted view that tautologies are true (and contradictions false) regardless of any circumstances, it must be shown that those practices of inference in which tautologies are true in all possible situations are somehow the correct ones. In that case, a method of inference in which tautologies do not possess this property would significantly change the concept 'true', by which I mean that it would assign different truth-conditions to some contingent propositions. The result would be, if not an entirely unworkable practice, at least a practice that admits a falsity of some sort (beyond the fact it may admit contradictions). Thus if it cannot be shown that a practice that admits some contradictions as true for example, is either unworkable or admits a contingent falsity, then it cannot be shown that the truth of tautologies is necessary regardless of all circumstances.

We require some fact or rule to discover a language in which a tautology such as 'it rains or it doesn't' is false, with reference only to some falsity in the truth-conditions of some contingent propositions compared with English, say. Otherwise the only change in the concept of truth in that language is that tautologies are no longer called 'true' (and contradictions 'false'), which is simply a change in the tags used to refer to them. This implies that calling both tautologies and contingent propositions 'true' in our language is merely an equivocation, and the concepts of 'truth' and 'logically necessary truths' are distinct.
This is a stronger thesis than the one arrived at in chapter 3, that transcendental conditions of particular meaningful practices have the same status as logical conditions given some particular engaged circumstances. The conclusion is that: logical necessity, like transcendental necessity, presupposes some engaged circumstances, and hence that logical necessity is but a subset of transcendental necessity. In consequence, since logical necessity is internal to some meaningful practice, no logical restrictions can apply to possible meaningful practices. I will call this thesis the 'logical primacy of the engaged circumstances' thesis (or the 'primacy thesis' for short). I will argue that Wittgenstein supports this thesis with a series of demonstrations to the effect that whatever seems like a logically necessary truth amounts to a transcendental condition of certain engaged circumstances. Thus, the falsity of a logically necessary truth amounts simply to disengagement from the meaningful practices involved, that is, acting in ways that do not assume those conditions to necessarily apply. I believe that much of Wittgenstein's writings on logic and the foundation of mathematics are precisely such demonstrations, against almost every fundamental logical or mathematical rule of inference. However, I will concentrate mainly on his discussion of the law of non-contradiction (LNC), for two reasons: first, it seems to me the most convincing expression of a logically necessary truth; second, if there are any logically necessary truths, then their denial must lead to a contradiction. Hence if it can be shown that LNC is dependent only on particular ways words are used in the framework of common practices of inference, this puts in question the existence of any logically necessary truth.

A number of objections to this thesis will have to be discussed below in detail. First, there is the problem of the revisability of the rules of logical inference. If logic could so easily be revised without a significant shift in the concept of truth, how is it that logic seems so unrevisible? Second, it might be objected that all the above being equal, it is still the case that any proposition is either true or false (and not both), and that any fact either obtains or not. Furthermore, that for there to be a meaningful practice of any sort, there must be a difference between following that practice correctly and incorrectly. Hence the rules of logical inference are themselves transcendental conditions of any form of involvement, since much like subject and the world, they are already in place given any statement has meaning.
Before arguing for the primacy thesis, I wish to examine Putnam’s claim, that if there are no logical facts – statements that are true of the world in virtue of logic alone – then equally there should be no contingent facts. Putnam argues that this is because both are equally dependent on meaningful practices. If we agree that whether there is a mountain-ash on Putnam’s property is determined not only by the meaningful practices involved, but also by contingent facts independent of any practice, we must admit the same about logical facts:

The content of the judgement that there is a large mountain ash on my property depends on our ‘forms of life’, granted; the fact that there is a mountain ash on my property is in that sense, perspectival, granted; but it is not an artefact of the way we use words that there is a large mountain ash on my property. And no more is it an artefact of the way we use words that Peano arithmetic is $10^{30}$ consistent. (Analyticity and Apriority, AK, pp.91).

It is unquestionably true that if logical facts depend on the engaged circumstances in the same way that contingent facts do, then the conclusion that there are no logically necessary facts would be false. It must be therefore shown how the way logically necessary statements depend on the engaged circumstances is essentially different from the way contingently true ones do. The primacy thesis entails that the proposition ‘there is a large mountain ash on my property’ make sense only within some meaningful practice, and Putnam wants to admit as much. The meaning may determine the truth-conditions of the proposition in particular circumstances, or its possibility of being either true or false, but not which truth-value it has. The engaged circumstances hence provide at most the necessary background for determining whether the proposition is true or false in a particular case. Although in some circumstances denying a contingent proposition amount to disengaging with a particular practice (like denying the sun is shining while affirming it is daylight, as discussed in the previous chapter), there are always circumstances in which it is intelligible and even true to deny a contingent proposition.

But the truth-conditions of rules of valid inference determine which truth value the statements expressing them have. These facts are by definition non-sensitive to
changes in spatio-temporal location, the particular utterer, historical background etc. This amounts to the Aristotelian view that has recently been phrased by Chisholm as: ‘Speaking very roughly, we might say that one mark of an a priori proposition is this: once you understand it, you see that it is true’ (Chisholm in AK, pp. 119). Or as Wittgenstein claims, to assert propositions of logic and mathematics is a criterion for understanding them, and is often used in teaching and testing knowledge of these disciplines:

‘...if I am trained in logic, I am trained to assert certain things and not to assert others...I am not trained to assert that Smith looks sad or that he doesn’t look sad. But I am trained to assert that 3*6=18 and not 19—and logical propositions ...for instance, when I have to pass an exam.’ (LFM, pp.188).

The truth of logical and mathematical propositions is a criterion of understanding them. Their truth value hence depends only on criteria for the use of words, and is unrelated to the way things are in the world. The primacy thesis, claiming meaning is determined relative to the engaged circumstances of an utterance, entails therefore that there are no logical facts as defined, without entailing the same about contingent facts.

Putnam claims there are two equally logically possible reactions to a future discovery of an inconsistency in Peano arithmetic: either we admit the system is inconsistent\(^1\), or we modify what we take to be potential (derivable by *modus ponens*) in the proof. In the latter case, Putnam admits, the consistency of Peano arithmetic is utterly due to facts about human meaningful practices. But in the former case (which is of course the actual case), Peano’s axiomatic formulation of arithmetic is genuinely tested for consistency. The consistency of Peano’s arithmetic, at least up to an indefinitely large finite number of axioms, is therefore a mathematical fact which depends on more than uses of words (ibid., 90-91).

Putnam’s point is that given an effective method of checking or proving consistency in a given system, this system would necessarily be consistent or not.

\(^1\) In which case a number of options are open to us: to renounce Peano arithmetic, to search for a new axiomatic description of arithmetic, to limit the mathematical induction in Peano’s arithmetic (as Putnam suggests) etc.
depending on more than the meaning we attach the terms involved. This is trivially true and is not denied or revised by the primacy thesis. This is because this effective method itself is a possible meaningful practice with the symbols it employs, and any mathematical system would come out consistent or not depending on the rules of the method.

To substantiate his claim Putnam must show that a particular set of axioms is consistent or not depending on more than just the meaningful practice in which they are applied. But this would conflicts with his admission, that the two reactions he describes are equally logically possible. Both depend on a certain method of checking for consistency, and if both are possible, then there is no notion of consistency independent of some meaningful practice— The first reaction takes arithmetic to be a paradigm of consistency, in its Peano formulation. Going through the axioms is perhaps intended to test the consistency of certain logical deductions. The second reaction considers a valid logical deduction to be a paradigm of consistency, as philosophers since Aristotle and Leibniz tended to do. In each case there is a meaningful practice towards which we take the first of Putnam’s reactions, making it a paradigm of consistency. If both are logically possible, then one notion of consistency is not essentially better than the other.

Putnam’s argument hence fails to show that there is a method of inference or calculation that depends on something other that the meaningful practices involved. I believe therefore that Putnam is wrong in claiming, that if the meaning of any statement depends on some engaged circumstances, then denying (or affirming) logical and mathematical facts goes hand-in-hand with denying (or affirming) physical contingent facts.

In what follows I trace Wittgenstein’s attempt to argue, that rules of inference depend exclusively on some engaged circumstances. He offers two main lines of argument:

i) As Wittgenstein argues in the *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, it is inessential to logic that it should contain only tautologies, or that logical propositions be taken as necessarily true. It is still possible to keep the truth conditions of any contingent proposition exactly the same, not assuming the above. Tautologies are hence not true in the same sense contingent propositions are, since they are simply assumed true in a particular method of calculation or proof. Denying the facts to which
tautologies allegedly refer does not cause a change in the concept of truth that carries to the truth-conditions of contingent propositions.

ii) Any rule of inference could be assumed to be invalid within certain deviant practices that are not essentially unworkable, or necessarily admit falsity. These practices may not meet standards set for what we want inferences to do and how we want them to be, but at most we can refrain from calling these practices 'inferences'. They would not be flawed in a way that there is at least one contingent fact which is either denied or indescribable in them.

i) In Lecture 19 on the foundation of mathematics Wittgenstein said:

we could do logic a different way. If it is a law of logic that 'p=q' is a tautology, then you might say it is also a law of logic that 'p=q' is not a tautology. So instead of proving that certain propositions are tautologies, you could do logic by proving that certain propositions are not tautologies. For here we say experiential propositions—but we do not use them as experiential propositions. A propositions would result of the form '(p.q)⇒r' and the whole point of it would be to show that you can't infer r from p and q.' (LFM, pp. 278-279).

This contention can be made a little stronger: suppose that some people, perhaps more sympathetic to Wittgenstein's denial of the existence of logically necessary facts, refrained from treating tautologies as necessarily true, and in fact avoided them as we avoid contradictions. These people do logic the way Wittgenstein describes, perhaps because they use logic to check theories for contingent, empirical (what they regard as valid) reasoning.

The point is that in this case the truth conditions assigned by this logic to any contingent proposition remain exactly the same as in classical logic. But in this logic tautologies are not taken to be true—nothing is admitted as possible evidence that 'p or not-p' for example. Instead, it could be assumed that tautologies and contradictions do not stand in potential relations to any contingent proposition, so that the
truth-value of such propositions cannot be effected by tautologies.

To see that clearly, suppose that in this logic there was a third truth-value, roughly translated as 'trivial', which is the value of both tautologies and contradictions. It is defined such that implication between a trivial and a contingent proposition is false in both direction; that with all other logical connectives the trivial proposition cancels out (such that \((p \text{ and } q^*) = p\) etc. where \(q^*\) is trivial), and that the value of any logical combination of trivial propositions is trivial. Perhaps the method of *reductio ad absurdum* is not available in this logic as a result of not distinguishing "trivially false" and "trivially true". Be that as it may it is not inconsistent and it would assign the same truth-value as classical logic to any contingent proposition. Hence no change in the concept of truth is required in order to deny that tautologies are true, only a change in the practice of doing logic.

A possible objection to this is that whatever the truth-value of tautologies is taken to be in this logic, it is still the case that its deductions rely on a notion of necessary truth, since the results of these deductions are still necessarily truth-preserving. I believe this objection does not rob Wittgenstein's claim of all its importance, since a similar point cannot be made about empirical propositions. If some people just decided that the proposition 'the earth is round' is trivial, that would effect an indefinite number of other propositions, such as 'the ball is round', 'the earth is flat' etc., whose truth-conditions are correlated with it through possible lines of deduction. But because tautologies entail nothing but tautologies, claiming they are trivial or even do not possess any truth-value has no such effect, and this difference is important to note.

ii) Nevertheless, the first point on its own does not establish that it is wrong to say that tautologies are true independently of any engaged circumstances. To do this Wittgenstein needs to show, that if we take for example the law of non-contradiction (LNC), its truth relies *only* on the engaged circumstances no further fact independent of them. Wittgenstein said:

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\(^2\) I will return to the matter of *reductio ad absurdum* below.
One wants to say, "can't you see? I can't sit and not sit at the same time." One even uses the phrase "at the same time"—as when one says, "I can't talk and eat at the same time". The temptation is to think, that one is asked to do something that he quite obviously can't do. (Ibid., pp. 185).

But there is an important difference between the two statements. One can conceivably try to talk and eat at the same time, obviously failing to be intelligible. But if one can as much as try to fulfil a contradictory command, then one may also succeed. In a known folk tale, a king asks a young woman to come to him neither in light nor in darkness, neither dressed nor undressed and bring him a gift that is not a gift. The wise woman came to him at dusk, wearing only a fishing net, and gave him a dove which flew away immediately. In what way is it right to say her actions were not complying with the requests? What, for example, is the mistake in coming to the king at dusk? Anything we say would amount to the claim that dusk does not fall under the description 'neither light nor darkness', but we cannot say what does, or even would.

Essentially, when we deny we can both sit and not sit at the same time, we have no clear idea what we are denying, since if we had a such clear idea, it is a contingent matter whether we can carry it out, and nothing stops us from trying. We are denying that anything which might possibly happen would count as sitting-and-not-sitting for example. But this is a point about the meaningful practices of negating, commanding, describing, sitting etc. and the circumstances of employing them. A contradictory statement could be made perfectly intelligible within deviant practices, for example, if in order to sit-and-not-sit one had to sit and talk at the same time, or perhaps hover half a inch above the chair, in which case it would be genuinely impossible to sit-and-not-sit at the same time. The same intuition perhaps led Russell to his famous joke, that Hegelians (who accept that contradictions, understood deviantly, do occur) would say the king of France is wearing a wig— for in a strange turn of speech there would be no mystery in someone having hair and not having hair at the same time.

It would be unhelpful to claim, that the way we actually understand contradictions entails that they cannot be true, granting different possible understandings of the contradiction. There is no way to explain what this sense of contradiction is, without using the LNC in the definition; for in order for 'p is true' to
entail 'p is not-false' truth and falsity must be both exclusive and exhaustive—and that is just a possible formulation of LNC. This supports the primacy thesis, which maintains that the falsity of contradictions is their definitive sense, and so corresponds to no fact independent the meaningful practice or describing, commanding and the like.

Graham Priest (Priest, 1998) claims that we should admit that some contradictions could be true even when understood in a less radically deviant way. Priest employs a roughly Quinean notion of rationality, being a holistic and broadly pragmatic consideration of the best possible explanation of the evidence. He wants to argue that consistency is not a necessary condition of rationality so conceived, so that some contradictions can both be true and rationally believed. To give a demonstration he invokes the "paradox of the preface": a writer of a non-fiction work (ideally) believes and intends the readers to believe that all the claims in the work are supported by the best available evidence and so should rationally be believed; on the other hand it is strongly inductively supported that all non-fiction books we know of turn out in some future date to contain at least some false statements. It is thus rational to believe that not all claims in the book are true. Hence it is rational both to believe that all the claims in the book are true and that not all of them are true to the evidence at the same time.

One possible attitude to the paradox is as a problem in rationality—in that case LNC is maintained as a necessary part of rationality, and the appearance of the paradox demands explanation, for example one that will show these are not really contradictory statements, since they refer to different temporal domains: up to and after the publication of the book. Another is to accept it as a genuine true contradiction, as Priest believes we should. Instead of trying to dissolve the paradox, we can maintain that both beliefs are indeed rational. To avoid the contradiction rendering the whole process of deduction trivial, he offers a simple model of a paraconsistent logic (PL) to replace classical logic—a logic in which p entails not-not-p but 'p is true' does not entail 'p is not-false'. As this demonstrates, the difference between the two attitudes does not involve a change in the truth-conditions of any contingent proposition, but only in the practice of inference:

3 There are of course problems with this response, but these are immaterial to the point I am making.
4 I will describe this system in little more detail below, but I need not for my purposes describe it in full.
‘...there are criteria for rationality other than consistency, and some of
these are even more powerful than consistency...There are many
features of beliefs that are rational virtues, such as simplicity,
problem-solving ability, non-adhocness, fruitfulness, and, let us grant,
consistency... The rational person apportions their beliefs according to
the evidence; and if the evidence is for inconsistent propositions, so be
it... (Ibid., pp. 420-422)

Suppose that accepting this plausible model of rationality we are faced with this
situation: ‘I walk out of the room; for an instant, I am symmetrically poised, one foot
in, one foot out, my center of gravity lying on the vertical plane containing the center
of gravity of the door... by symmetry, I am neither in rather than not in, nor not in
rather than in.’ (Ibid., pp. 415). In other words—the evidence gives equal support to
both p and not-p. Priest argues, that in these and similar cases (such as the liar
paradox) it can be admitted that a contradiction is true, without giving away rationality
altogether. In the case described, according to Priest, not to affirm the contradiction is
to be ‘purely dogmatic’.

Yet, I think the only essentially dogmatic view involved is the claim that LNC
is true, and necessarily so regardless of any circumstances. If this demand is
renounced, it is hard to see how one description of the case above is essentially better
than another. Priest thinks it rational to describe it as ‘I am both in and not in’ (Ibid.); a
constructivist can view this as a case where both p and not-p are unprovable, and
maintain the logical necessity of the law of non-contradiction6 (to be ‘in’ rather than
not-in’ one must be more than half way through and so on); but what we would
commonly say I believe is roughly ‘I am in the doorway’6. Perhaps there are in
different circumstances various reasons to adopt one logical system rather than
another; but whatever reasons there are, they cannot refer to the truth-conditions of
any contingent proposition since all the above systems are truth-preserving with regard

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4 Priest admits in a footnote that such a move would only be unsuccessful if p=not-not-p, which at
least some constructivists deny. But because Priest is arguing against classical logic in particular, he
leaves the issue at that.
5 By defining ‘the doorway’ to correspond to the case Priest describes we can maintain the validity of
classical logic.
to these. They are mutually exclusive but each is equally workable with regards to phenomena. The necessity of these (and any other) systems of inference hence does not hold independently of engagement in certain meaningful practices.

Priest admits that contradictions are highly improbable (which is why consistency is one of the pragmatic criteria for good theories). According to the way he understands contradictions, it simply means that cases where the evidence is exactly symmetrical between p and not-p are empirically very rare. Yet to move from classical logic to PL is very unlike moving from a scientific claim that something does not exist (in nature) to the claim that it is very rare. Priest does not point to any inconsistency or incompleteness in the classical system (besides the liar paradox), nor to any discovery we have not thought of or knew about before, and we cannot formulate using classical logic. The importance of the move lies not in a discovery of true contradictions in the empirical world, but in the readiness to apply contradictory statements in certain situations, coupled with the contingent fact these situations rarely occur.

A possible objection to Priest’s arguments can be constructed from Jerry Valberg’s discussion of the LNC (Valberg, 1982). Valberg claims that any logical system of inference presupposes the necessity of LNC. Any system of inference is rule-governed, and the validity of any deduction is determined by whether those rules are being followed or not. But if it is possible both to follow and not to follow a rule at the same time, then there is no way to distinguish following from not following it. Hence all systems of inference, however deviant, must rely on LNC. Furthermore, in any system of inference, if a certain deduction is valid, that contradicts it being not valid, and that again presupposes some notion of LNC. If LNC is a presupposition of any rule-governed activity, then it is a presupposition of any meaningful practice:

‘If we wish to play this [deviant] logic-game, we must play by the rules—that just is playing the game. We cannot both play the game and not play it. I trust it is clear that we would be relying on the [LNC] in this connection. Whenever we point out that such-and-such “cannot” be done because it conflicts with the rules, we are relying on the [LNC]...’ (op. cit., pp. 152).
But is it really as clear as Valberg takes it to be? Valberg's view seems to entail that as long as our rule-governed activities make sense, they cannot contain cases where it is questionable or even undecidable whether a rule is being followed or not. This is notoriously not the case when it comes to following moral and religious rules or state laws. In nature we find numerous cases of animals not easily fitting into any zoological category like the Platypus, which meets the rules for being a mammal as well as a bird (conceived as 'not a mammal').

I take it as obviously correct that all meaningful practices presuppose some distinction between following and not following their rules, or in other words engaging and disengaging from them. What the primacy thesis states, is that what counts as following such rules correctly is a matter internal to a particular meaningful practice, and thus no such criteria exist for all possible circumstances. Valberg has not argued that this distinction has to comply with LNC.

To make the point more explicit, it is worthwhile to return again to Priest's PL. Its logical consequence rule is identical with the one of classical logic (op. cit., pp. 413), so that in consequence p follows from F (where F is a set of formulas of PL) in PL iff it is not the case that p does not follow from F in PL. Valberg's objection stands when it comes to this system, since its consequence rule presupposes the LNC. Priest's aim is to show, that certain contradictory propositions can be true, but he does not consider the possibility of contradiction within logical inference. Yet PL could also be used as second-order logic. In which case it would be possible for p both to follow and not to follow from F.

Suppose that when a car stopped midway into a junction it was taken both to follow and not to follow that an offence was committed. The driver would be fined and acquitted, perhaps in no particular order. In that case there is a distinction between following traffic rules and not following them, but it does not obey the LNC, since you can both follow and not follow a rule. In other words, the order 'follow and don't follow the rule' has an application in some cases in this practice. Or suppose we were more inclined to accept the contradictory conclusions of the Sorites paradox regarding the pairs 'big-small', 'tall-short' and so on. We would thus allow that the same thing.

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7 There is an official law that pigs must not be grown on the land of Israel. Does growing pigs on wooden floorboards obey this rule? This may sound silly but it passed the courts and is the way pigs are grown in Israel today (though this is of-course not strongly enforced).
can be big and small at the same time, or that from the proposition 'x is small' it
follows and does not follow that it is not small To avoid failures in obeying such
commands as ‘bring me a big cake!’ we could, for example, use measures and say
‘bring me a cake bigger than this!’ and so on.

Granted, such definitions will produce strange and alien practices of inference
and calculation, they may seem pointless and we may refuse to call them ‘inferences’ at
all. But if this was pointed out to those who engaged with these practices, they could
just say: ‘well make sure you obey the rule rather than not!’ , or ‘make sure you specify
how ‘big’ you want something to be!’ It has not been shown that any change would
occur in the truth-conditions of any contingent proposition, e.g. ‘the car stopped
midway into the junction’, ‘not stopping at a stop-sign is an offence’, ‘there’s a big
cake on the table’ etc.

The point of introducing such practices here, and I believe when Wittgenstein
uses similar examples as well, is not to undermine the way deduction is performed.
Rather it is to undermine the view that the way we perform logical deductions is
correct on account of some necessary facts about thought, the world or language.
Assuming the LNC not to hold, we may end up with “funny” deductions, but not ones
that makes any thought or language impossible, or at least incoherent in some way.
The point is precisely to object to the view that logical rules of inference have some
ground other than the way deduction and inference are meaningfully practiced. I
believe that Valberg’s objection fails to show, that LNC is a principle that is
presupposed whatever practice of inference is presupposed.

