

BUILDERS AT OPPOSITE POLES, OR PIONEERS OF DIFFERENT QUESTS?
CONTRASTING HEIDEGGER AND SELLARS

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Thesis Abstract

Alptekin Sanlı, “Builders at Opposite Poles, or Pioneers of Different Quests?

Contrasting Heidegger and Sellars”

The present thesis concerns the status of the conceptual in our experience of the world. The trajectory of my argument runs as follows: (1) Responding to a recent debate between professors Hubert L. Dreyfus and John McDowell, I argue, against Dreyfus, that the exercise of our conceptual capacities, far from being a detached transformation of our basic animal coping skills, constitutes an inalienable element of our openness to the world. This stage of the thesis is chiefly exegetical: I try to show that Dreyfus’s appeal to Heideggerian phenomenology as a laying out of the foundation upon which detached rationality grows is misplaced, in that Heidegger’s work does not seem to bear out such a claim. Neither is it possible to discern, in the work of Sellars, from which latter-day “conceptualists” such as McDowell take their cue, a useless pretension as to reducing all our perceptual skills to our inferential capacities. The gist of this first stage of my argument is that the very construal of these two influential thinkers as “building the edifice of human experience” from opposite ends is highly misleading. Such a construal diverts us from considering how each seek to illuminate our existence by different modes of questioning. (2) Next I try to show briefly that beyond the failure of the Dreyfusian exegeses of Heidegger and Sellars, it is difficult even to make sense of the very idea that human experience is arranged in levels. (3) What truly is at issue in the whole debate, I then claim, is not at all the status of rationality as a “transformation” or not, but rather the possibility of our responsibility to truth, as a defining factor of human comportment.

Tez Özeti

Alptekin Sanlı, “Builders at Opposite Poles, or Pioneers of Different Quests? Contrasting Heidegger and Sellars”

Bu tez, kavramsal olanın dünyayı deneyimlememizdeki rolünü konu edinir. Uslamlamamızın aşamalarını verecek olursak: (1) Hubert L. Dreyfus’un, insan zihinselliği/kavramsallığının hayvanlarla ortak temel yetilerimizin bir başkalaşımı, ya da dünyadan kopuk bir dönüşümü olduğuna dair tezi reddedilmektedir. Dreyfus, bu tezini John McDowell’la tartışmasında geliştirmiştir, ve fikirlerinin temelinde kendisinin Heidegger ve Sellars yorumları yatmaktadır. Bu yorumların eksik ve yanıltıcı olduğunu göstermeye çalışacağız: Ne Heidegger insan zihninin ve kavramsal yetilerinin temelinde yatan kendi kendine yeterli bir görüngübilimsel alan tanımlamaktadır, ne de Sellars algısal yetilerimizi dile ilişkin yetilerimize indirgemektedir. Uslamlamamızın bu aşamasında esas amacımız, Heideggerci ve Sellarscı düşünürlerin “insan deneyimini ters uçlarından inşa ettikleri” fikrinin, her iki düşünürün, dünya üzerindeki varoluşumuzu başka bakış açılarından anlaşılabilir kılma çabalarını yadsıgını göstermek. (2) İkinci aşamada, Dreyfus’un Heidegger ve Sellars yorumlarının eksikliğinin de ötesinde, insan deneyiminin hayvanlarla ortak bir temeli olduğu ve “katlara” bölündüğü fikrinin anlaşılmaçlıgını savunacağız. (3) En son aşamada, tüm bu tartışmanın, aslında insan zihinselliğinin ya da kavramsal yetilerimizin hayvanlarla paylaştığımız bir temelden “başkalaşım başkalaşmadığı” sorusundan ziyade, aslında insanoğlunun belirleyici özelliklerinden “gerçeğe karşı sorumluluk” fikriyle ilgili olduğunu göstermeye