It can now be demonstrated, that the unrevisability of logic is not a relevant
objection to the primacy thesis. The primacy thesis does not claim that logical rules of
inference are necessary in virtue of some convention or decision that can be
negotiated. Rather, that they are necessary in virtue of the way certain practices are in
particular situations. Similarly, it does not imply there may be reasons to ever revise
language, on the contrary, it contradicts the existence of such reason. There could only
be reasons to modify any meaningful practice only if there were independent standards
as to how that practice should be. The primacy thesis is precisely the denial of the
existence of such practices. If we assume some engaged circumstances, the roles

5 Common use of this statement allows the context to determine criteria for applying ‘big’ anyway.
calculations play in various aspects of modern society for example, there can be many reasons to carry them one way rather than another (though in different circumstances, different methods can in principle be preferred). If normativity in general arises from the way meaningful practice actually are, that does not entail that they could just as well be otherwise; only that nothing normatively determines how meaningful practices must be, regardless of the particular situation.

Another well known claim to the effect that LNC holds regardless of any engaged circumstances is that from a contradiction everything follows. If that is an essential point about contradictions, then contradictions essentially forfeit the purpose of derivation or calculation, and could serve only as "stop signs" for those practices at least. The fact that they do serve as "stop signs" in our calculus is hence not dependent on those practices themselves, but is a necessary condition for any form of calculation etc. One argument for this is that a logical implication from a false proposition is always true, and contradictions are always false—but that is simply to beg the question in this case, since the claim is that nothing but our practices make contradictions false. Another argument is that it is a result of the logical argumentation method of reductio ad absurdum (which in common natural deduction is used to introduce a negation).

Wittgenstein nicknames this method "avoid the contradiction" (Ibid., pp. 209), since if a contradiction follows from a set of assumptions then at least one assumption in the set must be rejected. But, if a contradiction exists in the premises of a system, like Russell’s paradox with regards to Frege’s system (henceforth FL), applying the reductio to that contradiction allows us to reject, and hence also prove, any proposition whatsoever. As a truth-preserving method of deduction, the argument goes, such a system is hence useless.

To allow the reductio method to apply to a contradiction in FL (or any other system), in the sense of using it to deduce a particular conclusion, defeats one of the constitutive requirements from this kind of calculus, that the procedures within it (effectively) lead to a single result. Without it, calculation, derivation and deduction loose an important feature distinguishing them from divination, giving forecasts and so on. Wittgenstein admits as much (LFM, pp. 230), but argues this need not lead to any wrong ascription of truth values to any contingent proposition. For it is still possible that people using FL would get the same mathematics we do, as Frege in fact did, while refraining from using certain valid formulations which defeat the purpose of the
calculus. Such self-defeating formulations are not more destructive to the calculus than a short-circuit button is to any electrical appliance.

In fact, if we suppose Russell's paradox does invalidate FL essentially, regardless of our constitutive requirement not to accept a calculus which allows a contradiction inside it, then equally, the liar paradox should invalidate the practice of lying in the same essential way. The liar paradox uncovers a possibility to extend the practices associated with lying in a useless way, much as Russell's paradox does with Frege's predicate logic. But the practice of lying, as no one denies, can go on intelligibly despite this. It might be claimed, that the practice of lying and judging statements to be false is embedded in human life, and FL is not. That means that it is far easier to discard FL on account of its inherent contradiction than the practice of lying. But the point is that if a practice that contains a possible contradiction can be so used, then nothing about the existence of a contradiction makes it essentially unusable:

‘In the first place, [the paradox] doesn't happen in our ordinary use of “I’m lying”. And if we have a use of “I’m lying” from which it follows that “I am not lying”—isn’t this just a useless game?... “[then] why did we think of playing it?”—Answer: because “I am lying”—which is an ordinary statement— is analogous to “I’m eating”. And then the point is to show cases in which we would use such a statement; for example, “He’s 34– I’m lying, he’s 32.”' (Ibid., pp. 208).

In fact, nothing forces us to use reductio arguments at all. As Priest notes (op. cit., pp. 411-412), systems of logic in which everything validly follows from a contradiction are relatively recent. Traditional systems such as Aristotle’s logic do not possess this feature, and ‘there are now a number of approaches to paraconsistent logic, all with well-articulated proof theories and model theories’ (ibid.). All that is required is to deny that p is true iff it is not false, and thus renounce reductio ad absurdum as a valid method of deduction. Hence allowing a contradiction to be true in some cases does not necessarily invalidate any system of valid inference, particularly in a way that would entail a change in the truth-conditions of any contingent proposition.
On the contrary, it is because we use contradiction within the method of *reductio* that we want to maintain the truth of LNC. If nothing about the nature of contradictions makes them essentially unusable within a system of inference or any other practice, then the fact that contradictions are always false in our calculus is due only to the role they constitutively play in our calculus.

A commitment to the truth of a logical law of inference is not different from a commitment to infer in a particular way, keeping to certain constitutive requirements etc. I called this a commitment ‘engagement’ with a particular practice in given circumstances, behaving in ways which take the transcendental condition of a given meaningful practice to necessarily apply. To contradict a logical law is correspondingly to act in ways which lack some of the constitutive features of the practice involved. At best, one can refrain from calling those practices ‘calculations’, ‘reports’ or whatever. But this only supports the primacy thesis, since it clearly presents the problem one has with those practices as having to do with the same constitutive feature they lack, rather than facts in the world:

And what does it mean: to recognise or not to recognise the laws of logic? To swear by logic? To say “Surely this cannot be so” in a convinced tone of voice? Or just not to do a certain thing, for example, not to produce an “utterly useless calculus”? ...It isn’t that we are convinced of a particular truth. But rather that we want to do so-and-so. Going against logic means doing something we don’t want to do. (LFM, pp. 230).

The negation of a logically necessary statement is hence not impossible independently of any meaningful practice, but is rather a failure to meet one of the transcendental conditions of given practices, and thus a failure to engage with them. The negation of a logical law is impossible only once engagement with these meaningful practices is already presupposed in a particular situation. The LNC and other logical laws of inference are of course features of so many of our common meaningful practices, that disengagement from them all is usually a sign of irony and similar.

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...And in the case of higher-order logic, that \( p \) follows from \( P \) if and only if it is not the case that \( p \) does not
moods. Furthermore, assuming facts of nature to remain exactly as they are, certain practices may lead to greater confusion, or involve inefficient procedures (relative to some transcendental conditions). But there are no a priori reasons for those practices to be unworkable in any circumstances, unless we already presuppose some particular conception of ‘useful’, which includes being devoid of contradictions. That entails that:

(a) there can be no logical restrictions on possible practices;
(b) that any logical restriction presupposes engagement in some practice.

The conjunction of these claim is equivalent to the primacy thesis.
B. Heidegger on Synthetic a priori Knowledge and Intentionality

Heidegger also holds quite a radical view of logic and its foundations. In many ways similar to Wittgenstein, Heidegger mainly argues that logic, much like anything else, is dependent on the kind of Being of involvement and the transcendental structures correlated with it—the world and Dasein. This is expressed in his statement that ‘logic is the ontology of truth’, which is the conclusion he works towards in his Metaphysical Foundations of Logic. Unlike Wittgenstein, Heidegger pays very little attentions to developments in modern logic. Instead he develops his view of logical necessity mainly while discussing Leibniz and Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. Perhaps this is because the Critique is the first book in the history of philosophy devoted explicitly to investigating the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge, or of judgements that are valid necessarily a priori, and hence regardless of circumstances.

Kant’s arguments for the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge are hence directed against the primacy thesis developed in the last section. As I will try to demonstrate, they also misrepresent what Heidegger considers to be the true nature of logical necessity. I will therefore begin by following Heidegger’s discussion of the Critique of Pure Reason. I will then relate what Heidegger claims there to statements he made on logic and logical necessity in other places.

Kant’s claim, that rules which originate in reason can have necessary objective validity, underlies later conceptions of logic to a large extent. Generally logic is conceived as a necessary component of any thought or language, and so logically necessary conclusions are necessarily true of all the facts language and thought represent. I believe that in his Phenomenological Interpretation of the Critique Heidegger demonstrates that synthetic a priori knowledge is ultimately grounded in involvement. Heidegger thus reaches a conclusion significantly similar in its entailments to the primacy thesis, that the truth of logically necessary statements is grounded in meaningful involvement, though it was not Heidegger’s primary concern to develop this point. Heidegger’s main aim in this work is to interpret Kant, but for my purposes neither what Kant meant nor is he correct are the main question. Rather, I will try to demonstrate that Heidegger’s arguments against Kant’s justification of synthetic a
priori knowledge bear on any attempt to justify the necessary truth (or as Kant has it, objective validity) of logical statements, that rests on assumptions common to most contemporary conceptions of logic. An independent argument against the objective validity of logical statements can thus be constructed from Heidegger’s views, which I will claim is a strong argument that demands consideration.

Kant’s main objective in the *Critique* is famously to delineate a priori the boundaries of possible knowledge, or conceptual judgement:

‘Judgement is therefore the mediate knowledge of an object, that is, the representation of a representation of it. In every judgement there is a concept which holds of many representations, and among them of a given representation that is immediately related to an object.’ (CPR, pp. 93-94).

According to Heidegger, this conception of judgement is the root of the two essential components of thinking according to Kant, the activity of unifying representations or concept-forming on the one hand, and relatedness to objects or intentionality on the other. Heidegger claims:

‘On the basis of its double structure thinking admits of a double investigation. In one respect we can view thinking only as a functioning faculty by ignoring the fact that thinking relates to definite objects... thinking as related to objects can also become problematical, in which case the function of unifying is brought along with in thinking.’ (PIK, pp. 120).

These two possible forms of investigation give rise to general formal logic on the one hand and transcendental logic on the other once all empirical content is abstracted from the concepts investigated.

Formal logic ‘abstracts from all content of judgement, i.e. from all relation of judgement to an object, and considers only the logical form of the relation of any judgement to any other judgement (CPR, pp. 79). ‘Content’ here refers to some object in the world which is represented. Thus if a priori knowledge is all purely conceptual.
knowledge, abstracting everything empirical, then formal logic deals with all conceptual knowledge that abstracts from any conceptual content whatsoever and deals exclusively with the relations among concepts alone. These are typically containment, exclusion and co-existence. Kant shows how all these are derived from the LNC, such that a concept excludes another if both applying in a single representation would result in a contradictory judgement; a concept contains another if the application of the former without the latter in a single representation would result in a contradictory judgement; and a concept co-exists with another otherwise. Formal logic is hence analytic, since ‘the first principle of all analytic judgements’ is precisely that their ‘truth is necessarily recognisable on the basis of the principle of contradiction alone.’ (Ibid., pp. 68).

But in Kant’s system there are also a priori forms of intuition, and in particular time which applies a priori to all phenomena:

‘Time is the formal a priori condition of all phenomena in general. Space, as the pure form of every external intuition, is an a priori condition of external phenomena alone... – this principle is objectively true and universal a priori.’ (CPR, pp. 52).

Time is the a priori possibility of anything appearing to thinking as its correlate. Hence if we do not abstract completely from conceptual content, but only from empirical conceptual content, there would still be some content remaining, provided exclusively by a priori intuition. On the basis of this content concepts could be formed, in accordance with the formal structures of analysis (concept-forming), whose content as well as form would thus be provided purely a priori. The content of these concepts is time as a pure form of intuition. They would thus apply a priori to time, and by extension to all phenomena in time. The investigation of concepts whose content is a priori, and thus of knowledge gained purely a priori. Kant calls transcendental logic, which ‘has lying before it a manifold of a priori sensibility, presented by transcendental aesthetic.’ (Ibid., pp. 76).

The possibility, scope and limitation of transcendental logic is by far the major concern of the Critique, in accordance with Kant’s intention to clarify the possibility of synthetic a priori knowledge. Because transcendental logic investigates conceptual
content rather than form, its judgements are synthetic, and their denial not a contradiction; but because this content is *a priori*, its judgements are also necessary *a priori*.

Within transcendental logic Kant raises the question of the objective validity of *a priori* or conceptual judgements explicitly. This amounts to the question how can judgements based in reason alone—thus being insensitive to differing circumstances—be true of the world at all—thus of course in all possible circumstances. As long as conceptual judgements are purely formal, they only have a subjective validity according to Kant. The objective world is only accessible through intuition, which provides the conceptual content. ‘Subjective’ here does not mean psychological, i.e. phenomenal subjectivity, because formal validity is still *a priori* and derived from concepts alone. It is based on the essential workings of any kind of thinking-judging, regardless of any person’s mental states and attitudes. Since formal logic investigates the way representations can be combined, a violation of the rules of formal logic—reducible to a violation of the LNC—results according to Kant simply in a failure to represent anything. In other words, it is a failure to grasp *any* conceptual content, or objective reality. Only if the conceptual content is itself determined *a priori*, conceptual *a priori* judgements would have objective validity as well, or validity in the intuited reality. They can thus be valid of intuited reality while originating in reason, as for example mathematical truths and causal connections do according to Kant.

The distinction between general and transcendental logic is taken by Heidegger to be equivalent to a distinction between syntactic correctness and truth, where the validity of arguments is taken to be part of their syntactic correctness. Both true and false judgements (and valid arguments) have to obey the formal rules of logic if they are to be judgements (valid arguments) at all, whether *a priori* or *a posteriori*. Heidegger claims:

‘Accordingly the correctness of thinking is a necessary but not sufficient criterion for the truth of thinking-intuition, i.e., of knowledge... General logic cannot deliver another criterion or touchstone of truth, other than formal correctness. [But] truth is “the agreement of knowledge with its object.” ’ (PIK, pp.129, quote from CPR, pp. 84).
Kant therefore holds a view of purely formal logic which is similar to the logical positivists' idea that the rules of logic are conventional rules of syntax. But he disagrees with their claim that science and mathematics are grounded purely on such formal rules. He claims instead that only because subjective reason determines a priori conceptual content from within itself can the formal rules of syntactic correctness have any objective validity.

Kant's distinction between general and transcendental logic allows for the question of the objective truth of logical statements to arise more explicitly than it has mostly been since. A violation of formal logical laws (prototypically the LNC) is reducible for Kant to not constructing concepts at all. Their origin lies in the way thinking is carried through, rather than the way things in the world must be. Importantly, Kant includes under 'formal logic' the activity of applying logical rules of inference to investigate the validity of a formula, or provide a formal proof of a theorem. It hence includes, for example, all proofs made in any predicate calculus. But the question of truth, as it arises for well-formed formulas within PC, cannot arise for the logical rules of inference of the PC themselves. Their truth-conditions cannot be calculated within the calculus, since within the calculus these rules apply by definition. The question of the necessary truth of logical rules of inference (which Kant takes to be the philosophically interesting one, as I do here) thus lies beyond the scope of formal logic and is a transcendental question. Post-Kantian developments in logic tend to simply assume that axioms are true in the same sense that contingent proposition are, while taking the difference between the two to be epistemological, concerning the way they are justified (see for example Field, 1996). It is thus difficult to even raise the question of the objective truth of logical rules of inference within modern logical theory.

Transcendental logic investigates knowledge of the intuited world that is not derived from experience. Heidegger understands Kant's above claim to mean, that the main theme of transcendental logic is relatedness to objects or intentionality as such, as far as it is determined a priori. According to Heidegger transcendental logic is concerned with how objects are determined purely by their relation to thinking. He writes:
'The question concerning pure thinking is the question concerning a relation to objects which is independent of experience. It is a question concerning thinking's determination of the object. Here pure thinking means *a priori* determination of objects in advance.' (Ibid., pp. 125).

Thus, transcendental logic studies what pertains to objects regardless of what objects they are and all facts about them, since these are all empirical. In other words, transcendental logic investigates what pertains to objects *qua* objects, and Heidegger identifies it with the ontology of objects in his wider sense of the term, the investigation of the essence of objectness, what it is to be an object (Ibid., pp. 127).

This identification is the basis of Heidegger's entire explication of the *Critique*. He defends it in detail, and many commentators focused on the "violence" of Heidegger's interpretation to author's intentions. Macann finds 'two particularly unorthodox biases expressed in the Kant book.' (Macann, 1995, pp. 110) as well as one orthodox tendency of Heidegger to perceive himself as providing the correct interpretation of Kant. The first is the rejection of any epistemological concern of the *Critique*, and the second the identification of transcendental knowledge with ontological knowledge. I wish to accept the truth of these remarks; to my purposes the importance of Heidegger's interpretation is that it perceives Kant precisely as committed to the objective truth of transcendental logic: '..."transcendental" does not mean simply *a priori* knowledge... but means *that* *a priori* knowledge with factual content.' (Ibid.). Whether it is true to Kant or not, Heidegger's interpretation proceeds in the direction of examining the possibility of logical objective truth as such, and hence with the question I am primarily concerned to investigate.

Heidegger argues that transcendental logic is more fundamental than general formal logic. Relatedness to objects or intentionality is not the theme of general logic, since it deals exclusively with the formal relations between concepts. But the latter as representations include the notion of intentionality because they have content as well as form. In particular, concepts are distinguished one from the other with respect to their content, and so are the propositions p and q in any formal logical syntax. In Heidegger's words:
'If thinking is considered only as unification of representations among one another, then this means that thinking which is our *theme with respect to its function of unification* is essentially *related to objects*, insofar as unification of representations in each case represents something.' (PIK, pp. 138).

Heidegger takes this to be a commitment to the essentially intentional character of thinking, which is assumed by all phenomenologists since Husserl as well as many contemporary philosophers of mind. Heidegger claims, that since transcendental logic is the investigation of content as constituted *a priori* by thinking, it is an investigation of *a priori* intentionality – thinking’s *a priori* relatedness to objects.

Heidegger therefore believes that Kant goes wrong when he deduces the categories from the formal table of judgements, thus providing them with a formal basis, which disregards the intentional nature of thinking. For Heidegger, it is inconsistent with the definition of transcendental logic to ground it in something purely formal, since transcendental logic deals with thinking as *a priori* intentional and as above, ‘has lying before it a manifold of *a priori* sensibility.’ – or time.

The ground for the transcendental table of categories must accordingly be located in the *a priori* intentional nature of thinking, which in Kant’s system is time as pure intuition. Only if the categories could be shown to apply to all possible phenomena – or objects appearing in time – it can be deduced that it has objective validity *a priori*. Only pure intuition can provide content for transcendental *a priori* concepts with objective truth, based on the *a priori* constitution of objects as such.

This line of argument bears a striking resemblance to P.F. Strawson’s criticism of Kant’s attempt to deduce the transcendental table of categories from the formal table of judgement. Strawson believes that according to Kant, in order to have empirical knowledge intuitions must be brought under concepts. That implies that if there are any necessary conditions for concepts, these must apply necessarily to any empirical knowledge as well. In other words, the existence of empirical knowledge entails *a priori* that some concepts have an application in experience.
The categories thus become an expression of the necessary applicability of the various forms of judgement to experience.

Strawson claims we can understand this argument better if instead of 'concepts' we put 'propositions'. Any empirical knowledge would be expressed in propositions, and hence for there to be any empirical knowledge some propositions must apply to empirical reality. That entails that any essential structure of a proposition will be necessarily mirrored in the way objects of experience are. However, all the essential structures of propositions are already in place whenever we make any atomic subject-predicate proposition—every complex proposition, as well as general quantified ones, could be analysed in terms of such atomic propositions. Hence

We are left merely with the notion of...categories... corresponding to the logical distinction of individual "name"...and predicate-expression. Referring this logical distinction to the conditions of making objective judgements of experience seems to give us at most the notions of particular objects and universal kind or character as "categories"...But this meagre result we might have attained directly from the original distinction between intuitions and concepts. (Ibid., pp. 82).

Different perspectives aside, Strawson's conclusion is quite similar to Heidegger's—that the attempt to deduce the elements of transcendental logic from the table of formal logic collapses transcendental objective truth to the syntactic correctness that formal logic is already sufficient to achieve.

Heidegger believes Kant makes clear his presuppositions in paragraph 14 of the Critique, where he takes up again the problem of the objective truth of the categories explicitly. The problem discussed in this paragraph is the coordination between subjective synthetic representations and objective things. Kant perceives only two logical alternatives: 'Either the object contains the possibility of representation, or the representation alone contains the possibility of the object.' (CPR, pp. 124). In the first
case all knowledge would be empirical or a posteriori and synthetic a priori knowledge impossible. Synthetic a priori knowledge requires that representations alone contain the possibility of objects as such.

This raises again the problem of a priori intentionality as the main problem of transcendental logic. But again Kant claims that representations originate purely in the understanding, which is distinct from intuition and thus cannot determine conditions for intuition. Instead, Kant makes use of the term 'experience' as distinct from intuition, so that the categories are '...conditions by which something is thought, not as an object of intuition, but as an object of experience in general.' (Ibid.). This is well known in philosophical circles as the main thesis of transcendental idealism. Objective necessity a priori is the modality of necessary conditions of any possible object of experience—any correlate of thinking, or the intentional object essential to any intentional act of thinking.

I agree with Heidegger, that Kant's ontological commitments are nowhere expressed clearer than here, where the categories are explained as conditions for anything to occur to consciousness, and at the same time determine what belongs to all objects, i.e. all entities as such: 'What renders ontic experience possible is a self-enclosed whole of pure ontological knowledge, in which something like a possible object of experience is constituted in advance.' (PIK pp. 226). In this discussion Kant locates the origin of the categories, or objective truth a priori in general, in thinking itself abstracted from intuition. The concepts of 'object' and 'phenomenon' are thus distinguished from each other without an explanation or a good reason, for Kant insists repeatedly elsewhere that the categories only apply to (or constitute) phenomena—objects of intuition—anyway (see esp. section 22). To hold this together he must maintain the idea that something can conceivably be experienced by consciousness, that can never be experienced by our consciousness, which is the weakest and most unconvincing part of his system.

According to Heidegger the source of Kant's inconsistencies in explaining the categories is his misconstrual of the problem of transcendence, a misconstrual that most contemporary discussions of logical truth and necessity inherit. Kant poses the problem of transcendence as the coordination of representations and objects, which fits Heidegger's notion of ontic transcendence developed elsewhere (BPP, pp. 60ff). This form of transcendence:
I is usually – and also in Kant – initiated as a problem by putting the subject at one side and the object on the other side as two extant beings. But the subject is such a thing which has representations in itself. The problem now is the following: How can representations in the subject “come together” with their object?” (PIK, pp. 216).

This manner of presentation makes the Cartesian presuppositions of this account clear to view. A thinking subject is posed whose activities are essentially mental and independent of others and objects. This construal raises the question of that subject’s possible contact with external reality. In Basic Problems of Phenomenology Heidegger claims this view misconstrues intentionality, or the a priori comportmental character of what we call comporting...[which] is itself a structure of the self-comporting subject.’ (BPP, pp. 61). According to Heidegger, Kant’s conception of transcendence presupposes that the intentional content or object itself is internal to the subject, just as the intentional act is. Otherwise, if intentionality relates the subject to external objects themselves, the question of ontic transcendence makes no sense. I do not deny that there is room to claim that Kant manages to step beyond these Cartesian presuppositions, even if at times he falls back to them. The main thing for my purposes is Heidegger’s arguments to the effect that a Cartesian ontic transcendence and the objective validity of logical statements entail one another, independently of the thoughts of any particular thinker.

In Basic Problems Heidegger only observes that the mental internal conception of intentionality is laden with theory and is not self-evident, especially since the common conception of intentional acts tends to be external. People normally take themselves to be intentionally related to (think about, look at etc.) objects in the world—houses, walls other people etc. — and not to representations of them. But an external intentionality which relates the subject to objects directly presupposes that objects themselves are accessible to the subject, and that achieved on the background of the totality of the world as argued at the beginning of this thesis, resting on the ontological transcendental structures of involvement (Ibid., pp. 62-63).

In his Kant interpretation Heidegger adds that ontic transcendence itself already presupposes that a direct relation to objects already somehow exists. Ontic
transcendence is the possibility of *coordination* between representations and objects and therefore posits in advance the two realms between which coordination is to be found. Hence if coordination is to make sense at all, the realm of external objects must already be somehow accessible to the subject as well as representations. But the realm of external objects lies by definition beyond the subject’s *mental* intentional content. Heidegger concludes that for the problem of coordination to even arise, the subject must already presuppose a world external to its mental content, and as argued, that is possible only if it is a world in which it is involved.

If the categories constitute what belongs to objects as objects, which is the only way they can have objective validity, then “external” intentionality or relatedness to a totality of possible involvements is presupposed. This result can also be generalised beyond the Kantian system. Logical rules would be objectively true of the world only if thinking determines *a priori* what it is to be an external object of an intentional state. The very concept of an external object to an internal intentional state, however, presupposes free involvement in a world which thinking does not determine *a priori*.

I touched on this point in chapter 2, while discussing Heidegger’s conception of the Cartesian *ego*. I discussed Kant’s proof of the existence of the external world, based on our internal consciousness of time\(^\text{10}\). I agreed with Heidegger that Kant’s proof is incapable of defeating ‘Berkeley’s challenge’, of proving there is a difference between Being and Being-accessible-to-a-subject. Berkeley’s challenge as presented here is an ontological challenge. It does not involve Berkeley’s identification of the material and the mental, against which Kant’s response may be sufficient. It is, if you will, a transcendental version of Berkeley’s own intransient views. In its transcendental version, a Berkeleyian may accept Kant’s argument to the extent that the idea of an external world is necessary to account for our phenomenal consciousness. But without defeating the challenge this idea remains a product of the transcendental subject without a serious foundation. To found it, the subject must somehow *a priori* be able to deduce the existence of a reality external to whatever is accessible to it. In Kant’s terms, we require a transcendental deduction of the idea of an external world.

\(^{10}\) see pp. 39-40
One answer is that the external world is simply one possible constituent of the 'I think' of the transcendental subject as Kant conceives it. So the need for a transcendental deduction is waved off, it is more or less a brute idea of reason, much like freedom. This attempt is interesting because it wants to agree with the Berkeley’s transcendental challenge. It accepts that the external world is only provable once it is defined by its mode of accessibility to the subject through the categories. The answer is: of course, the transcendental subject is in principle “entitled” to call a region of its phenomena ‘the external world’. The problem is that the ontic problem of transcendence would still not get off the ground. For there can be no problem of coordination between one region of phenomena to another—in Kant that is the work of the non-conceptual imagination, presenting us with a whole manifold of phenomena rather than discrete sensations. The external world thus become immune from any Cartesian doubt, for the ego is certain of its perceptions, but the external world so defined just is a construct from a subset of these. Anything external in a philosophically interesting way has been rubbed out of this conception.

Strawson tries a different way to deduce the external world starting from the utterly formal premise of the unity of consciousness ‘...detached from the doctrine of synthesis, from the theses of transcendental psychology.’ (Strawson, 1966, pp. 102). The premise of the unity of consciousness states that it is possible to self-ascribe any experience as an experience belonging to a single subject. This implies that at least for some experiences it is possible to distinguish the experience itself from the self-ascription of that experience to a subject, for example, to distinguish (1) ‘it seems to me this stone is heavy’ from (2) ‘this stone is heavy’. But, the argument goes, this can only be done if an objective realm is stipulated in which such-and-such is the case regardless of the subject’s experiences. Without this distinction (1) and (2) would collapse into each-other, and there will be no room to distinguish experiencing from recognising oneself as experiencing, and that contradicts the premise of the unity of consciousness (Ibid., pp. 100-101).

The argument rests on the premise, that the following three statements are possible within the sphere of immanence of the subject:

i) It seems to me this is a heavy stone
ii) This is a heavy stone.
iii) i) and ii) state different things.
The argument concludes that there is an objective realm, to which the second but not the first of these statements refer. But I believe that a transcendental Berkleyian could claim that the second statement is actually analysable in purely subjective terms in roughly the following way: ‘this stone is heavy’ = ‘it seems to me the stone is heavy’ and ‘at any time T₀ + t (when T₀ is the present) it would seem to me the stone is heavy (a temporal continuity condition) and ‘it would seem to any subject that the stone is heavy’ (an intersubjectivity condition). This can be adjusted to accommodate ‘objective’ changes in the content of perception (the stone is cut and becomes lighter), either by adding a causal continuity clause, or by qualifying the temporal continuity clause to grant continuous and intersubjectively observable changes as ‘objective’ change in the content of perception.

If the transcendental Berkleyian is right, there is no way, accessible to a worldless unified consciousness, to distinguish statement ii) from statement i) plus a set of conditions internal to the sphere of immanence. The subjective difference between statement i) and statement ii) would not justify a priori the use of the idea of an external world. Even if there is a hole in the caricature of a Berkleyian argument presented here, I cannot see a reason why a list of subjective conditions could not be sufficient to constitute the (ex hypothesi) purely subjective phenomenon of the unity of consciousness.

The best actual example of a transcendental Berkeleyian move of the sort portrayed here is Husserl’s “bracketing” of the external world (cf. Meditation I.8 in Husserl, 1991). Husserl’s methodology is based on leaving aside all ontological questions regarding intentional content, and describing it exclusively as a correlate of consciousness. Kant wants to go beyond Husserl’s position in that he attempts an ontological proof of the (necessary) existence of an external world, but he lacks any support for this move as long as he starts from a unified consciousness alone. It may be said that for Heidegger Kant’s position collapses necessarily to Husserl’s, and both are missing the only element that can ever provide an ontological justification for “removing the brackets” and affirming the existence of a world external to the unified transcendental consciousness.

The missing element, according to Heidegger, is of course the kind of Being of involvement, for which an external world—albeit a world as a totality of possible involvements—is a central transcendental condition. Heidegger describes Kant as
providing an ontology of the extant. What he neglects, according to Heidegger, is the background allowing to delineate the extant *qua* extant, and thus for his entire investigation. Without the world of involvement, the very notion of a world external to consciousness becomes transcendentally unjustified. The question of ontic transcendence is thus inherently incoherent, since it presupposes the existence of a relation to objects within involvement, and aims to justify that very relation.

The important point for my purposes in Heidegger's objections to Kant is the connection Heidegger draws between Kant's misconstrual of the problem of transcendence and the primacy he eventually gives to formal considerations, arising from thinking alone. A possible Heideggerian argument would be: Ontic transcendence presupposes only mental content to be immediately accessible to the subject. Therefore the ground of any coordination between representations and objects, thus of objective necessity *a priori*, must be located within the internal rules of thinking itself, which are by definition purely formal. While on the other hand, the purely formal rules of thinking apply to representations in general, and for them to become objectively necessary *a priori* some coordination between these representations and objective reality must be assumed. Ontic transcendence and the objective necessity of formal logic hence entail one another.

This logical equivalency means that if rules of logic, products of thinking alone, are to be objectively necessary then accessibility to the thinking subject must be constitutive of the mode Being of all objects. This is because thinking cannot determine in advance what pertains to individual objects themselves, which is empirical. This is obviously an ontological claim, i.e. a claim about the constitution of the mode of Being of all entities. If it is false, then so is the claim that logical rules are true necessarily *a priori*. Although Kant himself may have not set out to do so, the formal character of his deduction of the categories eventually became one of the long-lasting dogmas of transcendental philosophy, long after the phenomenon of meaning replaced experience at its centre stage. One major example is the common conception of meaning as reference (as well as truth as correspondence discussed above), which involves a coordination between a symbol representing mental content and an object (or state-of-affairs) in the world, parallel to the coordination between representations and objects in ontic transcendence.
I believe that Heidegger has successfully shown, that though logic is purely formal and thus independent of ontological considerations, the assumption that logical rules of inference are true necessarily \textit{a priori} contains certain ontological presuppositions that can be questioned, and shown to be ontologically subordinate to the kind of Being of involvement. The structures pertaining to this kind of Being cannot therefore fall under the scope of formal logic.

In my view this claim is also the main upshot of Heidegger's now famous discussion of anxiety and the nothing in \textit{What is Metaphysics?}, which he summerises as follows:

The nothing is the origin of negation, not vice versa. If the power of the intellect in the field of inquiry into the nothing and into Being is thus shattered, then the destiny of the reign of “logic” in philosophy is thereby decided. The idea of “logic” itself disintegrates in the turbulence of a more original questioning.' (BW, pp. 105).

Consistent with his philosophical project, Heidegger argues in that lecture that our concept of negation rests on possible meaningful dealings with the nothing, or the negative. The nothing cannot be represented, since by definition ‘The nothing is the complete negation of the totality of beings’ (Ibid., pp. 98), and so a representation of nothing is no representation at all. A meaningful involvement determining the role of the concept ‘nothing’ in a situation cannot therefore be of a kind that first represents the beings concerned according to some predetermined rules. I believe therefore that, according to Heidegger, the question of the nothing points beyond theoretical constructions of a given phenomenon to an examination of its place within non-theoretical involvements. In the case of the nothing or negative, Heidegger believes it is primarily manifested within such moods as boredom, depression or anxiety, in which \textit{nothing} is interesting, worth-while or makes sense respectively. These moods are what they are in virtue of the role they play within our Being-in-the-world in general. They effect and are manifested in the way we meaningfully deal with anything in the world.

Heidegger concludes that the logical operation of negation, which is sufficient to construct all non-modal logical operators as is well known, is not the unique nor the fundamental concept of negation, nihilation etc. Rather, the essence of these concepts ...
lies in meaningful involvements that determine them:

‘For [logical] negation cannot claim to be either the sole or the leading nihilative behaviour in which Dasein remains shaken by the nihilation of the nothing. Unyielding antagonism and stinging rebuke have a more abysmal source than the measured negation of thought. Gallling failure and merciless prohibition require some deeper answer. Bitter privation is more burdensome.’ (BW, 105).

Nothingness is understood according to the (often sinister) roles it has in these and other moods, which tend collectively to remove us from our everyday dealings in the world, to place us over and against everything at once. Heidegger’s conclusion can mean either of two things: either the laws of logic are necessary only within some involvement which assigns them such roles, or the laws of logic are necessary only on the basis of the totality of the world, which is a transcendental condition of involvement. The first alternative amounts to the same as Wittgenstein’s claim, that there are no logical restrictions on possible meaningful practices, and that logical necessity is reducible to transcendental necessity as defined. The second maintains that logical laws are true regardless of circumstances, but can only be thought or understood on the background of an involved world.

I believe however that the second of these alternatives is incoherent for several reasons. First, if it is correct that the necessary truth of logical laws is logically dependent on the subject determining the mode of Being of objects, then Heidegger’s denial of the latter claim amounts to a denial of the former as well. Second, the world for Heidegger is a totality of possible involvements which is a necessary condition of any particular dealing with entities being meaningful, and is hence manifested in the existence of any such meaningful dealings. The notion of anything being ontologically dependent on the world but not on any particular meaningful involvement is hence a dubious one. An example of something non-relative to any involvement could be a fact of nature such as that the earth is the third planet from the sun. It is perhaps relative to some meaningful involvement that a particular English sentence can serve to state this fact, but this fact itself is of course independent of any human involvement. But this fact is also independent of the world in Heidegger’s sense, since it would be as it is
even if there were no human-beings, and thus no world as well.

In a recent work Herman Philipse (Philipse, 1998) reaches the opposite conclusion to mine, using an interpretation of Heidegger’s *What is Metaphysics?* that is quite similar to the one developed here. Philipse claims (Ibid., pp. 11-12) Heidegger was influenced by Husserl’s distinction between different “material regions of beings” of the different sciences and human activities: the historical, biological, physical, mathematical and so on. Heidegger extends Husserl’s distinction in such a way that the meaning of concepts used in one material region need not stay the same in another:

‘He supposedly holds that the formal categories have different meanings relative to the respective material regions in which they are applied. For example, the copula “is” would have different meaning if used in the domain of history from the meaning in which it is used in Biology (Ibid. pp. 13).’

Philipse accepts that this view commits Heidegger to deny that logical rules of inference are necessarily and universally true, and asserts that in that case Heidegger’s conclusion turns out to be nonsense (Ibid.). He applies the principle of charity and concludes, that Heidegger means that some regions of discourse, in particular discourse about Being and Nothing, lie beyond the scope of any logical rules of inference. He ends up attributing to Heidegger a view similar to Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, according to which ‘The significance of the world and of life lies outside it and transcends the bounds of sense.’ (Ibid.). In other words, Heidegger’s ‘Being’ is equivalent to the *Tractarian* ‘mystical’. Philipse rounds off his criticism of Heidegger’s approach by applying the criticisms of the later Wittgenstein against Heidegger’s “Tractarian” position:

‘If one thinks that expressions of rules for the usage of words, such as “nothing is round and square all over”, are true in the ordinary sense of corresponding with reality, one will conclude that these statements are essentially true. However, expressions of rules of language are not true at all, or at least they are true in a very special sense only, the sense in which it is true that the king in a game of chess can move one square
at a time... As Heidegger was convinced that he was not merely analysing the meaning of words, but rather that he was trying to describe the essential structures of a phenomenon, he confusedly mixed descriptions in his conceptual analysis.' (Ibid., pp. 339-340).

I believe there are several problems with this interpretative move:

1. It does not explain why Heidegger does not keep himself, like the early Wittgenstein, to a mere description of possible logical discourse, but rather develops a highly elaborate ontological language. Furthermore, he takes it to be a more fundamental language than the logical one, constitutive of the logical language as well as indefinitely many other material regions, which are all its modifications:

   As a being, factical Dasein [i.e. an existing human-being] has different possibilities for ontic understanding and knowing (historical, biological, psychological, cosmological) ... It must be shown how the essence of Dasein as factical Dasein demands, not only with regard to itself but in the whole breadth of its possible transcendence, a variety of ways of inquiring, knowing, grounding and proving. (MFL, pp. 214).

2. In Wittgenstein's Tractatus contradictions (and tautologies) could not belong to the set of fundamental Tractarian propositions, since they are senseless rather than nonsense—that is the attempt to say what can only be shown. In Heidegger's ontological language by contrast, many points are made with the help of contradictions such as: 'Dasein is equiprimordially both in the truth and in untruth.' (BT, pp. 265); 'Being is farther than all beings and is yet nearer to man than any being...' (Letter on Humanism, BW, pp. 234); 'And what withdraws in such a manner keeps and develops its own incomparable nearness.' (WCT, pp. 16) and so on.

3. Most importantly perhaps, it takes no account of the primacy of the kind of Being of involvement in determining meaning, which as I argued throughout is central to Heidegger's evolving thought. The significance of the world, for example, is for Heidegger not only a matter for ethical, aesthetic and religious contemplations. Rather,
giving significance to objects, people or events is inherent to the involved perspective, to which most of our everyday dealings in the world belong.

If on the other hand we uncharitably attribute the stronger thesis to Heidegger, according to which logical rules only apply as within certain relevant involvements and not necessarily in all, these problems of interpretation disappear. The first problems is solved since the essential transcendental structures of involvement, i.e. subject and world, constitute a totality of possible meaningful involvements that is irreducible to the sum of its parts, and involvements which take logical rules to be constitutive are but a part of it. The second is solved since contradictions are not admissible given some meaningful involvements and not others. In particular, the transcendental structures of involvement cannot be under the scope of logical rules of inference since they must already be in place for the rules of logic to necessarily apply within any meaningful involvement.

Interpreted in this way, Heidegger's philosophy is of course immune to Wittgenstein's later anti-Tractarian arguments, since the essence of a phenomenon uncovered by his investigations is nothing other than its place within a possible meaningful involvement. As for the claim that this thesis is nonsensical, in this chapter I hoped to show that the primacy thesis is at least worthy of philosophical consideration.

Before ending this chapter I wish to point out, though Heidegger fails to do so, that not only the objective validity of logical rules (in Kant's jargon) relies on Cartesian presuppositions, but even their a priori formal correctness. The formal correctness a priori of logical rules of inference is taken by Kant (as well as many philosophers before and after him) to rely on these rules being necessary rules of thought if not of the world. But the relational conception of the subject maintains that to have a world is what ontologically constitutes human thinking. Only a subject defined independently of the world (say as a thinking substance) can have constitutive rules (say rules of thought) that are valid independently of how the world is. Only in this case can there be a non-empty set of rules that necessarily apply to any possible thought regardless of any worldly circumstances. Both formal correctness and objective validity, if they are to be necessary regardless of any circumstances, rest on the same ontological basis which is fundamentally Cartesian.
The claim that there are logically necessary facts have been shown to rest ontologically on ontological transcendence, manifested in being involved in the world. That is, it presupposes a notion of external intentionality, allowing worldly entities to be understood by the subject within meaningful involvements. In consequence it presupposes the relational conception of the subject, according to which the subject is constituted by having a world in which it is involved. The necessity of logical rules of inference, for example, ontologically rests on there being possible involvements in the world constituted in part by those very logical rules. Hence Heidegger’s position entails the primacy thesis, that logical necessity is reducible to transcendental necessity, and hence there are no logical restriction on possible meaningful involvements.

Transcendental necessity, which is the name I suggested for the modality typical of necessary conditions of a particular meaningful involvement, is argued by both Wittgenstein and Heidegger to underlie logical necessity. Wittgenstein argues, cogently I believe, that logical rules of inference necessarily apply only as long as particular practices of inference, calculation, making reports, giving orders etc. are presupposed. Different ways of going about these and other activities need not either be essentially unworkable or admit a falsity. The constitutive conditions these practices possess, such as effectiveness or lack of contradictions and paradoxes, are constitutive of our dealings with them and nothing else — Other workable practices need not answer to the same conditions, or may even judge when those conditions are met in some deviant way.

Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant demonstrates that the claim that logical rules necessarily apply to all circumstances rests on a questionable ontological basis, and is thus open to criticism from an ontological perspective. It presupposes that accessibility to the thinking subject is constitutive of the kind of Being of any entity. Otherwise, if the subject is rather constituted by having a world accessible to it, there can be no a priori determination of what the world must be like. I argued that this entails that there are no logical restrictions on possible meaningful involvements, and that logical necessity is reducible to transcendental necessity. This conclusion is the same as the one Wittgenstein draws, and which I called the primacy thesis.
The Engaged Circumstances and Theories of Meaning

A. Meaning and Theoretical Explanation

In the previous chapter I have argued that both Wittgenstein and Heidegger maintain that there can be no logical restrictions on possible engaged circumstances, which include a given meaningful practice in the circumstances of its application. In Wittgenstein I found an argument for the view that transcendental necessity, as I called the necessity of conditions of engagement in a meaningful practice in given circumstances, explains the normativity of the norms and facts that determine the meaning of statements made within that practice, and that includes carrying out logical inferences. If that is correct then the meaning of any statement depends on the engaged circumstances of its utterance, and that encompasses the so called logical grammar or form of any token utterance as well, since the latter constitutes certain normative connections between the utterance and other related statements.

If a token utterance's logical grammar was independent of its engaged circumstances, it could be specified once and for all, using such tools as a fixed vocabulary and syntax. In that case it would be determined for all possible engaged circumstances what were the complex expressions, noun phrases, predicate structures etc. of the utterance. There would be at least a nucleus of meaning to the statement which is independent of the engaged circumstances, which is inconsistent with the primacy thesis. There may be cases of statements having only one possible logical grammar, but these are only special cases, where statements function within only one (probably technical) meaningful practice. In general, the primacy thesis entails that the possible logical grammar of an utterance remains undetermined disregarding the engaged circumstances.

It is often claimed that the linguistic capabilities we possess and the systematic relations between sets of statements in our languages must be explained on the basis of
some model language, consisting of a vocabulary and a finite number of rules of syntax. For such a model to be a theory of meaning, it must provide, for each meaningful utterance in a given language, an account of what it means depending on the meaning of its component parts. For such a theory to be possible, the meaning of natural-language expressions must be shown to rely exclusively on the meaning of the lexical units comprising them (vocabulary) and their inner structure (syntax), with the context of application determining at most the reference of any demonstratives appearing inside it. But if the logical form of any statement depends on the engaged circumstances of its utterance, and since these are indefinitely many, the possible meanings of any statement cannot be listed once-and-for-all, including the possible logical forms they can have. Hence as I will argue in this chapter, the primacy thesis entails that the phenomenon of meaning cannot be explained by means of a recursive theory of meaning with finite syntax. As a result, providing a theory of meaning for natural languages is an impossible task.

It is important to note that many linguists and philosophers in practice admit the dependency of logical grammar on the engaged circumstances, when setting their sentences within different contexts to expose the differences in logical grammar when their surface grammar is the same. This is not a problem for linguistics, a science concerned with providing the correct grammar of an expression once its meaning is already known. Nothing is methodologically wrong with linguistics as an empirical science if meaning is taken to be determined by the engaged circumstances, which provide criteria for the correctness of any linguistic analysis. But this is not the case for either a semantic or a syntactic theory of meaning.

Put differently, there are two possible ways to explain language speaking. A weak version of explanation calls for a systematic mapping of the meaning of a sentence M(S), once it is assumed to be known somehow, to its grammar G(S). This is done to explain how G(S) is the vehicle for encoding and decoding M(S), in the instances where it is known that it is such a vehicle. This is one of the definitive roles of linguistics and carries no philosophical significance as far as I can see. The stronger version of explanation calls for the constitution of the phenomenon of language-speaking—or a model to explain how M(S) is constructed or constituted by G(S) relative to a fixed vocabulary and syntax. I take this to be the philosophical motivation
for a theory of meaning.

The implication of the primacy thesis is that the meaning of a token utterance $U$ is constituted relative to some particular engaged circumstances, and need not stay the same given other possible engaged circumstances in which $U$ figures. Hence no single model can explain the construction of $M(S)$ regardless of the engaged circumstances of $U$. In other words, the primacy thesis entails that $M(S)$ does not depend exclusively on $G(S)$. The linguistic capacity of human-beings, as much as the phenomenon of meaning itself, cannot hence be strongly explained with reference to any particular structure that human-beings (or their minds) possess.

I will discuss two prominent contemporary approaches to giving a theory of meaning for any natural language: Davidson’s truth-conditional approach and Horwich’s dispositionalist use-theory of meaning. I will attempt to demonstrate the particular failure of each as entailed by the primacy thesis. I was guided in my choice by the fact that these two approaches seem the most accommodating for the role of the circumstances in determining the meaning of any token utterance. If it can be shown that these approaches fail, that would be significant inter alia for less accommodating accounts, such as Dummett’s “full-blooded” theory of meaning or Fodor’s computational one. I will then ask what sort of an account of meaning is consistent with the primacy thesis.

B. Truth-conditional theories of meaning

Davidson’s now famous programme is to show that a theory of truth can do the work of a theory of meaning, against the criticisms raised by Quine on the one hand and “ordinary language philosophers” like Grice and Strawson on the other. Davidson provides one of the most clear expressions of the constraints on a theory of meaning in *Semantics for Natural Languages*:

> An acceptable theory should… [i] account for the meaning (or conditions of truth) of every sentence by analyzing it as composed, in

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1 Although admittedly Chomskian linguistics includes presuppositions about the constitution of meaning as well. The demarcation I am drawing between linguistics and philosophy of language is not necessarily a demarcation between linguists and philosophers of language.
truth relevant ways, of elements drawn from a finite stock...[ii] provide a method for deciding, given an arbitrary sentence, what its meaning is...[iii] the statements of truth conditions entailed by the theory should...draw upon the same concepts as the sentences whose truth conditions they state’ (Davidson, 1984, pp.56-7).

This would contribute, according to Davidson, to the formulation of the closest thing to a theory of meaning that explains how all and only the meaningful sentences of our language are generated.

Conditions [i] and [ii] together entail that a Davidsonian theory of meaning is possible only if there is a countable set of fixed logical grammars assigned to any statement. For condition [i] states that the truth conditions of a sentence must be analysed according to the truth conditions of some finite stock of elements plus the sentence’s structure, but the ‘truth relevant’ structure of a sentence is its logical form. Furthermore, to meet the demands of condition [ii] the meaning of any sentence must be decided relative only to the meaning of its component parts and its logical form, the elements mentioned in condition [i]. Hence for a theory of meaning to meet Davidson’s first two conditions the possible logical grammar of any arbitrary sentence must be fixed disregarding the circumstances, which do not feature in condition [i]. If there was no determinable function between a finite set of logical forms and each meaningful utterance in a given language, a Davidsonian theory of meaning for that language would be impossible.

Davidson’s view can be summarised as follows: there’s an important sense of meaning in which it is true that whenever we use a statement, such as ‘the roses are red’, its meaning stays the same. This meaning is dependent on the syntax and vocabulary alone. Davidson believes that ambiguity in the object-language is not a problem for his theory of meaning. Especially if the metalanguage is the same as the object language, ‘and all these problems will be carried through without loss or gain into the metalanguage.’ (Truth and Meaning, ibid. pp. 30). But I believe here Davidson has in mind either a semantic lexical ambiguity (where a term has more than one meaning) or syntactic scope ambiguity. The reason that these ambiguities do not present a problem is that the function in question can map each sentence to any number of possible logical form. But if there were differences in logical form due to differences
in the engaged circumstances of the utterance, and since there can always be new circumstances in which a given sentence is somehow used, such a function would have to map every sentence to an indefinite number of possible logical forms, and so it would not be determinable once and for all. If that is true of any language then a Davidsonian theory of meaning for that language cannot be provided.

Davidson’s model seems perhaps on first consideration to be quite plausible, there is almost a pragmatic intuition behind it. Language is a tool developed by human beings, and it seems only natural that words and sentences were developed with a particular fixed meaning, to serve a particular purpose. Since words and syntax are the means we use to decode sentences, it is only plausible to look there for an explanation how it receives the meaning it has. Furthermore, if there is no fixed meaning to a word or a sentence regardless of the engaged circumstances, then how do dictionaries work, and other ways we explain the meaning of a sentence, not knowing any circumstances of its application?

But these issues do not pose real problems for the primacy thesis. It is definitely not inconsistent with statements typically having one particular meaning, let alone with there being a practice of explaining the meaning of a word or a sentence. The practice of explaining words with the help of dictionaries, for example, allows a variety of relations between the dictionary’s definitions and the uses of statements in particular circumstances: one of the dictionary definitions may fit the use exactly, or be very close, or the use might be a derivative of a definition, and finally, it may not fit at all. The standard definition of a word or sentence still allows for new uses of the words to develop as well as for deviant uses of words in an ironic and other moods for example. What the primacy thesis maintains is that there is no necessary common ground for all possible meaningful uses of a statement in any engaged circumstances. Furthermore, that there is not even a countable number of alternative common grounds, which exhaust all possible uses of statements in any circumstances, for there are simply no logical restrictions on possible meaningful practices. A dictionary definition or the typical meaning of a statement do not serve as such exhaustive definitions, that can be used to strongly explain the meaning of the statement regardless of all circumstances.

There is no function, determinable in advance, between the definitions in a dictionary and all the meanings a word may possess in all circumstances, unless we use
a particular sense of ‘meaning’, equivalent to ‘being a dictionary definition’. Some sentences, like ‘the roses are red’, are so ordinary that it is hard to even imagine them having radically different meanings, which are not metaphors or code names. Others, like “riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of shore to bend of bay...”, seem more sensitive to differences in meaning in different engaged circumstances. But for a theory of meaning for English to be possible, more than just the difference between ordinary and strange meanings has to be supposed. Meaning must be determinable regardless of the engaged circumstances, depending on its vocabulary and logical form alone.

Before moving to discuss a particular example of a logical analysis of a domain of language suggested by Davidson, I wish to discuss Wittgenstein’s arguments in the *Investigations* for the dependency of logical grammar on the engaged circumstances of the utterance (PI, pp. 88-92). Wittgenstein believes that philosophers go wrong in thinking there is a notion of clarity or exactness of an analysis that can itself be logically established, and thus hold regardless of particular circumstances. If such clarity existed, a proposition could be proven logically to be clear, and would thereby eliminate the possibility of misunderstanding. If it existed, there would be logical standards for correctness that any analysis must meet, and so any analysis meeting these standards would be the correct analysis of a sentence, regardless of particular circumstances.

In paragraph 87 Wittgenstein observes, that an explanation will never be exact, accurate or complete unless criteria for exactness (accuracy or completeness) in a particular case are determined in advance. Similar to the case of justification I discussed in chapter 3, without them the task becomes either an infinite or a completely arbitrary one. Every explanation we give must be expressed in words, and each word in turn could also be misunderstood ad infinitum.

Wittgenstein concludes that giving an explanation is necessarily a context-dependent activity. This kind of context-dependency is different from that of demonstratives. An explanation is accurate when it manages to correct or avert a particular misunderstanding, assuming particular engaged circumstances, that are necessary to understand the explanation in the way it is given. The utterance ‘It’s the one on the right’ can be a sufficient explanation to enable someone to light the right cooking-flame, assuming not only that the referent of ‘one’ is supplied by the context,
but also a person's ability to light gas cookers in general, distinguish right from left etc. A British stop-sign can prevent a type of traffic accidents happening given that drivers can read English, possess the knowledge necessary to receive a driving license, obey traffic rules and so on. Wittgenstein claims explanations essentially cannot go beyond that, and avert any possible (conceivable) misunderstanding of a particular statement or activity. We face one of two options: either every explanation demands another or 'none stands in need of another- unless we require it to prevent a misunderstanding' (Ibid., p. 87). This point can be extended to logical analysis. To uncover the logical form of a particular statement, criteria for the accuracy of the analysis must be determined in advance of the enquiry. Without them any clarification would stand in need of clarification ad infinitum.

But how are the criteria for an expression being fully analysed to be determined regardless of the application of the expression in particular circumstances? Consider Wittgenstein's example of the expression "my broom is in the corner" (Ibid., p. 60). Is this statement fully analysed when the word 'broom' is analysed as 'a broomstick with a brush attached to it', or 'nylon fibres attached to a wooden platform combines in the middle with a wooden pole', or perhaps by giving the arrangement of atoms in the broom?

More generally, disregarding the application of an expression, there are an indefinite number of languages in which it can be expressed, and hence also for its final analysis. Only very general constraints limit the number of possible languages, such as for example, that an analysis of coloured space be given in terms of some elementary colours and so on. Hence disregarding the situation one language cannot be more or less clear than any other language. It may be preferred to another solely on the basis of external pragmatic grounds, such as that it can be applied to a larger domain of natural-language than another proposed language of analysis, or that it fits well with other established theories etc. These are good reasons to use those languages in a weak explanation of the meaning of natural-language sentences, as in linguistics. But there can be no a priori settlement of the question which language is the best or correct one on external grounds. These are empirical and new inventions or discoveries may enlarge the domain of one language of analysis or shrink the domain of another. In
other words, as long as two languages can provide a complete analysis of the same set of sentences S(N), disregarding the engaged circumstances, preference between them is completely arbitrary.

It seems to me an empirical matter whether there can be more than one equally successful languages of analysis. The same holds for the claim, made by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, that there must be something essentially common to them all. What, after all, is essentially common to calling an object ‘a broom’ and describing it as a combination of sub-atomic elements (which is still impossible to achieve of course)?\(^3\) If so then taking one particular language to correspond to the correct analysis of the sentence is simply an arbitrary matter.

Wittgenstein also deals with this argument by *reductio ad absurdum*. He claims that if a language L existed, in which every sentence S(L) is necessarily completely clear, then being completely clear would be synonymous with being a sentence of type S(L). Any sentence in a system other than L would thus necessarily be unclear, and can be clarified only by being analysed into sentences of type S(L). If L is identical with natural language, logical analysis would be impossible. If it is not, our everyday expressions become essentially unclear, standing in need of analysis in terms of L: ‘The essence is hidden from us’: that is the form our problem now assumes’ (Ibid., p 92).

This runs against Wittgenstein’s ‘idly turning wheel’ argument, which I will reconstruct as follows: if logical analysis consists in a systematic mapping of sentences in natural language N with sentences in L, how is the sentence S\(_i\)(L) to be distinguished from the corresponding sentence S\(_j\)(N) of which it is the correct analysis, apart from their different wording? Surely if we simply put one phrasing for another, without showing how this wording is in some way better, we achieve nothing. Now the correspondence between S\(_i\)(N) and S\(_i\)(L) is designed to be meaning-preserving, whether in terms of truth or assertibility conditions. Hence *ex hypothesi* there can be no difference in the set of circumstances in which S\(_i\)(N) and S\(_i\)(L) are correctly applied, which the mapping is designed to preserve. But if the sentences of S\(_i\)(N) and S\(_i\)(L) can

\(^{\text{1}}\) I will refer to grounds for preferring one language to another, disregarding the circumstances and assuming an equal domain ‘internal grounds’ for preference.

\(^{\text{2}}\) Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger argue that the properties making an object a broom depend on its relation to other things in contexts of involvement and cannot be deduced simply from observing the

\(^{\text{3}}\) Both Wittgenstein and Heidegger argue that the properties making an object a broom depend on its relation to other things in contexts of involvement and cannot be deduced simply from observing the
generate an identical domain of meaningful activities and statements, how is L preferable to N as a language of analysis? ‘This sentence, one might say, achieves the same as the ordinary one, but in a more roundabout way.’ (PI, p. 60)

To avoid becoming an idly turning wheel the conception of natural language as an essentially unanalysed body of sentences is committed to claim that some language L ≠ N corresponds better to the facts, either in a speaker’s mind or in the objective world (including the speaker’s brain). But if Wittgenstein’s or Heidegger’s arguments are correct to the effect that these are insufficient to constitute the phenomenon of meaning, which is constituted within publicly observable practices, then this is a dead end. The view of natural language as essentially in need of analysis is shown to be at least committed to a view of meaning that was put in questioned by both Wittgenstein and Heidegger.

It may be the case that Davidson is able to accept all that, and save his notion of a theory of meaning by condition iii) above, that the language of analysis use only the concepts appearing in the analysed statement. But that only saves Davidson from issues related to the choice of vocabulary. In matters of syntax there can still be no internal reasons to prefer one to the other. This is because the logical form of any token utterance remains underdetermined until considered in light of its engaged circumstances. Wittgenstein rounds off his discussion of logical analysis in the sixty-odd sections of the *Investigations* with the introduction of another much discussed notion, family resemblance. It is meant to replace the rejected logical standards of clarity. He introduces the concept in reply to the interlocutor’s objection, that he avoids stating what must be common to all possible languages, in virtue of which they fall under the extension of the term. He responds:

‘And this is true.—Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all,—but that they are related to one another in many different ways.’ (PI, pp. 65)
A similar point can be made about the particular logical form of every complex expression. As I noted above, there needs to be no particular structural feature common to two statements which mean the same thing (except, of course, that they mean the same thing), such as ‘the broom is in the corner’ and ‘the brush attached to the broomstick is in the corner’. Similarly, nothing is to say there has to be something particular in common to all token utterances of the same type, though their use must be related in some way, which cannot be specified once-and-for-all. But since Wittgenstein does not take that route, or mentions logical form in particular anywhere, this will be demonstrated in further detail below.

As a result the correct analysis of any token utterance depends on its engaged circumstances in two separate ways: first, the choice of the language of analysis is motivated by external grounds, that are themselves sensitive to the circumstances. For example, a language L may clearly present a particular set of logical properties, that gets rid of a particular logical puzzle. I call this the problem-dependency of logical grammar. Second, even given a particular language of analysis has been chosen, the correct logical grammar of an utterance still depends on the engaged circumstances, since it may have indefinitely many logical forms in different engaged circumstances. I call this the context-dependency of logical grammar.

To demonstrate the correctness of these arguments I will now examine Davidson’s analysis of adverbial and prepositional modification as a particular example of a Davidsonian theory of meaning. The problem with these types of modification is the ‘variable polyadicity’ of action verbs, first raised by Kenny (Kenny, 1963, pp. 107). Action verbs can take on an indefinite number of adverbs and prepositions modifying the action to which they refer. The sentence ‘I rode my horse’ for example can be indefinitely extended in the following or similar fashions: ‘I rode my horse fast and strenuously in the fields at midday...’. Under the common Russellian form of analysis, each time we add an adverb or a preposition we require another argument in the predicate referring to the action: the first would become aRb, the second aRbcde and so on. This would be a flaw for a theory of meaning of such sentences, first because it would extend the number of vocabulary predicates indefinitely, second because it would make the systematic logical entailments between those predicates mysterious—

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corresponding physical object would precisely not capture the correct analysis of the term ‘broom’.

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It would not explain why an action predicate with \( n \) places entails all action predicates with \( 1 \) to \( n-1 \) places containing the corresponding constants or bound variables *mutatis mutandis*. It does not explain, for example, why the sentence above entails ‘I rode my horse strenuously in the fields’.

Davidson’s analysis of logical form need not account for logical entailments that are constitutive of the vocabulary terms of the language. For example, logical form need not account for the difference in entailments between ‘A believes that \( p \)’ and ‘A knows that \( p \)’, since that belongs in the difference of logical entailments between the lexical units ‘know’ and ‘believe’ (regarding the truth of \( p \)). Also, it need not account for deviations in meaning due to a difference in reference of demonstratives uttered in different times and places. Finally, it need not account for certain implications of sentences that are the result of applying the rules of the systems in which they play a part. Thus, it is not due to its logical form that the statement ‘the king is in mate’ implies the game of chess is over, but to the rules of the game. But all other logical entailments of a particular token utterance must by his own admission be accommodated by Davidson’s analysis.

Davidson first notices that the polyadicity problem exists for event sentences in general (and thus that the agency implied in action sentences is immaterial to this particular problem). He then suggests we should include events in our ontology such that we would have (quantifiable) singular terms referring to events. He claims that, apart from making it possible to treat the polyadicity of event predicates in a way I shall outline below, this suggestion makes it much clearer how there can be different descriptions of the same event (Ibid., pp. 110). Consider for example ‘You are sitting in your room doing nothing’ vs. ‘I am resting and thinking what I should do next’. Davidson rightfully claims that if we could have singular terms referring to events, then this fact reduces to a simple identity statement between singular terms, so that instead of an event \( a \) (sitting in my room doing nothing), we propose event \( b \) (thinking what I should do), and claim that \( a=b \). Without events in our ontology it becomes a mystery how the same event can have an indefinite number of (sometimes contradictory) descriptions (Ibid., pp. 109).

Davidson concludes that some predicates have event places. He provides an analysis of adverbial and prepositional modification, by treating adverbs and
prepositions as such predicates. Thus he analyses the sentence ‘I flew my spaceship to the moon’ as $(\exists e) (\text{Flew}(I, \text{my spaceship}, e) \land (\text{To} (\text{the moon}, e)))$ where $e$ ranges over events. This analysis clearly shows why this sentence entails ‘I flew my spaceship’, or, given that ‘the moon’=‘luna’, ‘I flew my spaceship to luna’.

Davidson offered his analysis to solve the particular problem of the polyadicity of event predicates. His argument against Russell’s form of final analysis concentrated on a difference in a domain between his and Russell’s suggested languages – the ability to analyse event sentences in a way that would perspicuously present the logical entailments of such sentences. Indeed, his logical analysis is final in the sense of being able to clearly present this set of logical entailments, once we accept his ontology.

The problem-dependency of Davidson’s analysis is clearly shown in Davidson’s rejection of Kenny’s analysis of action sentences. According to Kenny, the sentence above should be analysed as ‘I brought it about that my spaceship flew to the moon’. Davidson rightly maintains that this analysis does not solve the problem of the polyadicity of event predicates, but admits that Kenny actually meant his analysis to bring out the distinctive role of agency in action-predicates. Action predicates are a sub-class of event predicates which Kenny defines as possible answers to the question ‘what did A do?’ (Kenny, 1963, pp. 154). Kenny argues, that there are at least two important features of their logical form that distinguish action verbs from other event predicates (ibid., pp. 183-184). First, since action predicates exhaust the class of voluntary acts, only action predicates can appear in an imperative statement (‘eat this cake!’ vs. ‘collide these two bodies!’ for example). Second, because only actions are purposive, only action predicates can appear in teleological ‘why?’ questions (‘for what purpose did you eat this cake?’ vs. ‘for what purpose did these bodies collide?’). Davidson’s analysis fails to reveal these distinctive features of action predicates. If we chose that as our criterion for successful analysis, then Kenny’s analysis is to be preferred to Davidson’s. Hence what we take to be a complete analysis of the logical form depends on pre-established criteria for completeness relative to a particular problem.

The context-dependency of logical form can be shown by demonstrating that the same utterance can have radically different logical forms, in the same language of

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1 Disregarding for the moment Davidson’s separate treatment of these features of action predicates.
analysis, under different contexts. Take Davidson’s analysis of adverbs and predicates, and consider the sentence: ‘He wore his shoes down to work this morning’. This sentence might mean:

1. He has worn his shoes down for them to work this morning (as opposed to yesterday, they gave him blisters). The possible logical entailments of this sentence are: he wore his shoes down, he wore his shoes down to work (but not he wore his shoes down this morning). A possible logical analysis under Davidson’s language is (∃e) (Wore down (he, his shoes, e) & in order to (work, this morning, e)).

2. He wore his shoes down before he went to work this morning. This entails: he wore his shoes down, he wore his shoes down this morning, he wore his shoes down to work. A possible analysis would be (∃e) (Wore down (he, his shoes, e) & in order to (work, e) & t(e)=this morning).

3. He wore his shoes so that he could work this morning (he usually walks barefoot). This has the same entailments as 1). The correct analysis is (∃e) (Wore (he, his shoes, e)& To (work, this morning, e)).

4. Yesterday he wore his boots at work (he works in the fields), today his shoes (the boots got torn). Same entailments as 2). The correct analysis would be (∃e) (Wore (he, his shoes, e)& To (work, e) & t(e)=this morning).

The first thing to notice, taking options 1) and 3), is that Davidson’s analysis fails to show, how we could entail ‘he wore his shoes down to work’, since that seems to break the second predicate in half. Yet in those cases it is wrong to say ‘he wore his shows down this morning, (using the other broken half of the predicate), for the same reason we cannot assume t(e)=this morning— because for all we know, he could have worn them down in the middle of the night, for them to work in the morning. This is a difficulty for Davidson’s analysis being the correct final analysis of event predicates. But I do not wish to concentrate on it here, and I shall assume that it can provide a correct analysis of any event sentence for the sake of argument. For my point is not that there are logical entailments of statements that are not brought out by analysis in a given language. This is the sort of problem Davidson has with Russell’s analysis, and which motivated his own solution. My purpose is rather to show that there is no way of telling how many possible logical analyses statement can have, nor which one it has whenever a token of it is uttered, regardless of the engaged circumstances. In other
words, the primacy thesis does not entail that a correct analysis, relative to a particular language, cannot be provided for any token utterance assuming its meaning is known; rather, that understanding its meaning is not strongly explained by possessing such an analysis, as part of a theory of meaning.

I wish therefore to stress, that although the difference between 1-2 and 3-4 can be attributed to a difference in the lexical meaning of the predicate To(a,b,e), the differences between members of each pair cannot be explained in this way, and are determined by the context of the assertion. The context-dependency of these utterances cannot be removed by providing further condition of the form: ‘in circumstances C the correct analysis is F’. The reason is that the relation the circumstances have with the meaning of a statement is not one that can be turned into a strict rule. In giving the different logical forms I provided a sketch of the circumstances that would help determine the correct logical form. But such a sketch cannot be made into a rule, that, for example, ‘in every circumstances C in which ‘his shoes gave him blisters the day before’ the correct analysis of the sentence is (1)’ and so on. Even given circumstances C, it is still possible that the sentence meant to express proposition (4) for example, which I take to be the most obvious reading of the sentence. As above, the existence of normal or typical cases of meaning does not corroborate the claim that it can be strongly explained by any finite set of rules.

To see that more clearly it is enough to consider, that in order for the particular circumstances I provided to pick the correct logical form, the assumption was made that the sentence expresses a true proposition. In other words, certain (Gricean) pragmatic assumptions were made, that an utterance is given with the intention of being truthful and to give the best available information in the circumstances. But if we acknowledge that a statement might be false, or even that it may display a misunderstanding on the part of the speaker, then we cannot give conditions which would fix the correct reading regardless of circumstances. For any set of rules we give, there are conceivable circumstances in which those conditions are met and still a different logical form would be correct. That just is the implication of the primacy thesis. If it cannot be solved by providing a finite set of additional premises as in the case of chess, then this form of context-dependency is not the kind Davidson can afford to disregard.
It might be claimed, that we somehow possess every possible logical form of this (and every other) sentence, and that the context only determines which one applies in any token utterance of the sentence. But this cannot be the case, because there is no way of knowing, prior to considering the context of the utterance, what number of logical forms it may have. If we consider the same sentence again, but this time assume that we are talking about a notoriously lazy person, then the sentence might also mean: ‘he put his shoes on, and that was his work for the day’. In this case we take the sentence to determine a causal relation, between his wish to do some work, and his wearing his shoes. In this case, under Davidson’s own analysis of causal statements, the correct analysis would be:

\[ (\exists e) \text{(wanted To (he, work, e)} \land \text{t(e)=this morning)} \land (\exists f) \text{(Put (he, his shoes, f)} \land \text{t(f)>t(e)).} \]

Yet, unless we are talking about circumstances of extreme (even ludicrous) laziness, and probably add a bit of irony as well, such an analysis of the sentence is definitely far-fetched. This is not the end of it though, even if these were the only existing uses of the statement. For nothing stops us from introducing new and deviant uses. Suppose for example that ‘he wore his shoes’ would be made in some dialect to function the same as its close semantic relative ‘he put his shoes’. The sentence ‘he wore his shoes down to work’ could also function to mean more or less ‘he worked hard’, similar to the sentence ‘he put his shows down to (some serious) work’. This is not an idiom, since ‘he wore his gloves down to work’ and ‘he wore his shoes down to some serious dancing’ are possible sentences, given that ‘wore’ functions the same as ‘put’. But in this case the polyadicity of this predicate disappears completely, since it does not entail ‘he wore his shoes’ (since the expression could be used even when, as it happens, he worked barefoot). The logical form is again radically different, since ‘wear’ functions here as a complex predicate:

\[ \text{Put(subject, object) To (adjective, activity).} \]

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5. The actual phrasing of the sentence is an awkward way of putting it, but not an impossible one. Consider: ‘did he do some work this morning? ‘he wore his shoes down to work this morning!’
6. Which I will not discuss in detail.
And that would seem to justify a Russell-type analysis. To conclude, Davidson's programme of deciding the logical form of an utterance from its semantic units and structure alone is an impossible one, which is one entailment of the primacy thesis.

These examples aim to demonstrate that there can be no function mapping every sentence of a given language to a set of countably many possible logical forms, since no clear limits are set to the number of logical forms it can have in different engaged circumstances. Even given a language of analysis, only the particular context determines which combinations of the vocabulary and syntax of that language make sense, and what makes sense in one context need not necessarily makes sense in another. Thus even if all the different senses of that sentence could be formulated in Davidson's language, it would not be on account merely of the reference of names and its syntactic structure that the sentence possessed their meaning. Rather, it would be due to the way statements are used meaningfully, so that even then the possibility remains of extending the practice in a way which would make it impossible to analyse in Davidson's system.

The problem-dependency of Davidson's analysis shows that we would not be able to generate all sentences of natural language using it, since there are logical properties this language neglects, as for example agency (intentional vs. unintentional action). The context-dependency of the correct analysis shows that we would not be able to generate only the meaningful sentences of our language, since in any context Davidson's language may generate meaningless sentences.

The impossibility to provide a function mapping some finite set of logical forms to every meaningful utterance in a given language is a failure for a wide range of suggested theories of meaning, not only for Davidson's programme. However, there is a different type of theories of meaning, for which logical grammar is not such a central notion. Davidson wishes to distinguish:

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1 Although they may become meaningful given a different context.
Uncovering the logical grammar or form of sentences (which is the province of a theory of meaning as I construe it), and the analysis of individual words or expressions (which are treated as primitive by the theory)' (Davidson, 1984, pp. 31).

But there is another approach to theories of meaning, concentrating not only on structure but on providing the meaning of individual lexical units. The arguments presented in this section will hence leave these theories untouched. But as long as it is the role of a theory of meaning to provide a function mapping any word or expression to some property \( U(w) \), that determines its meaning for all possible circumstances, it would be inconsistent with the primacy thesis. I will thus turn to examine a contemporary approach to giving such a theory of meaning, calling upon the use of a word or expression to provide the function \( U(w) \), provided by Paul Horwich.

### C. Use Theories of Meaning

Horwich has recently been proclaiming a version of a use theory of meaning he non-committedly pins on Wittgenstein. In *Meaning Use and Truth* (Horwich, 1995, pp. 356) he summerises it in four points:

1. There are meaning-properties
2. Each meaning-property has an underlying nature.
3. The underlying natures of meaning-properties are non-intensional.
4. The non-intensional natures of meaning-properties are basic regularities of use, explanatory fundamental generalisations about the circumstances in which words occur.

In the more recent *Meaning* (Horwich, 1998, pp. 45) he provides the following summery:

Think of all the facts regarding a person’s linguistic behaviour – the sum of everything he will say, and in what circumstances. The thesis is that this constellation of data may be unified and explained in terms of a relatively small and simple body of factors and principles including, for each word, a basic use regularity.
Clearly Horwich proposes a function $U(w)$, that maps each word to some regularity of use that determines how it is to be used in every possible circumstances. He offers a theory of meaning not only to show how complex expressions depend on the meaning of their constituents, but also to describe the meaning of every word or constituent of complex expressions in non-intensional terms, according to some use regularity. This regularity is constituted by the above-mentioned fundamental underlying nature of the concept corresponding to each word, which explains this regularity of use $U(w)$. In *Meaning* Horwich calls this underlying concept the acceptance property of a word. Underlying $U(w)$ there is hence another function $A(w)$ which maps each word to its acceptance property (or, let us grant, a finite set of acceptance properties). If $A(w)$ is non determinable for any meaningful expression in a given language, then Horwich’s use theory of meaning could not account for it.

One of Horwich’s main concerns is to refute an objection to the possibility of giving such a function found in Kripke’s Wittgenstein interpretation. Kripke proposes an argument against what he calls dispositionalist theories of meaning, theories that analyse the meaning of a word in terms of speakers’ dispositions to use it in certain ways. Horwich reconstructs the argument as follows (Horwich, 1995, pp. 360):

1. Whatever constitutes the meaning of a predicate must determine its extension.
2. The use of word does not determine its extension.

Therefore:

3. The meaning of a predicate is not constituted by its use.

Horwich believes that this argument equivocates between two notions of determination: a weak notion (he calls ‘determination’) appearing in premise 1., which means simply, that terms with the same meaning (synonyms) must be co-extensional; and a strong notion of determination (Horwich calls DETERMINATION), according to which it must be possible to infer, by scrutinising the function $U(w)$, that $w$ stands in relation $R$ to a set of objects $S$, such $S$ is the extension of $w$. For Kripke’s arguments in support of premise 2. show only that $U(w)$ does not allow for such inferences.

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8 Kripke uses his now well-known ‘quus’ example, which I will outline here, but will not go into in depth: quus is a mathematical function which gives identical values to the regular plus function except for very large numbers, for which it always equals 5. Kripke’s claim is that though quus and plus have different extensions, these could not be discovered by any dispositions of speakers to use them, since *ex hypothesi* for all practical purposes these functions are identical. Clearly, what this proves is that the extension of the predicate ‘plus’, whether it means plus or quus, could not be simply read from the use regularities. This is Horwich’s strong notion of DETERMINATION.
Kripke is left with two options: the first is strengthening the notion of determination appearing in premise 1.; the other is weakening the notion of determination appearing in premise 2. The first of these options would, according to Horwich, commit Kripke to the view that truth is a substantive property that can be analysed in non-intensional terms. This is what Horwich calls the inflationary conception of truth, which he finds metaphysically nonviable. I am willing to grant him that, if only because my argument does not depend on a particular conception of truth. That leaves the other option, to show that use does not determine (weakly) the extension of a predicate. To do this it must be shown, that ‘two predicates may have the same use but different extensions’ (Ibid.). Horwich proceeds to argue that Kripke’s arguments do not in fact establish this, and I am willing to grant him that as well, purely for the sake of argument.

Instead I wish to address a recent suggestion by Alexander Miller (Miller, 2000, pp. 164), as to how Kripke’s argument can be reconstructed, using a third notion of determination (which Miller calls determinationc):

A property U(w) determines, the meaning of w iff \( U(w) = x \) is inconsistent with \( U(w) = y \), where \( x \) and \( y \) are not co-extensional.

Miller claims that this notion is implied by Horwich’s weak determination, which I believe is easy to see, and so does not presuppose an inflationary conception of truth. Using it in premises 1. and 2. of Kripke’s argument, would according to Miller make it sound again. Roughly, Determinationc means that whatever use regularities constitute w’s meaning \( x \), must be inconsistent with w meaning \( y \), where \( x \) and \( y \) are not co-extensional. Miller believes he supplies Kripke with a demonstration that use regularities do not meet this condition.

In fact, Miller only refers back to Kripke’s use of ‘bleen’, true of something if it is blue before some time \( t \) and green afterwards. He claims it is both syntactically and semantically equivalent to ‘blue’ (since they are interdefinable in the familiar way), and though they would be used the same way, they have different extensions. I myself am not convinced that ‘blue’ and ‘bleen’ are used the same way. In fact, Miller is forced to admit that Horwich can utilise the difference in the extensions of ‘blue’ and ‘bleen’ (before and after time \( t \)) to expose the difference in use between them. Miller concedes this as a way out, but points out this response commits Horwich to traditional dispositionalism, which Horwich wants to reject (Ibid., pp. 169). Hence, though I
believe Miller’s point stands, I think better examples for it can be found.

Remaining in the realm of colours, it is known that in one native American language there is no word for yellow, and what is called yellow in English would be called either orange or green in that language. Now a typical use regularity condition for ‘green’ in Horwich’s view is that ‘we apply ‘green’ to an observed surface iff it is clearly green’ (cf. Horwich, 1998, pp. 46). Though that condition applies equally well for English and the native American language, their extensions would be different in a number of shades. In fact, even the extension of the concept ‘red’ in English is not determined, by the use regularity Horwich would provide for it, since red cabbages, grapes, squirrels etc. are clearly not red, if we compare them with a colour sample (where they would be purple or brown). Another example from within a single language are two concepts with only a vague distinction between them like ‘heap’ and ‘pile’. Though is various contexts they have differing extensions, the use of these two terms is very close to identical. Their vagueness does not allow them to be distinguished by a use regularity such as: ‘we apply ‘heap’ to a collection of objects iff it is clearly a heap’.

Hence if premise 2. of Kripke’s argument is true inserting determination, in it, and since premise 1. is entailed by Horwich’s own theory, then Kripke’s argument becomes sound again. However, there is another inconsistency between a use theory of meaning and the primacy thesis, which Miller only touches in passing. That is the idea, that some use regularity determines the way a word is used in all possible circumstances. Going back to the colours example, Miller notices that the use regularities Horwich offers do not begin to cover all possible uses of a term such as ‘blue’:

But what about uses of ‘blue’ which are not instances of this regularity? For example, the use of ‘blue’ in ‘If the mousepad is blue, then it is coloured’. Or my applying ‘blue’ to a pillar box in the dark. Or my applying ‘blue’ to the mousepad in less than optimal conditions?” (Ibid., pp. 166).

Horwich can accept this and still maintain, that the appropriate use regularity is a minimal requirement related to all possible uses in various counterfactual ways, and Miller does not consider this response. But again there are other examples that make
this escape impossible, provided by Wittgenstein when discussing family resemblance, a point which is even more relevant to a Horwich-type theory of meaning than a Davidson-type one, since both Horwich and Wittgenstein concentrate on the meaning of individual expressions. Wittgenstein notices that such terms as ‘number’ and ‘game’ do not possess any use regularity whatsoever in common to all their possible uses. Even the fact games are played for leisure, which seemed to me a plausible candidate, is not true of the political game, say. And although it is possible to use those terms within meaningful practices in which they have some determinate characteristics in common, it is equally possible (and in fact more frequent) to use them without a use regularity which could be specified once-and-for-all:

‘All right, the concept of number is defined for you as the logical sum of these individual interrelated concepts: cardinal numbers, rational numbers, real numbers etc.; and in the same way the concept of a game is the logical sum of a corresponding set of sub-concepts.’— It need not be so. For I can give the concept ‘number’ rigid limits in this way, that is, use the word “number” for a rigidly limited concept, but I can also use it so that the extension of the concept is not closed by a frontier. And this is how we do use the word “game”.’ (PI, p. 68)

Trying to provide a Horwich-type use regularity for the term ‘number’ runs into an immediate difficulty, of defining what it is that numbers apply to— collections of objects, ordered list of objects, marks on paper... There is no way of determining in advance what ‘number’ can apply to. Second, to say that we apply it to anything “only when it is clearly a number” will not do, since it can be applied also to what is quite clearly a collection of objects. While to define ‘number’ without using the term in the definition requires a way of summing up what can be done with numbers, but that depends on the mathematics applied, the purpose and circumstances of the application, etc. They cannot therefore be listed once-and-for-all. Similar problems occur with the term ‘game’ and indefinitely many others— suppose we say that we apply the term to an activity, but one can be playing a game by not phoning a friend up, say, in a particular situation. Or, following Wittgenstein, we may apply the term to any meaningful utterance or gesture. The latter two uses of ‘game’ also stand in the way of
claiming, that we apply the term to anything iff it is clearly a game, for both games between friends and language-games are not clearly games.

Not only is the first claim of Horwich's theory of meaning threatened by Kripke's argument, because terms with the same use can have differing extensions, its second claim is shown to be false by the lack of a set of countable "natures" (according to claim 4, use regularities) that explain the way a word is used in all possible circumstances. Since Horwich's premises 3 and 4 all presuppose the truth of premise 2, their falsity is logically entailed by its falsity. But because premise 2 is independent of what particular underlined nature a meaning-property has, its falsity goes beyond proving the impossibility of a use theory of meaning, to engulf any theory of meaning that depends on the existence of some underlying nature explaining the use of a word in all possible circumstances.

Looking back to the claims of the previous section and the claims of this one, we may conclude that the phenomenon of meaning, be it of statements, thoughts or activities, cannot be explained by reducing each particular statement etc. to a state described by some fixed system of rules. And it does not matter whether the system presupposes the meaning of its basic elements, or proposes to give the meaning of each meaningful element of language by reference to some explanatory fundamental property. This is because, as the primacy thesis entails, the particular meaning of any token meaningful expression is dependent on the engaged circumstances of its utterance, and so cannot be given once and for all. Understanding the meaning of any statement, activity or thought, in other words, is a process that cannot be systematised; its sensitivity to a particular situation is of such a kind, that it is impossible to know, calculate or predict in any way what essential characteristics or "nature" it can have in all possible circumstances—only what it is like in a possible application of it. But any workable system must have a countable number of elements and structural rules (or vocabulary and syntax). This feature is built in to the definition of a "workable" system, since otherwise it would lose any explanatory power it may have. It is thus always calculable what possibilities a system has, and it is impossible than any system will strongly explain the phenomenon of meaning. In the next chapter I will explore the limits that the phenomenon of meaning places on calculability or predictability.
Involvement and
Freedom to Engage

A. Freedom and Ground

In the last chapter I was concerned with drawing the negative conclusions of the primacy thesis, namely the impossibility of providing a systematic account of the meaning of any meaningful token utterance in a particular language. The engaged circumstances, such as for example, going shopping in a modern supermarket, working on a play in a fringe theatre, and so on, are necessarily a factor determining the meaning of any utterance. Hence no utterance has any meaning regardless of any engaged circumstances.

Here I wish to draw the positive conclusions of the primacy thesis, a positive account of the necessary conditions of the phenomenon of meaning, which is entailed by the primacy thesis. With this both aims I set for this work would be accomplished—This would be an account of the locus of agreement between Wittgenstein and Heidegger, which I sought continuously in their discussion of what makes meaning possible. At the same time it would bring all the themes explored in this work together in a coherent whole: the totality of the world, the relationally conceived subject and normativity.

What the primacy thesis claims to be essentially unsystematisable is engagement in a particular practice (being involved in a particular scheme or design) in given circumstances. This claim is composed of two separate points: first, there is no decision procedure for whether to engage in a particular form of involvement in a given situation, given agents' beliefs and desires, unless one is already engaged in some

1 Because of the primacy of the engaged circumstances it is impossible to give a finite list of description which would be equivalent to actually engaging with a particular meaningful practice in
meaningful practice involving such beliefs and desires. Second, there is no decision procedure, for all possible meaningful practices, for whether an agent is engaged in them or not, given their actions, beliefs desires, utterances etc.

The first point is an extension of the claim made in chapter 1, that whether a set of facts constitutes a reason to engage in a particular involvement is dependent on agents' projects, overall engagements to be involved in something for their own sake. If that is true then whatever reasons there are to engage in a particular activity, for example, would also be relative to agents' projects. Suppose there is half an acre of unused land in an urban area. There is a lack of hospitals in the area and city hall promised to build more. Suppose further that half an acre is not enough for city hall's planned new hospital. Now, will city hall (which we assume to be optimally rational) decide to build a hospital there or use it for another purpose? Below I will argue that what can be known is what the outcome of either choice would be - compromising the plans for a hospital, or compromising its promise to the electorate. But I will claim that which of the two is preferable is not decidable, even if we assume knowledge of all relevant facts, unless it is built in to our decision procedure that, say, commitments to the electorate take precedence in all circumstances. But that means that city hall is already assumed to be engaged in some involvement, namely the involvement in fulfilling commitments to its electorate.

The second point is an extension of the point made in the previous chapter, that meaning is unsystematisable. It states that given agents' actions along with all relevant facts, beliefs and desires, these agents' meaningful involvement is still essentially underdetermined. Elements of a given set of such factors can have indefinitely many meanings depending on the involvement within which they figure. I call the missing ingredient agents' engagement with a particular practice. As in chapter 4, I will say an agent is engaged in a particular practice when an agent acts (verbally, mentally and otherwise) in a way which uses the terms, thoughts etc. of the given practice and takes for granted its transcendental conditions.

Both points making up the claim that the phenomenon of meaning cannot be systematised can be restated in terms of agents' engagement in a particular practice in given circumstances. The first point states that agents' engagements cannot be
systematised since they do not depend systematically on the set of all relevant facts
determining them. The second point states that agents’ engagement is necessary to
determine the meaning of their behaviour.

Some systematic dependency of a phenomenon on its determining factors is a
presupposition of any prediction of the phenomenon’s behaviour. I will hence call the
first point the unpredictability of agents’ engagements in a particular meaningful
practice in given circumstances (or engagements for short)\(^2\). I will call the second point
the necessity of engagements for anything to possess a particular meaning.

Following Heidegger, I will refer to the conjunction of these two points in
terms of possessing a kind of freedom. Since engagement is the subject of both
points, I will call this it the freedom to engage. The claim that human beings are free to
engage amounts to the claim that engagement is both unpredictable and necessary for
the phenomenon of meaning. If it is true then it is always an open question whether to
engage in a possible meaningful practice, which can be answered for an agent only
once they are already engaged in some meaningful practice.

The claim human beings are free to engage hence contains the conclusion of
chapter 1, that some involvement for-its-own-sake is a presupposition of the existence
of the phenomenon of meaning. For such engagement to be free, a totality of possible
involvements must be presupposed as well. It contains the conclusion of chapter 2,
since if the subject is essentially free to engage, then it is defined essentially in terms of
Being-in-the-world. And it contains the conclusion of chapters 3 and 4, since
engagement in some meaningful practice is necessary for any statement to have a

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\(^2\) A note is here required on my rather technical use of the term ‘unpredictability’. Some natural
processes are unpredictable because of the sheer number of events comprising them. Such events are
at least statistically predictable, and no one would take seriously the claim that because they are
averaged over they do not operate according to the same rules that describe simpler and directly
predictable natural processes (the statistical prediction in fact relies on the same natural laws being in
operation). Other forms of unpredictability are stronger because they are mathematically necessary—
such as the unpredictability of chaotic processes or of calculations that complexity and computability
theories deal with. But precisely because they are mathematically formulated they are part of a
systematic mapping, and are in that sense predictable. Thus the mathematician can calculate under
what conditions a system enters a chaotic phase, or moves to a measure beyond finite calculation. A
variation of the same objection applies also for the unpredictability of quantum events—This very
unpredictability is a direct entailment of the empirical-mathematical system of quantum theory, and as
such it must yield entirely predictable results (without them the theory would not be an interesting
scientific one). The unpredictability here discussed is for the reasons of a different kind. It would
only be truly predicated of something to which no systematic mapping can be provided at all, and does
not create predictable patterns of any sort.
particular meaning. But this engagement means acting so as to presuppose the
transcendently necessary conditions of a particular meaningful practice.

Freedom to engage, being a necessary condition of understanding, thus sums up all points made by both Wittgenstein and Heidegger and explored in this work. Hence if it could be shown that:

a. both Wittgenstein and Heidegger argue for the two points jointly comprising the claim for freedom to engage;

b. their arguments make a cogent critique of traditional and contemporary approaches to metaphysics, meaning, normativity and action;

we would have the locus of agreement between Wittgenstein and Heidegger, and of the criticisms they raise about traditional and contemporary philosophical presuppositions.

The notion of metaphysical freedom is inherently related to the totality of the world, an issue we touched upon in chapter 1, and must bring to focus here. Freedom was an essential component of the argument to the effect that the world is a transcendental condition of involvement. The world is a totality of possible involvements, within which the activities, thoughts, relation etc. of human-beings get their meaning. Having access to the world, expressed as Being-in-the-world, is what Heidegger calls transcendence, and I developed in chapter one as being a transcendental condition of free involvement. The world is such a condition because some conception of one's life as a whole, even if one lives in deliberate avoidance of making long-term plans and far-reaching decisions, is presupposed by the fact that any of one's dealings in the world explicitly demands reasons. But the meaning of any particular involvement in the world is understood if and only if it is engaged in on the basis of reasons, and thus on the basis the totality of the world.

Any engagement that is entered into for reasons is entered freely, in the sense that is important for this discussion. If we are necessarily engaged in any involvement, any explicit reason to engage in it would be superfluous, since engagement would happen with or without explicit reasons—whatever reasons there are to prefer it to alternatives. This should not be taken as a point against any theory or explanation of what reasons are, such as Davidson's theory that reasons are causes (cf. Davidson, 1980). Neither is this the same point Jaegwon Kim makes, when he claims that deep-level causal explanations in psychology would make rational explanations
superfluous (cf. Kim, 1989). The point is rather a constraint on any theory of reasons, since it is a point about what reasons are—Any explanation of what reasons are must accommodate the fact that to do anything on the basis of reasons presupposes, to make sense, the existence of available alternatives, and the ability to act according to the conclusions of one’s reasoning. In this sense reasons presuppose some freedom whatever the characteristics of any mechanism underlying them are. Examples of actions lacking this kind of freedom are actions performed totally blindly, without consideration for reasons: actions performed in a psychotic state, reflexes, involuntary actions and the like.

Suppose there was a disease (call it the ‘Kant syndrome’) that made its bearer go for a walk for an hour each day at 5:00 p.m. Having Kant syndrome is distinguished from simply going for a walk only by the lack of the agents’ explicit demand for reasons. It would also have meaning as it were only from the outside, only for other people watching it, as a case of Kant syndrome. Whether patients could think and speak normally during an attack or not, they could only refer to it from the “outside” as a Kant syndrome attack and not from the “inside” as going for a walk, something which gets its meaning in a situation depending on how it relates to their lives as a whole. There would not, for example, be a question of why to go, or for how long etc.

Also with reasons there arises the question of preference, since a reason for an action provides the ground for preferring it to all possible alternatives, at least inasmuch as any further suggested alternative puts the preference in question if and when it arises. But reasons here function as a sub-class of justifications, all members of which necessarily involve a preference among a totality of possibilities. To prefer something over a totality of possibilities is, as I discussed, to prefer it for its own sake. This leads Heidegger to assert that

‘The primal phenomena of ground is the for-the-sake-of, which belongs to transcendence. Maintaining itself in the for-the-sake-of and binding itself with it freedom is freedom towards ground.’ (MFL, pp. 214-215).

Regardless of whether, for example, they also form a subclass of causes as well.
That is, there can only be an explicit demand for reasoning/justification in order to act, for an entity which is free to engage, and must hence act with an understanding of its actions. That can only be achieved if that entity has access to a background totality of possible involvements, for-the-sake-of some of which it lives its life. Freedom to engage was in fact introduced in chapter 1 as a transcendental condition of reasoning being an explicit demand of action, if not of reasoning *per se*.

The world is hence not a condition of involvement *per se*, but only of *free* involvement, involvement with explicit demand for reasons. Only a free entity can engage in certain meaningful practices on the basis of understanding their meaning. Human-beings may suppress the search for reasons or suspend it for whatever purpose, but are always capable of considering reasons for any of their actions and thoughts.

The world is not a structure that subsists on its own however, but only for entities of the kind Dasein, which in turn are what they are in virtue of transcending all entities into the structure of the world. Human beings’ relation to the totality of possible involvements is hence presupposed by any proposition being meaningful or true:

‘The world described primarily by the for-the-sake-of is the primordial totality of that which Dasein, as free, gives itself to understand. Freedom gives itself to understand; freedom is the primal understanding, i.e., the primal projection of that which freedom itself makes possible.’ (MPL, pp. 192).

Entities of the kind Dasein therefore essentially possesses a kind of freedom, which I called ‘the freedom to engage’, that is a presupposition of their ability to engage in any involvement on the basis of an explicit demand for reasons. A possible way of understanding Dasein is thus as the kind of Being of entities free to engage. Free engagement in any meaningful involvement is always an open question to which there are available possible alternatives open to entities of kind Dasein. But this freedom is a feature of the understanding, not will or action—by the mere fact than human beings understand that the things among them are such-and-such they manifest this kind of freedom. In this respect freedom to engage is different from freedom as origination or autonomy, the independence from and ability to generate causal chains.
Rather, as unpredictability, it is simply impossible to describe it completely by a mapping into any coherent system of rules, causal or otherwise. Hence no algorithm running on some system of rules or ‘mechanism’, as I will henceforth call it, can constitute or strongly explain the possession of such a freedom, even if mechanisms are necessary to weakly explain how a living organism, for example, instantiates it. Unpredictability as defined here is conceptually or categorically alien to explanation or justification by means of mechanisms so defined. Something cannot therefore be both unpredictable and explained by a mechanism (a computational or functional model for instance).

This makes clearer perhaps the question of the relation between freedom to engage and the everyday conception of freedom, roughly as the ability to do as one chooses. Freedom to engage is a different phenomenon altogether: it does not come in degrees and does not change in the face of circumstances, as long as we always understand these circumstances to be such-and-such. Freedom to engage, if my arguments are sound, is the freedom of understanding, or the fact that we are already engaged in some involvements freely (on the basis of reasons), whenever we understand things to be thus-and-so. This includes understanding whether we are or ought to be able to do as we choose in a given situation. Unlike freedom as commonly understood, therefore, there is no sense in which one’s freedom to engage can be restrained or taken away, nor yet be enhanced or instantiated by some thought or deed.

Heidegger may help us here with his claim that freedom to engage is an ontological conception of freedom. In his sense, this means that the fact that we are

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It is an interesting question what the relation is between freedom as origination and freedom as unpredictability, though I must confine myself here to a few concise remarks. If an entity is free to engage and in that sense unpredictable, its behaviour cannot be comprehensively and strongly explained systematically, and by extension causally. By way of not being strongly explicable as a causal system, such an entity can be said to possess origination. But that is not to be taken as inconsistent with determinism, as far as it maintains the closedness of physics, if the unpredictable entity is not identified completely with its physical instantiation.

If an entity possesses origination however, that does not necessitate it being unpredictable as well, since the way it initiates causal chains may still be strongly systematically explicable, with reference to reasons, purposes etc. Thus, assuming an originating Cartesian soul which is also maximally rational, it would be committed to the rules of rationality in a way which would allow a systematic strong explanation of its behaviour. That is true even if, ex hypothesi, it is not causally closed. Freedom to engage is thus if anything a stronger notion than origination, though at the same time it is not inconsistent with determinism, as long as it is granted that the physical system instantiating it cannot strongly explain its possession. The main point to make, though, is that while origination is a property of the will, unpredictability is a property of understanding, and is hence quite independent of the so called “hard problem of freedom”.  
free to engage makes it possible for us to understand cases of being both free and enslaved in the first place—it makes it a possible issue for human beings, whether they are in fact or ought to be able to do as they choose in any particular situation. However, because freedom to engage is a condition of understanding, Heidegger suggests perhaps that the philosophically interesting freedom of human beings is not their ability to do as they choose, something which can be taken away from them. Rather, it is the fact that they are always acting on the basis of understanding the situations they encounter. Freedom to engage suggests a different philosophical analysis of freedom as commonly understood, an analysis that seems just as plausible in the face of phenomena. Even in our practices of determining a person’s responsibility for some event in courts, judges often concentrate on whether the person was in a position of understanding the consequences of their actions, rather than whether they were able to do as they choose. Also, how much freedom to do as they choose children get from their parents commonly depends on the level of their understanding of what goes on around them, and is taken to by a justified norm in most societies.

Freedom to engage amounts to the fact that Dasein is the kind of Being of entities which must commit themselves to engage in some possible involvement. This amounts to their activities explicitly demanding reasons, and performed with understanding. There are two ways to understand the above claim:

(a) Dasein must commit itself to engage in some involvement—there are no decision procedure or mechanisms to determine this engagement disregarding all of Dasein’s engagements.

(b) Dasein must commit itself to engage in some involvement—inasmuch as Dasein’s activities, thoughts, intentions etc. are meaningful, Dasein is already committed to engage in some involvement. Freedom to engage is in fact the conjunction of these two claims:

(a) As I mentioned, this point is an extension of the conclusions of chapter 1, that engagement in some involvement for-its-own-sake is necessary for any particular involvement to explicitly demand reasons. If it is to be engagement for-its-own-sake then it cannot be decided upon following some system of engagement...

5 A psychotic killer may be acquitted if it turns out they did not understand what they were doing.
rules, for in that case engagement would be the result of having a further reason to enter a particular involvement—namely that it follows from that system of rules. Hence if involvement for-its-own-sake is necessary then Dasein committing itself, regardless of any systems of rules, is equally necessary.

Furthermore, suppose there was a decision procedure to determine, for all possible involvements, exactly when one would or should be engaged with them. It could be conceived as a function from situation-states (including facts, intentions, beliefs, desires etc.) to engagements in a particular involvement. The input of such a procedure would ideally be all kinds of facts: the beliefs and desires of agents, the physics involved etc. Its output would be statements about agents’ particular engagements, e.g. ‘N will/should, understanding the circumstances, go shopping at his nearest supermarket’.

If the mechanism has the particular involvement as a possible result, it must be an element in a countable set of situation-states that the procedure recognises an is able to return. The mechanism’s syntax determines all the ways that the procedure can arrive at situation-states as a result. If, as I argued, such a determination is always internal to some involvement, then it is impossible to decide whether an agent will/should engage in any involvement once-and-for-all. Thus, if it was known that N is hungry, does not have food in the house, believes there is a supermarket down the road and the physics allows him to get there, it does not necessarily follow that N will go to the supermarket to buy some food. Further facts, such as that N has no money, or that he is an observant Muslim and it is the time of Ramadan may interfere; also, N’s interpretation of the facts may be more or less unorthodox: not having food in the house may be taken as punishment for sins, or a sign that his family does not appreciate him, and his honour would commands him to accept this; lastly, N may be otherwise involved, in a hunger strike for example, which may supercede his desire for food. It may perhaps be claimed that if the mechanism had access to all facts, it may in principle deduce the right engagement. But even given all the facts the question of their relevance even if they were perfectly capable of doing as they chose to do.
cannot always be solved once and for all. Thus, N may rebel against the
punishment which he perceives the lack of food to be or against his Muslim
upbringing, and go to the supermarket after all. Whether a fact is relevant to
one's engagement depends on one's engagement rather than the other way
round. Hence no system of rules can determine, for all particular
circumstance, whether one is (or ought to be) engaged in a particular
meaningful practice.

(b) This claim is a development of the primacy thesis, or the claim that
some engaged circumstances are necessary to determine the meaning of any
particular statement. While point (a) shows human agents' involvements are
not deducible from their actions and mental accompaniments, point (b) entails
that the meaning of the latter depends on these involvements. If this is true
then agents' engagements, for which there is no systematic mapping, are
necessary conditions for their actions and mental states to have a determinate
meaning. The italicised 'must' in the statement 'Dasein must commit itself...
' is hence neither a causal 'must' nor a practical 'must'. The former refers to
some causal connection between one state of a system to another, the latter
posits a particular purpose which necessitates an action. But the 'must' in the
statement refers to the fact that agents' engagement in some involvement is a
transcendental condition for its actions and mental states to possess any
meaning.

Consider for example two identical twins, both serving behind the bar at
a diplomatic ball. Only one of the twins though is a genuine barperson, while
the other is a secret agent spying on the Russian ambassador. Suppose that
both twins go through exactly the same motions throughout the night – while
one twin cleans a pint glass, the other pretends to do the same while keeping
an eye on the ambassador; while one is chatting-up someone, the other does
the same because it is the ambassador's assistant, and so on. Suppose further
that what goes through their minds is equally the same (the spy may have a
genuine interest in the assistant, the barperson may be watching people
through the pint glasses too), and even their immediate objectives (to watch

\[\text{Whether it is a descriptive or normative system is immaterial here.}\]
the ambassador's movements, to get a piece of information from the assistant) do not significantly differ. It is still the case that the meaning of each of their actions is different, though there are no significant variations in all these factors, simply on account of their different engagements — the overall significance of their actions. We can even imagine such information, and even their entire identity, being removed from their memories, as it is done in *Total Recall* by Phillip K. Dick. Observing them, even down to the recesses of their minds, would not reveal the difference in the meaning of their actions.

Again it may be suggested that with access to *all* the facts, the difference in meaning would be made apparent. But this runs against the relevance problem again—for to determine which facts are relevant to one's engagement is itself dependent on their engagements. Suppose it was a fact that the agent is intending to defect or become a double agent, or perhaps simply that it was her day off and she was helping her twin sister. The presence of these facts may change the meaning of her communications with the Russian ambassador. But this cannot be made into a rule, for it is equally possible, given these facts, that she is still spying on the ambassador, or even that she is there to spy on the ambassador without being told she is, as happens in *Nikita* by L. Basson. In conclusion, whether an agent is engaged in a particular involvement or not cannot be deduced from observing their actions alone, even if we make all their mental accompaniments transparent along with as many additional facts as possible. But changing nothing other than these engagements may give all those actions and mental states a completely different meaning. In other words, these do not possess a determinate meaning regardless of agents' engagements.

Because of the unpredictability of engagements, they cannot be replaced by any decision procedure or mechanism disregarding all of agents' engagements. It may be suggested that a person's brain is precisely such a system: if we knew exactly what happened in a person's brain we could deduce exactly what that person engages in.

Suppose then that we have a perfected neuroscience able to decode all the information in a person's brain. Let us grant that all of a person's actions and mental states could be deduced from analysing their brain. I have shown that what they engage
in is not deducible from these, while their engagement is still necessary to determine the meaning of their actions and mental states. Furthermore, engagement is not a fact that can be stored as such in the brain, since an agent is not always in a privileged position regarding what they are engaged in. Involvement is necessarily public and may be more or less understood by those who are engaged in it. Thus, an agent is an authority on whether she is playing chess; but she may not be one when it comes to whether she is calculating Feinmann diagrams (she might conceivably confuse them with something else), has a certain neurosis or is being abused by her partner. Furthermore, even if the belief ‘I’m behaving neurotically’ is found encoded in someone’s brain, it is a conclusion of the primacy thesis that this statement’s meaning is dependent on the engaged circumstance of its application. Two identical brains may thus belong to two persons who are engaged in different meaningful practices in given circumstances, like the twins I mentioned in discussing point (b). Hence engagement in a particular involvement cannot be encoded in a brain on pain of an infinite regress. A person’s engagements, and thus the meaning of their actions and mental states, is necessarily underdetermined from a perspective, like that of neuroscience, that disregards all the person’s engagements in some involvement or other.

Freedom to engage is not an added component to subject and world in the constitution of the phenomenon of meaning. Rather, it sums up the very relation between subject and world—only an entity which necessarily lives in a world of possible involvements can have the freedom to engage in some such possibilities. While for an entity to be free in this sense it must have some relation to a totality of possible involvements. If there were some kinds of involvement in which an agent could not be engaged even to the point of understanding them as a possibility, then either they are impossible or necessary for them. In the first case there would be an involvement human agents cannot enter at all, in the second there would be some involvements in which they are necessarily engaged. In either case their freedom to engage would be limited. Freedom and the totality of possibilities for-the-sake-of which entities of the kind Dasein live are thus mutually dependent, and any argument for the relational conception of the subject is also an argument for freedom to engage:

In freedom, such a for-the-sake-of has always already emerged...
is not something like for-the-sake-of somewhere extant, to which freedom is only related. Rather, freedom is itself the origin of the for-the-sake-of. But, again, not in such a way that there was first freedom and then also the for-the-sake-of. Freedom is, rather, one with the for-the-sake-of. (Ibid., pp. 191).

Since the world is the totality of possible meaningful involvements, freedom to engage is a requirement for anything to exist within the world. Thus to be a piece of equipment is to be necessarily related to some possible application within a possible involvement; to be a place is to be somewhere we can get to or dream of getting to, even if it is a parallel universe, and so on. As mentioned in chapter 1, 'world-entry' is the term used by Heidegger to denote first receiving a role in a possible involvement. World-entry thus presupposes freedom to engage—something can take part in a particular meaningful situation only for an entity which is free to engage.

This does not imply that the rules governing natural phenomena are determined purely by the involvements in which they figure. But these rules can have meaning only on the basis of some prior determination of possible such rules, which is provided by the transcendental conditions of a possible involvement. The world is a condition of such rules being explicitly formulated. The obvious example of this comes from the sciences, since science is a thematic attempt to discover facts and laws of nature rather than imposing them. But the science of chemistry, say, can only discover facts and rules pertaining to substances and compounds once it is determined in advance what facts and rules are to be considered facts and rules about chemical substances. I expect everyone agrees that chemical research could not prove Fermat’s last theorem, and in this we do not appeal to some sort of chemical omniscience. Rather, to our understanding that the methodologies of chemistry are necessarily improper to discover such a proof, and that any proper methodology would just not be one of chemistry. The rules determining what chemistry is as a possible involvement are not the subject matter of chemistry or any other science. Rather they define what it is to do chemistry and leave it to human-beings to freely engage in it.

On the other hand, because the roles given to things in particular involvements form the strongest kind of necessity, every possible involvement constitutes a certain system of rules, which applies necessarily to everything encountered within this
involvement. In consequence, all systems are constituted relative to possible involvements for entities of the kind Dasein, but the phenomenon of free involvement cannot be reduced to any of their logical sum. By engaging in any possible involvement, human agents freely accept a certain system of rules in the way they make sense of a situation, and understand the entities encountered within it. In Heidegger's words (keeping in mind that 'ground' is here taken to mean any rule used to explain or justify a phenomenon):

> 'freedom is qua transcendental freedom towards ground...To understand oneself from out of the for-the-sake-of means to understand oneself from out of ground...The essence of ground differentiates itself to different sorts of "grounds" (e.g., [Aristotle's] four causes), not because there are different beings, but because the metaphysical essence of Dasein [i.e. freedom] as transcending has the possibility of first establishing world-access for diverse beings. And because Dasein transcends itself, it is groundable for its own self-understanding along different possible directions in different ways, but never in a single way. (Ibid., pp. 214).

All this means that freedom to engage remains uninfluenced by most incompatibilist arguments, which assume freedom to be contradictory to acting purely out of causes, justifications or reasons. It is equally untouched by a certain strand of contemporary criticism of the very claim that we are free, by arguing that 'freedom' is an incoherent notion which even the falsity of determinism could not save. Thomas Nagel for example, claims that

> We aspire in some of our actions to a kind of origination that is not a mere subjective appearance—not merely ignorance of their sources—and we have the same view of others like us...My reason for doing it is

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1 The question remains, does determinism entail that all our engagements are predetermined as well. I will deal with this issue below. But this has nothing to do with the incompatibilist claim that determinism is inconsistent with origination or self-causation.
the whole reason why it happened, and no further explanation is either necessary or possible. (Nagel, 1986, pp. 114,115).

He then goes on to argue that this view is in fact incoherent. His strongest argument to that effect is, that because we must act 'on the basis of the most complete view of the circumstances of action...and this includes as complete a view as we can attain of ourselves' (Ibid., pp. 118), such a freedom demands that we attain a completely objective view of ourselves. That, of course, can only be attained from a point totally outside ourselves, and this we can never achieve. According to Nagel, 'for us to be free is identical with us creating ourselves out of nothing, and that is logically incoherent, for 'in order to do anything we must already be something.' (Ibid.).

Even if this view manages to show that origination is an incoherent notion, it would entail nothing regarding freedom to engage, since to be free in this sense is not to determine every feature of ourselves or the involvements we engage in, but only to determine whether to engage or not in any involvement, on the basis of processes of reasoning.

Galen Strawson presents a quite similar argument to Nagel's, but it seems to bear more relevance because it is presented against any view of freedom 'according to which to be a free agent is to be capable of being truly responsible for one's actions... [While] to be capable of being truly responsible for one's actions is to be capable of being truly deserving of praise and blame.' (Strawson, 1986, p.1). It seems therefore to be directed at any notion of freedom that would aspire to constitute responsibility, and not simply to freedom as origination. But then, after describing the task of an objectivist (or metaphysical) theory of freedom he goes on to claim: ... 'if one is to be truly responsible for one's actions, then, clearly, one must be truly self-determining or truly self-determined in one's actions. True responsiblity presupposes self-determination.' (Ibid., pp. 28), and says nothing more about it. True, his main interest is to argue against libertarians who buy into the notion of origination themselves, and support freedom with metaphysical indeterminism. But the issue is perhaps not as clear as Strawson would have it be.

Even a caricature of an alternative account may demonstrate this in face of the lack of argument to the contrary. Freedom to engage could be the ground for true responsibility, if the latter were conferred on anyone with understanding, and hence the
capacity to free engagement, at the base of all their actions. This capacity would require that some or all of one’s actions would result from understanding them relative to one’s project in Heidegger’s terms, the orientation to the whole that is a transcendental condition of meaning. There is no demand for all or some of one’s actions to be self-determined however—if engagement is not regarded simply as another “action” of the agent. If it were it would lead immediately to a vicious circle, if my basic claim is correct, that all meaningful activities already takes place on the basis of some involvement. The latter is manifested in the dealings we have with things around us, performing certain activities or participating in certain meaningful practices, but it is not a further action to these— In order for this capacity to exist nothing further is required than accessibility to a world, or the capacity to prefer one’s actions to all other alternatives on the basis of understanding, if and when they happen to occur.

This caricature’s appeal to intuition does not come short of Strawson’s, on the ‘undeniable strength’ of which his arguments heavily rely. I have discussed the practices of law and child raising, but consider even the practical joke in which a self-abusing note is stuck to a person’s back under pretence of a friendly pat. This person is intuitively considered worthy of praise and blame (or in this case ridicule), though this is certainly something that happened to them rather than being a self-determined act, simply on account of his capacity to have realised what is going on, or in other words, to understand the real significance of the dealings around him. Strawson’s argument hence reduces to an argument against self-determination, rather than any conception of freedom that would attempt to ground true responsibility.

A more interesting objection to the claim that freedom to engage is a necessary feature of the subject’s relation to the world, or that human understanding is essentially unpredictable in the sense defined here, comes from functionalism. Functionalism holds that the nature of all mental entities is determined by their causal significance in the overall behaviour of the organism. Since freedom is taken to be a property of minds, it too must be explained by providing some sort of causal system or mechanism which would generate the characteristic behaviour associated with being free to engage (i.e., an explicit demand for reasons). Integral to it is therefore the attempt to give a
systematic account of actions with an explicit demand for reason, thus holding the exact contradictory position to the one I am proposing here, that this form of action is unpredictable and could not be given a decision procedure. Both views are compatibilist views of freedom, since both deny the opposition between freedom and causal determinism. I will deal primarily with Daniel Dennett, who devoted a book — Elbow Room — to the issue of freedom.

Like Heidegger, Dennett believes that reasoning is central to freedom. He begins with a discussion of reasons and as we shall see, his treatment of deliberation relies on the conclusions he draws from it. Dennett begins with the observation that a set of “interests” is associated with any organism, simply because any living organism as such is concerned with reproduction and self-preservation, when it does not conflict with the former. These interests supply the organism with reasons for action (according to the paradigmatic belief-desire model) once they are coupled with beliefs about the organism’s environment. Dennett explains that

‘The reasons for action that came first in creation were rather like Platonic Forms, pure abstracta whose existence, while dependent on the existence of strivers and seekers, was independent of their being explicitly recognized or represented by anyone or anything.’ (Dennet, 1984, pp. 23).

The big question then becomes, what is Dennett’s explanation for the removal of the scare-quotes from the process of reasoning? In other words, how do we move from actions that are performed for reasons of self-preservation out of blind natural selection to actions with an explicit demand for reasons along his model? Dennett accepts that the difference depends on the phenomenon of meaning. In order to have actions that explicitly demand reasons these actions must be performed on the basis of understanding the meaning of the situations encountered. To remove the scare-quotes,

\[\text{See especially chapters three and five, where our subjective commitment to believe we are free is discussed.}\]
\[\text{When Dennett puts words in scare-quotes he means that they apply to processes seen from our point of view, but not from the point of view of the agent undergoing these processes. In other words, processes with scare-quotes do not possess an explicit demand for the agent to recognise them as what they are, and so the actions of such agents do not explicitly demand reasoning.}\]
Dennett asserts, we must conceive of brains as 'meaning manipulators, information processors, or, as I shall say, semantic engines.' (ibid., pp. 28)\(^\text{10}\).

Dennett claims that reflective processes, processes that correct the functioning of "ground level" processes, can approximate such a semantic engine indefinitely, once they reach a sufficient level of complexity. These processes have the capacity to reprogramme the organism's computational procedures of learning and reasoning and enable them to improve over time until,

Eventually the "illusion" is created that the system is actually responding directly to meanings. It becomes a more and more reliable mimic of the perfect semantic engine (the entity that hears the voice of Reason directly), because it was designed to be capable of improving itself in this regard; it was designed to be indefinitely self-redesigning.' (ibid., pp. 30).

The problem is that even such reflective processes are very limited compared to human reasoning. I will demonstrate it here against the belief-desire model which underlies Dennett's arguments. A countable set of beliefs and desires cannot be shown to constitute a reason for action (in such a way that an agent acts on it) by reference only to the members of that set, because of the relevance problem discussed above. Thus, if A has the desire to hang a picture on the wall and the beliefs that she possesses nails and a hammer and that pictures could hang from nails stuck to a wall, this may not constitute a reason for action for A. For suppose that A also believes that the nails are far too weak or small, or that it is wrong to hang pictures on walls— other beliefs and desires as well as relevant facts may prevent the set of beliefs and desires from constituting a reason for action. Suppose we put these inside a *ceteris paribus* clause. So instead A no longer believes that hanging pictures on walls is wrong, but it is still the prevalent custom in A's society; this may still mean that the set does not constitute a reason for action for A. So the *ceteris paribus* clause must include the beliefs of

\(^{10}\) Here already Dennett runs into grounds that our discussion has made questionable. A brain can be a semantic engine presumably if it contains some theory of meaning programmed into it somehow. If possessing a theory of meaning is not a necessary nor sufficient condition for constituting meaning, then the onus is on functionalists to explain how a brain can be a semantic engine at all. I will disregard this possible objection for the sake of argument.
other people as well. The clause is now quite strong and comprehensive. Its very strength testifies to the lack of definite limits to the amount of detail that may be taken into account for anything to constitute a reason for action. But its strength is also its weakness, because the claim that the set could constitute a reason for action only disregarding everything else is far too strong. A may still decide to act on the specified set of belief-desires even given it is forbidden to hang pictures in her society, or try the nails even though they may be too weak.

The fallibility but constant improvement of human reasoning cannot be invoked at this stage. As noted above, to act even on a single explicit reason for a particular action involves a consideration of a totality of possible reasons for action which cannot be reduced to a countable set of elements. A computational reflexive programme, on the other hand, is at the very least unable to change its own programming while it is running. This reflexive programme itself would have a set of discrete possibilities of reflections available to it, other ones being inconceivable to it. Adding further programmes to reflect on the reflexive programme would immediately lead to an infinite regress. Thus for a reflexive computational programme there exists a countable set, all and only elements of which are possible reflections on its own ways of action. Because in addition every reasoning programme has a similar set of options open to it prior to being reflected upon, there exists for any computational model of reasoning a countable set of possible reasons for action. Such a programme can never be a good approximation of a semantic engine, whose reasoning always involves (even if not consciously) an indefinitely larger number of possibilities.

This problem exists essentially for any computational model, for computations must be performed in discrete steps leading from one to the next. If one part of a computation does not necessarily depend on the results of the previous steps the computation could lead to a different result every time it is applied. Thus every computation is mathematically limited to a set of countable steps, and could not, for this reason, encompass the considerations involved in taking a set of facts, beliefs and desires to be a reason for action.

Furthermore, whether something is a reason for action or not itself depends on some particular circumstances, which themselves cannot be reduced to set of countable elements. That can be demonstrated even against the most basic “interests” that all creatures share according to Dennett, reproduction and self-preservation. For once
these actions explicitly demand reasons even they cannot be taken for granted. Nor is it necessary that renouncing these interests is in effect to renounce all interests. Thus for monks on the one hand and Japanese Samurai on the other reproduction and self-preservation respectively can be renounced for other interests—religious piety, honour and the like. Thus even a computational process that emulated reasoning perfectly in some circumstances would not necessarily be able to do so in others. It is fallible not only in its reasoning but in its very capacity to undertake certain forms of reasoning at all.

When it comes to decision making, Dennett believes that deliberation arises out of an economy of information management, necessary for two reasons: first, the amount of information is often too large to process in any length of time the organism can afford, thus even if one could calculate exactly what will happen with enough information, pragmatic reasons stand in the way of performing such a calculation. Second, no deliberation can predict the results of its own processes of deliberation for threat of an infinite regress. Thus 'events concerning the outcomes of its own deliberations ... are beyond its prognosis machinery in a way that no further investment in cognitive machinery could possibly overcome.' (ibid., pp. 112). Economical information management means averaging over certain classes of objects rather than observing each particular, and then dividing the classes into such categories as 'interesting', 'important', 'irrelevant', 'up to the organism' and so on, relative to the interests and capacities of the organism. Surely the same kind of argument can be directed against this account to the effect that no set of facts is sufficient or necessary for anything to be important or irrelevant. But because deliberation is for Dennett essentially reasoning plus economical information management, the argument against reasoning carries ipso facto over to decision-making. The existence of a countable set of all possible forms of engagements open to an organism is a necessary condition of the possibility to describe its behaviour in a systematic way—such a condition is lacking when it comes to human reasoning.

Acting with an explicit demand for reasons, and thus meaningfully, presupposes freedom to engage. The latter is in consequence an ontological primitive—it cannot possibly be reduced to a different ontological realm, because in order to reduce one realm of entities to another some form of systematic mapping is required from entities, processes and events of one realm to the other. This is equally true for eliminative
reduction, in which the reduced realm is not an independent ontological realm, as well as for supervenience, maintaining the independence of the two realms of entities. Since the unpredictability of freedom to engage excludes the possibility of such a mapping, it cannot possibly be reduced to any systematic combination of elements that do not already presuppose it. I believe that this ontological primitiveness of freedom to engage, and thus of the entities that essentially possess it, is the foundation of Heidegger’s various arguments for the ontological primacy of the structures he associates with Dasein’s Being. Dasein, the kind of entity essentially possessing such a freedom, is itself ontologically primitive, cannot be defined in any other way but as the entity which possesses this kind of freedom.

B. Wittgenstein on the Unpredictability and Necessity of Engagement

Wittgenstein’s thoughts on the unpredictability and necessity of engagement are a natural extension of his views on logical necessity, since the latter is probably the best candidate for a counter example to freedom to engage with any possible meaningful practice. Initially Wittgenstein offers not so much an argument as a demonstration and a challenge:

Supposing we met people who did not regard [physics] as a telling reason... Instead of a physicist, they consult an oracle... Is it wrong for them to consult an oracle and be guided by it?— If we call this “wrong” aren’t we using our language-game as a base from which to combat theirs?... I said I would combat the other man,— but wouldn’t I give him reasons? Certainly; but how far do they go? At the end of reasons come persuasion (think what happens when missionaries convert natives) (OC, p. 609, 612).

By making their beliefs and relevant practices complicated and detailed enough it is possible in principle to imagine such people are able to fit all contingent facts about the world that we acknowledge into their system, in accordance with the primacy thesis. The divination itself, for example, may be performed in a way that would approximate relevant mathematical calculations to such a degree that many of
their predictions did not vary much from those of physics. Any mistakes could always be attributed to the elusiveness of the gods or the deficiency of the interpreter. Thus, although both sides would be convinced that the other is wrong, there is no way of demonstrating this by pointing to contingent facts in the world: ‘Where two principles really do meet which cannot be reconciled with one another, then each man declares the other a fool and a heretic.’ (Ibid., p. 611). As the primacy thesis maintains, what distinguishes contemporary humanity from these people is nothing other than engagement with particular meaningful practices under certain circumstance. There is, in other words, an element of reasoned preference involved in us doing physics the way we do rather than like the oracle people. It is never necessary for us to do it one way or the other, nor is any way we do it truer to the facts. The difference between using physics and divination does not concern the facts, but the way these fact are related to each-other and to other beliefs, desires activities and so on. Those relations depend on the meaningful practices involving them. I believe that apart from this demonstration, arguments both for the unpredictability of engagement in some meaningful practice and for the necessity of some such engagement for any statement, thought or action to possess a particular meaning can be found in Wittgenstein’s work. I will discuss both in turn.

A Wittgensteinian argument for the unpredictability of engagement is an extension of his claim, developed in chapter 5, that some meaningful practices are necessary to provide a scale of clarity for any explanation or justification, and thus for reasoning as well. Wittgenstein argues that because of this, nothing can be so clear as to be beyond the possibility of misunderstanding. This point extends to engagement as a general case extends to a special one, for the explanation or justification in question can be an explanation or justification for engaging or applying a given meaningful practice in a situation. In fact, the example Wittgenstein uses to deal with explanation in general is an example of an explanation of engagement in a particular practice, the builders language-game of paragraph 2 of the Investigations. Wittgenstein proposes a table of names and the picture of the object they refer to as a prototype for a purely mechanistic explanation or justification of engagement in a practice. The problem is that such a table would not work if the builders-to-be do not know which name
corresponds to what object. Supplementing one explanation with another, like an arrow schema supplied along with the table, only leads to an infinite regress, since there may be more than one way to read the schema, and so on. Although this point concerns the teaching or introducing of a practice, a similar claim can be made concerning the constitution of a practice as well.

Because any system of rules can always be at odds with the practice, no mechanism as defined can guaranteed to necessarily constitute the practice or instantiate it. In other words, it is impossible, for example, to construct a robot following a given algorithm through, which is guaranteed necessarily to be engaged in a given meaningful practice. I believe this is made clear in Wittgenstein's discussion of machines (or mechanisms) (PI, p. 90-91). He notes that when we allocate a possibility of motion to a machine, we presuppose that other ("unintended") motions, such as the cogs going soft or contradictions appearing in a calculus do not occur. But the unintended may still happen when the machine is actually running, and in that case the machine (or mechanism) would not be able to detect it, for this assumes a prior independent understanding of what the intended motions are regardless of the mechanism. Adding self-monitoring mechanisms could not solve this problem on pain of an infinite regress. Hence no machine can be guaranteed to necessarily instantiate its intended possibilities of motion, without assuming some prior independent understanding of what these possibilities are. Engagement in a meaningful practice is manifested in people's thoughts, words and actions, and is thus a case of application of rules. No system of rules can guarantee engagement in a meaningful practice, because no system of rules can guarantee its correct application beyond the possibility of mistake. This case is similar to the one where Wittgenstein discusses the pupil who could not see that 1004 is not the consecutive of 1000 in the series "+2", a mechanism (or the occurrence of a given formula) cannot constitute engagement with a given meaningful practice, since an instantiation of any mechanism is in fact consistent with being disengaged from this practice: 'We can always construct doubtful cases, in which the normal list of rules does not apply' (Z, p. 440).

Wittgenstein draws a double conclusion from this—agents' engagement in a particular practice cannot be constituted by a system of rules, and no such system (say

\[11\] Wittgenstein's truth-tables and Turing's discrete-state tables are some of many demonstrations that
a table to explain the building-game, or an arrow schema to explain the table itself) is
necessary if agents are already engaged in the meaningful practice. That is, a system of
rules is neither necessary nor sufficient for constituting engagement in a particular
meaningful practice.

‘Can we not now imagine further rules to explain this one? And, on the
other hand, was the first table incomplete without the schema of
arrows? And are other tables incomplete without their schema?’ (Ibid.)
‘You must bear in mind that the language-game is so to say something
unpredictable. I mean: it is not based on grounds. It is not reasonable
(or unreasonable). It is there – like our life.’ (OC, p. 559).

Wittgenstein’s argument that engagement in some meaningful practice is
necessary for anything to explicitly demand reasons is also to be found, I believe, in his
much discussed rule-following considerations. I will concentrate on McDowell’s
According to McDowell Wittgenstein’s main concern in the rule-following section is
‘to exorcise the insidious assumption that there must be an interpretation that mediates
between an order, or the expression of a rule given in training, on the one hand; and an
action in conformity with it, on the other.’ (Ibid., pp. 273). The question is, what is the
connection between a particular action, say registering for the gym, and the
formulation of a rule or a command, say ‘take care of your health’.

According to McDowell, Wittgenstein tries to reduce the assumption that this
connection involves interpretation *ad absurdum* by showing that it commits us to one
or another horn of a dilemma, neither of which could be accepted. If understanding is
correct interpretation of an expression of a rule the question becomes: how is the
correct interpretation to be determined? Wittgenstein’s now familiar point is that every
expression of a rule can be understood in more than one way, and the problem recurs
for any further instruction we might supply. Hence to maintain that understanding a
rule is supplying it with *the correct* interpretation is driven, according to McDowell, to

all effective decision-procedures can be modeled as tables.
postulate some ‘super-rigid connection between the words and the subsequent action.’ (Ibid., pp. 271). He then describes several of Wittgenstein’s attacks on this idea, for example, his claim it implies that understanding lies beyond anything either taught or verified, since these depend on forms of action that are not super-rigidly (that is, beyond the possibility to misinterpret) connected to the words of a rule. But since I argued against the possibility of a super-rigid system of rules being applied regardless of any circumstances above, I will assume this point as taken.

On the other hand, if we stick by the claim that understanding a rule is an interpretation of its expression, and accept that there is no super-rigid connection between the expression and the correct interpretation, we are driven to conclude that the meaning of a rule is never known with certainty. McDowell is aware that this is the interpretation of Wittgenstein offered by Kripke (Kripke, 1982). McDowell believes it is flawed mainly because it presupposes without argument that understanding a rule is an interpretation of its expression. He also maintains that it is wrong to assume Wittgenstein supported this. Kripke finds his sceptical paradox formulated in Investigations p.201: ‘This was our paradox: no course of action could be determined by the rule, because every course of action could be made to accord with the rule.’ But McDowell noted that Wittgenstein actually claims that ‘What this shows is that there is a way of grasping the rule with is not an interpretation, but which exhibits what we call “obeying a rule” and “going against it” in actual cases.’ (Ibid.).

Without the assumption that understanding a rule is interpretation, though, the sceptical conclusion is as invalid as the super-rigid connection conclusion. According to McDowell, Wittgenstein uses the sceptical conclusion in his reductio of the claim understanding a rule is an interpretation of its expression. A super rigid connection is for Wittgenstein not the only possible alternative to the sceptical paradox. ‘It rather constitutes, in conjunction with the fact that the paradox is intolerable, an argument against the misunderstanding.’ (op. cit., pp. 266).

Once this is established McDowell argues that the fact the connection between words and actions is normative entails that the meaning of rules cannot be reduced to facts which exist independently of this very meaning, as antirealists like Dummett hold. In other words, McDowell claims that the meaning of a rule could not be given using only descriptions of facts about the environment or about people’s behaviour. In that case, there would be no way to distinguish the content of such statements as “this is
(what is called) yellow" and “this is what (most) English speakers call yellow”, which is the corresponding description of facts. In other words, there would be no normative aspect to the use of words.

McDowell does not give an argument for the fact that a normative aspect must belong to meaning, mainly since his purpose is exegetical and hence even in case this was wrong ‘...this would be no ground for ignoring the textual evidence that the programme is Wittgenstein’s own’. (Ibid., pp.276). But such an argument can easily be supplied. I argued in chapter 3 that engagement in any meaningful practice involves taking certain statements to express transcendentally necessary conditions. For example, it is transcendentally necessary I believe N can read English if I show N a newspaper report. Because transcendental necessity has the same force as logical necessity given one is engaged in a particular meaningful practice, normativity is a necessary aspect of meaning—certain facts or relations between facts must be assumed to hold with necessity. Statements of facts about the environment and people’s behaviour do not possess such a strong modality.

According to McDowell therefore, in the rule-following argument

‘Wittgenstein’s point is that we have to situate our conception of meaning and understanding within a framework of communal practices...shared membership in a linguistic community is not just a matter of matching in aspects of exterior that we present to anyone whatever, but equip us to make our minds available to one another, by confronting one another with a different exterior from that which we present to outsiders.’ (Ibid., pp. 276, 284).

In other words, without assuming people’s ability to understand language, all that is visible to an observer are certain regularities of actions and utterances (and conceivably also mental states); assuming such an understanding we get normative connections between them all.

However, I find McDowell’s final picture of rule-following less than perfectly clear. What is it exactly to make our minds “available to one another”? or to “hear someone’s meaning in their words”? The answer is most probably to be sought in McDowell’s disjunctivist solution to the problem of other minds, which I discussed and
criticised in chapter 2. He argues there that perceiving the satisfaction of criteria for attribution of mental states, for example, is to *directly* observe the other’s mental state, while a mistaken attribution means that relevant criteria were only apparently satisfied (McDowell, 1983, pp. 472). Correspondingly, perceiving someone’s actions, which criterially satisfy following a certain rule, may be construed as directly perceiving someone following a rule. A similar escape clause can be used for cases of mistaken attribution. Since I have already criticised this conception before, I will proceed here to examine Simon Glendinning’s suggestion as to how we make our minds available to others in language, which has motivated my criticisms in chapter 2 as well.

According to Glendinning, McDowell’s disjunctivist account, though pushed as an alternative to traditional Cartesianism, still agrees with Cartesianism on one fundamental point:

> ‘Specifically, both assume as coherent a particular interpretation of what it is for a living human being to be a ‘subject of experience’, namely, an interpretation conceived in terms of its potential for a distinctively first-personal, ‘inside take’ on its own states, its presence to its own experience.’ (Glendinning, 1998, pp. 139).

Glendinning claims, as I have discussed above, that because of this McDowell’s disjunctivism does not provide a knock-down argument against a Cartesian sceptic. The sceptic can accept disjunctivism and locate her doubt at the point of determining which of the disjuncts apply in any particular case. The importance of this criticism in the present context is that it threatens to collapse the normative connection between words and actions back to a matter of descriptive regularities, between the actions of an agent and the expression of a rule. As I argued in chapter 2, the importance of this point goes beyond epistemological matters, which McDowell is aware of. It would always be possible that criteria for following a rule were only apparently satisfied, and so there is more to following a rule than the appearance that criteria are satisfied. In that case whether one is following a rule would not be immediately visible to language speakers after all, or at least, it could never be guaranteed that it is.

Instead of the disjunctivist model, Glendinning suggests that the rule following considerations demonstrate that understanding what action obeys a given rule
essentially involves placing it in a context of possible responses. For example, understanding the rule ‘when at dinner with a zebra, pass the rice to the left’ essentially involves placing it in a particular context of possible responses: not only passing the rice to the left in appropriate situations, but also bemusement, surprise, inquiring for the source or reason for this etiquette, and so on. While if we assume more or less normal circumstances, checking one’s pulse or hopping on one leg is not within the context of responses involved in understanding that rule. The public nature of rule following, according to Glendinning, hence belongs essentially to the understanding of any rule and by extension, the meaning of any statement, thought or action. Contrary to McDowell’s disjunctivism, observing the satisfaction of criteria is not conceptually independent of appropriate responses.

‘In the literature, ‘criteria’ are often conceived as behavioural conditions of some type. And in a sense that is correct. However, in my view, what is in question here is never simply a case of the presence of some typical condition which then elicits some typical response. On the contrary, the behavioural condition in question is not something that can be established to obtain independently of one’s response. That is, the identification or ‘recognition’ of such a behavioural condition is already a response.’ (Ibid, pp. 143).

Concentrating on responses brings out the necessity of engagement in two closely related ways. First, as Glendinning notes (Ibid., pp.145ff), responses are conceptually linked to a subject who responds, and their response is what counts as satisfaction of criteria in Glendinning’s exposition. Thus, it is agents’ response to the statement ‘turn left’ with an appropriate movement, for example, that makes it a giving of directions, and so on. Hence the engagements of the subject are a necessary condition for any statement or action to have meaning.

Second, if the context of possible responses defines the meaning of a statement, then this meaning is necessarily determined relative to particular meaningful practices involving these statements, and never in advance of particular engaged circumstances. E.g. the statement ‘I am in pain’ is put in entirely different context of responses when it is uttered to one’s GP, boss, or partner (in bed), and hence has different meanings as
well. As I mentioned while discussing the implications of the primacy thesis on theories of meaning in chapter 5, that claim does not contradict the existence of “typical cases” for the meaning of a statement, or “normal circumstances” in which it would be used. Thus if asked what does it mean ‘I am in pain’, out of any particular context, it is absurd to deny that we can explain it in a few sentences. But in any particular case of using it we may find ourselves qualifying it with something like ‘well used here it meant...’ followed by something similar but not the same as the general definition we have given. What is denied is that there has to be a common ground (or a specific number of alternative common grounds) to all possible meaningful uses of a statement in any possible circumstances. The meaning of any statement hence depends on agents’ engagement in a particular meaningful practice in particular situations.

Though Glendinning does not press this point, his interpretation brings out the similarity between Wittgenstein’s rule-following argument and Heidegger’s concept of world-entry. Both entail that all systems of rules are valid only within some involvement in the world. Together with the claim that engagement in any such involvement is unpredictable, this would substantiate the claim that human beings, insofar as their actions come under an explicit demand for reasons, are free to engage with any meaningful practice. In Glendinning’s terminology, placing a statement, thought or action within a context of appropriate responses is both unpredictable and constitutive of the meaning of the statement, thought or action. Hence although Glendinning’s interpretation is, in my view, a very good one, he only draws half of its appropriate conclusions.

According to Glendinning Wittgenstein argues for a lack of a unique notion of exactness or clarity determined in advance for anything to possess meaning. Though this is correct, it neglects Wittgenstein’s further point, that for any particular statement, activity or thought to have meaning, there must be a notion of exactness, according to which the participants’ understanding of that meaning is publicly measurable. The combined effect of these two points is freedom to engage, since criteria for exactness are necessary for anything to have a particular meaning, but are determined relative to the engaged circumstances.

It could be seen as a problem for the claim Wittgenstein supported freedom to engage that he never states his views in terms of responsibility and freedom. To see that his views could be restated in this language it may be worthwhile to consider one
recent attempt to discuss freedom from an externalist perspective, offered by Pettit and Smith (Pettit and Smith, 1996). I believe it is an important step toward an understanding of how freedom to engage is at the basis of Wittgenstein’s views on meaning, and the primacy thesis in particular.

Pettit and Smith observe that our beliefs and desires are constantly weighed, formed and judged within our daily communications with others, in the exchange of opinions, advice, arguments etc. in which we express them. They claim that certain constraints are necessarily placed on belief and desire formation if it is to genuinely take place within such conversations. Thus for example, to enter a discussion of this sort it must be assumed that certain objective criteria exist, which determine the truth of statements in the discussion and which are accessible to the participants. Without such criteria each participant would judge separately whether statements are true and false. Hence every participant would assign separate truth-conditions to any statement, and in consequence different entailments as well. Thus no one’s statements would either contradict or support the other’s, and there would be no way of connecting the statements in a single discussion.

If belief and desire formation is to be a genuine topic of discussion, there must similarly be accessible criteria determining the correctness of beliefs/desires in particular circumstances. Pettit and Smith formulate three necessary conditions of what they call “the conversational stance”, and argue that these apply to belief/desire formation:

'It only makes sense to adopt the conversational stance in relation to someone... if three conditions are satisfied: first, there are norms relevant to the issue of what she ought to believe; second, she is capable of recognizing this to be so; and third, she is capable of responding appropriately to the norms: that is, capable of believing the way she should (Ibid., pp. 433).

The result of not meeting any of these conditions is the collapse of the practice of conversation as engaged in to form and judge beliefs and desires. According to
Pettit and Smith, any agent who does not meet one of these conditions does not possess the kind of authority which is invested in anyone so discussing beliefs and desires. Suppose a person does not recognise the first condition, or the existence of shared norms to which her beliefs must answer; she would probably stick to her beliefs no matter what and judge everybody else accordingly. The ultimate verdict on that person according to Pettit and Smith is that 'they are out of their minds and not worthy of attention' (pp. 431), but in each particular case the "default position" is more optimistic than that—It is assumed that the person is conditioned in some way, lacks a vital piece of evidence or practical ability, that they are locally illogical or have a lazy mind before allowing that the person is beyond all hope.

But I believe failing to recognise the first condition may amount to something less radical altogether than what Pettit and Smith describe. The person may be jokingly changing positions, or taking the opposition to their interlocutor just to annoy or perhaps to save face. These activities do not dispossess the person of any authority, because their implicit understanding of how the practice is followed correctly lies behind their disruptive actions— at most they are being unhelpful and destructive. What is central about the three conditions of the conversational stance is hence, that disobeying them disengages one from a discussion meant to judge and form beliefs/desires. Pettit and Smith point out that if the agent is unable to engage in the practice, this would be a mental disability, but they neglect cases of intentional disengagement for whatever reason. The result of not meeting either of the three conditions is hence first and foremost disengagement from judging beliefs/desires in discussion.

Pettit and Smith claim that these three conditions constitute a certain kind of responsibility, since they could be restated in terms of 'ought' and 'can': condition one states that there are objective norms determining what one ought to believe/desire given the circumstances; conditions two and three state respectively that a participant in a discussion of beliefs/desires can recognise these norms and form their beliefs/desires accordingly. Corresponding to this notion of responsibility is a notion of freedom, to which they suggest the name "orthonomy", as distinct from the traditional conception of freedom as origination or autonomy.

12 Unless we presuppose some language into which all those statements could be translated correctly.
Responsible believers and desirers are orthonomous subjects, in the sense that they recognize certain yardsticks of right belief and right desire and can respond to the demands of the right in their own case... to orthonomous rather than autonomous, an agent’s evaluations and desires have to be sensitive to his recognition of normative requirements: reasons that may be offered in support of the evaluative claims.’ (Ibid., pp. 442, 443).

Orthonomous subjects forms their beliefs/desires with an explicit demand for reasons, and hence in accordance with objective norms.

The traditional conception of freedom as origination focuses on agents’ ability to do otherwise than they actually did in the circumstances of action. According to Pettit and Smith there is nothing particularly attractive about this ability, from the point of belief/desire formation. If it depends on the ability of agents to recognise objective norms regarding what they ought to believe/desire, i.e if it is orthonomous, nothing important hangs on their ability to form beliefs/desires not according to the relevant norms, and thus mistakenly. What is important from the point of orthonomous belief/desire formation is that for any belief/desire, were it wrong, it would be possible for the agent to get it right (Ibid., p.444). This formulation guarantees that all one’s beliefs/desires are held for reasons which relate them to relevant objective norms.

I believe it is not difficult to see that this argument progresses along quite Wittgensteinian lines, consistent with the primacy thesis. The necessary conditions for belief/desire formation are sought within the meaningful practice in which it takes place, namely discussions. The necessary application of these condition hence presupposes engagement in this practice in particular circumstances, since nothing stops anyone from forming their beliefs by whim and fancy for example. But disengagement from this practice does entail, that a reasoned discussion of belief/desire formation is in most cases impossible. In fact, what Pettit and Smith call “the conversational stance” is at the same time the reasoning stance; they are not interested in a conversation where one person simply lays out her beliefs to another out of mere
interest, but one in which those beliefs are put on the line as to their truth. Pettit’s and Smith’s argument hence points to a conception of the necessary relation between freedom and reasoning, that is implied in Wittgenstein’s philosophy. In particular it is apparent in his claim that all meaningful practices assume some norms to necessarily apply, as discussed in chapter 3.

Pettit and Smith present their view as contrary in particular to Dennett’s picture of belief/desire formation presented in *The Intentional Stance*. For Dennett the belief/desire model is an explanatory or theoretical stance adopted towards a system for pragmatic reasons, when that system can be trusted to be rational, to meet standards of consistency, completeness, simplicity, attunement to evidence etc. Such a stance can be adopted (and is adopted daily) towards game-playing computers for example (Dennett, in Honderich (1973), pp. 165). The better these belief/desire algorithms form beliefs/desires in accordance with these standards of rationality, the more the beliefs/desires would be true to the facts. It is, in other words, a mechanistic explanation of belief/desire formation paralleling the mechanistic explanation of reasoning I dealt with in the previous section. Similar to the way I dealt with Dennett’s views on reasoning above, Pettit and Smith claim that this view fails to explain belief/desire formation with an explicit demand for reasons:

> 'But under this image, people can remain passive or mechanical subjects who harmonize and update their beliefs and desires in a more or less automatic way. Such adjustments... may happen within them without any recognition of why they should happen and without any efforts on their behalf to help them happen. [Under] the picture of responsible believing and desiring... the subject may or may not be particularly rational... But the subject is certainly not a mere passive or mechanical system. She does not just revise her beliefs and desires automatically... she revises them under the spur of recognizing what the relevant norms require of her.' (Ibid., pp. 441-442)

But I believe that orthonomy in belief/desire formation is insufficient to establish the non-viability of Dennett’s picture. For an agent to be *orthonomous* it is enough that she forms her beliefs/desires according to objective norms regulating the
way belief/desires relate to situations in the world. An agent must be committed at least to a genuine discussion of believed/desire formation. But is this engagement itself free or is it not?

If it is not free, then Dennett could in principle find the mechanism, however complicated, that would generate this engagement, or at least approximate it indefinitely. In consequence the norms of belief/desire formation could become a topic of discussion for entities instantiating this mechanism. The mechanism would generate orthonomous subjects who form their beliefs/desires according to norms that they are able to recognise and discuss. The difference would be that their engagement in the conversational stance is not free, but rather automatic and independent of recognition. Hence if participating in the conversational stance is necessary to human beings then there would be nothing in human beings which could not be mechanistically explained. At the same time there would be at least one involvement in which human beings are not free to engage.

Yet if engagement in the conversational stance is free, this freedom cannot be construed as orthonomy — the latter presupposes some objective norms to hold, but there are no objective norms regulating engagements, except by way of relating one involvement to another. As mentioned above, if someone refuses to commit to the conversational stance there may be other involvements she could not participate in, such as rational belief/desire formation, but nothing can force her to engage. If engagement itself is free it is so precisely in a sense which does not recognise any objective norm whatsoever, except norms that relate one involvement to another. It thus cannot be reduced to a system of rules and generated by an algorithm instantiating it. Hence if it is to be an alternative to a mechanistic explanation of belief/desire formation, orthonomy must presuppose the unpredictable freedom to engage, which lies at the basis of human engagement in any meaningful practice. In other words, there can only be objective norms regulating belief/desire formation for agents who are already involved in something in the world. I believe therefore that one can find in Wittgenstein, without him actually mentioning it, a view which agrees with Heidegger that engagement in any involvement is unpredictable and necessary for anything to possess a particular meaning.

Freedom to engage puts certain limitations on the scope of theoretical explanations. The *explanans* of such explanations cannot have recourse to anything
involved. But if human understanding presupposes freedom to engage, then to explain it we must make recourse to freedom to engage, a phenomenon that essentially belongs to the world of involvement, or of human affairs. Freedom to engage is thus a result of the primacy of the kind of Being of involvement in determining the phenomenon of meaning, a notion central to the thought of both Heidegger and Wittgenstein, as shown throughout this work. This is an ontological primacy, since without involvement there would be no meaning to any statement, activity or thought. It entails that the phenomenon of meaning is only explicable from an involved standpoint which cannot be reduced to a purely theoretical one. Moreover, because all systems of rules are internal to some involvement, in which human beings are free to engage, the theoretical attitude presupposes the involved one, while precluding any use of it as a possible explanans.

Entities which are free to engage are thus inexplicable by adopting the theoretical attitude, so that being such an entity cannot be reduced to a certain mechanism, or an algorithm running on some system of rules. For such an entity, whether to engage in any involvement in a given situation is always an open question, which cannot be resolved by any theoretical reduction. Of course, entities of the kind Dasein can also be considered from different perspectives, for example, as the biological organism homo sapiens. As homo sapiens human beings may be theoretically explicable, but as instantiating Dasein they are not.

One's engagements depend ultimately on two factors, both internal to the involved standpoint—existing within a totality of possible involvements, or Being-in-the-world; and a project, or an engagement in a particular involvement for its own sake, which is accessible on the background of the world. The theoretical standpoint cannot explain the possession of a particular project, since by definition there are no reasons for the choice of one. But without a project one would have no reason to engage in any involvement, and hence having a particular project, increasing

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13 Heidegger is known to have claimed, that the theoretical attitude is in fact a "humanist" attitude, since it presupposes something like Kant's Copernican Revolution, which gives the human (Cartesian) subject a constitutive role in the world of phenomena. However, Heidegger would not object to the description of the theoretical attitude as removed from the world of human affairs. This is clearly what the distinction in Being and Time between the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand comes to, since 'what is decisive in the 'emergence' of the theoretical attitude would then lie in the disappearance of praxis. So if one posits 'practical' concern as the primary and predominant kind of Being which factual Dasein possesses, the ontological possibility of 'theory' will be due to the absence of praxis—that is, to a privation.' (BT. pp. 409)
humanity's technical mastery of its environment for example, is necessary for there to be a reason to engage with the theoretical standpoint in the first place. In sum, freedom to engage entails that the question whether to engage in any meaningful practice in any give situation is essentially open, for any human involvement in the world. Its essential openness entails it cannot be explained in terms which do not presuppose this very openness themselves.
Conclusion

I have tried to develop a conception of the phenomenon of meaning, consistent with the thought of Wittgenstein and Heidegger. My two main aims were: first to trace the similar and even equivalent claims of both thinkers and lead them back to some basic agreement between them; second to present an analysis of meaning from the perspective shared by both. I wished to present the best arguments for its cogency and investigate its bearing on contemporary discussions of normativity, truth and action.

One of the main themes discussed by the two thinkers is the centrality of involvement (in Heidegger’s jargon) in determining the phenomenon of meaning. Involvement is the kind of Being of the entities we encounter in our non-theoretical dealings in the world, and is the system of roles, aims and facts which determine what such entities are in any particular dealing with them. In the first two chapters I developed the connection between meaning and involvement as perceived by both. I began with Heidegger’s arguments that a relational totality, that is a totality of possible involvements and not things, which he calls ‘the world’, is required if any particular involvement is to be possible and thus meaningful. I then argued that Wittgenstein’s methodological principle of clarifying the meaning of utterances within circumstances in which they could be used properly, entails that meaning is constituted relative to a relational totality of language-in-use.

If involvement or language-in-use presuppose the world as a totality of possible involvements, then human beings, in so far as they understand language, must always already live in such a world, wherein they can encounter entities that have significance or a role in their lives. They must, in Heidegger’s words, essentially transcend into a world, or Be-in-a-world. In chapter 2 I developed Heidegger’s conception of the kind of Being of human beings, as a further transcendental condition of meaning. I then argued that though Wittgenstein discusses the notion of the human subject only briefly in his later period, a conception of what it is to be a human subject is implied in his thought by the fact that human beings are implicitly essentially the participants in any meaningful practice. I argued that as such a potential participant in any meaningful practice the human subject must be relationally conceived, in a very similar way to Heidegger’s conception of Dasein.
Because free involvement in the world presupposes the relational totality of the world, entities that are free to engage in any involvement necessarily already transcend, or exist within such a totality. Thus, even if we accept Cartesian scepticism regarding external reality, it is still necessary that a world exists in the sense of a relational totality, as long as the human subject understands meaning. This implies that the Cartesian ego cogito could not be the correct conception of the human subject. Heidegger claims that for the Cartesian ego, the only alternative to the relational conception, what kind of Being anything is is determined according to its mode of accessibility to the subject. The ego is necessarily a transcendental solipsist, because it is itself the fundamental ground of Being—now conceived as accessibility to a subject. If that is true, then on pain of a logical circularity the Cartesian subject could not define itself in terms of a project—a fundamental involvement it enters for its-own-sake. The ego would then not be capable of free involvement in the world. This demonstrates the ontological primacy of involvement compared with cogitation—while cogitation is ontologically a limit case of involvement, the reverse is not true. Wittgenstein’s main objection to the Cartesian conception of the subject also rests on the fact that it provides a distorted view of what meaning is. Wittgenstein’s claim is rather stronger than Heidegger’s, since his private-language argument, as I develop it, entails that a Cartesian ego, if it existed, would not be able to understand human language. I believe this argument, if sound, gives an even greater support to Heidegger’s conception of the human subject than his own.

In Chapter 3 I give both philosophers’ arguments to the effect that a particular involvement, or a meaningful practice in the situation of its application, is necessary for any statement to be either meaningful or true. I called a given meaningful practice in the circumstances of a particular application the ‘engaged circumstances’, ‘engagement’ here means acting (mentally, verbally or otherwise) in way which presupposes the transcendental conditions of the meaningful practice to apply. I believe that the transcendental analysis of both Heidegger and Wittgenstein reveals understanding and truth to be necessarily internal to some engaged circumstances. I call this claim the ‘primacy of the engaged circumstances thesis’ or the ‘primacy thesis’. It is inconsistent with there being any fact that is necessarily true regardless of all circumstances. Logical necessity is traditionally supposed to be precisely that. The primacy thesis thus entails that there are no logically necessary facts, or that what is
regarded as such is in truth a transcendental condition of particular engaged circumstances.

The primacy thesis entails that engagement in a particular practice (or involvement) in given circumstances is essentially unsystematisable. I argued this is the central theme uniting Wittgenstein and Heidegger and setting them apart from the philosophical tradition. This claim is composed of two related subclaims: first, there is no decision procedure for whether to engage in a particular involvement in a given situation, given agents' beliefs and desires, unless one is already engaged in some meaningful practice. Second, there is no decision procedure, for all possible forms of involvement, for whether an agent is engaged in them or not, given their actions, beliefs desires, utterances etc. The first claim entails that an agent's engagement is unpredictable - cannot be calculated given all the factors that determine it, since they do not do so in a systematic way. The second entails that this engagement is necessary for the agent's thoughts, words and action to possess meaning. I call the claim that agent's engagement is unpredictable and necessary for meaning 'freedom to engage'.

Roughly, freedom to engage amounts the fact that whether to engage in any meaningful practice is always an open question, one that can be answered ultimately only by some commitment to a project—engagement for its own sake. Also, it means that situations do not entail a particular way of understanding them, and naturally, that only in understanding them they become meaningful. Whenever we understand a situation to be such-and-so, we already exercised our freedom to engage, since we could not deduce that understanding from the situation, disregarding any involvement in the world. Freedom to engage is the very relation between subject and world, and summarises all the themes discussed in this work. If freedom to engage is an implicit theme in the thought of both Wittgenstein and Heidegger, it is in my view the fundamental similarity between them, from which all the points of agreement discussed in this work follow.

The main upshot of my discussion is laying bare the limitations of the theoretical (uninvolved) perspective in strongly explaining the constitution of meaning and the transcendental structures correlated with it, namely the world and the human subject. As Heidegger point out, who was always very aware of the history of western civilisation, the theoretical attitude has been central to western thought since the Greeks, and especially after the 17th century Enlightenment. Scientific methodology in
particular has always taken pride in removing anything essentially human from the 
*explanans* side of its explanations. Scientific models do not contain anything that 
depends for its existence or causal powers on the existence of human beings, or other 
entities that speak and understand. If meaning is essentially and irreducibly involved, 
then such scientific and theoretical models could not account for its existence, and for 
the nature of human selfhood and the totality of possible involvements as well, given 
they are indeed correlated with meaning.

This conclusion has several crucial implications on a variety of fields. First, if 
there are entities which irreducibly depend on the involved perspective, then a purely 
scientific ontology cannot be a comprehensive one. This is so even if science can 
provide a comprehensive description of the physical universe. This entails that 
tonologically there are far more independently existing entities than most mainstream 
contemporary ontological theories admit. According to Heidegger, especially in his 
early period, "fundamental" ontology must begin with an exposition of human beings' 
essential relation to Being, which allows many and various kinds of Being to be 
revealed and explicated: the Being of extant objects, pieces of equipment, works of art, 
human beings, time and so on. What passes in the philosophical tradition for ontology 
is in truth, according to Heidegger, merely an ontology of the extant. This 
presupposes, without justification, an identification of Being with the kind of Being of 
the extant, reducing all beings to extant objects, explicable in theoretical terms.

This would cast doubt on recent cognitive/computational approaches in the 
philosophy of mind as well, regardless of the scientific advances that have and 
doubtless will be made via this approach. If human selfhood is constituted by 
involvement, then minds in general and human self-conscious minds in particular are 
not simply a kind of extant object, that can be strongly explicated by a theoretical 
model of any sort. But all strands of the cognitive/computational approach (though I 
cannot demonstrate it here) take mind to be such an extant object—a system 
esentially describable in terms of being in various discrete states, given internal and 
external input/output stimulus. If the mind is constituted (at least in part) by 
involvement, this approach cannot hope to give a comprehensive account of what the 
mind is, what it is to possess a mind, or what it is to be conscious. Importantly, this 
criticism applies to the cognitive/computational approach in general, whether for the 
representational theory of mind, causal functionalism or instrumentalism. But though I
have touched on this topic towards the end of my thesis, it lies mostly beyond the
scope of a discussion of meaning to which I limited myself.

This conclusion may also shed new light on Wittgenstein’s and Heidegger’s
strict disavowal of theories in philosophy. This claim is explicitly made by both in
various circumstances, but I did not have the space to discuss it here in further detail.
It remained controversial even among ardent supporters of Wittgenstein (less so with
Heidegger). But the primacy thesis may afford us a new interpretation for this extreme
rejection of theories in philosophy, one that cannot be dismissed off hand, at least
while maintaining the truth of Wittgenstein’s other claims about meaning, mental
content etc. Let ‘theory’ refer not simply to a body of true statements (regardless of
how truth is to be construed), but to an essentially uninvolved systematic
representation of a given phenomenon. Thus, as long as philosophy is concerned with
conceptual analysis or the a priori explication of a given phenomenon, and if
transcendental necessity is the strongest necessity possible, then philosophy cannot be
concerned with a theoretical explication of concepts. Philosophy must employ the
irreducibly involved perspective, since it is only within some involvement that concepts
or involved phenomena possess a determinate nature that can be explicated.

Philosophy cannot give us a theoretical model of a given concept that explains its role
in any situation in which it figures. Rather, it can only explicate the role a concept or a
phenomenon has in given engaged circumstances – a meaningful practice applied in a
given situation. Understood this way Wittgenstein’s and Heidegger’s objection to the
use of theories in philosophy becomes an integral part of their overall view, to stand
and fall together with the rest of their major ideas.

But perhaps the most important implication of all concerns human being’s
Being-in-the-world, outside the confines of philosophical contemplations. The claim
that human beings are essentially free to engage, which I argued summarises the main
tenets of both Wittgenstein’s and Heidegger’s work, is the claim that human existence
is not strongly explicable in a systematic way. In other words, the essence of being
human does not involve the instantiation of any particular system of rules, since human
beings are not essentially engaged in any involvement. Because of the abstract and
general nature of this claim, it applies equally to biological, psychological, economic,
ethical, religious political systems and so on. The individual human agent is essentially
always free to consider whether to engage in any of these systems, whether to accept a
particular way of understanding a situation. Because we approach most situations in life with some understanding, we always already considered the question of engagement (by way of acting, rather than conscious deliberation) whenever we act in any meaningful way. In the light of this conclusion it is quite disturbing that recent historical developments point to a growing global commitment to producing a higher and higher technological society, as expressed in the amounts of money and effort put into computers and cybernetics, the internet, genetics, cognitive science and so on. The vast majority of people living today contribute to this trend, whether directly or indirectly, with very few of us (if any) actually freely engaging in this project for its own sake, or in other projects which include it necessarily. This opens up the possible ethical implications of the primacy thesis and freedom to engage, implications which, though I think are there, I will have to draw in detail at a later date.
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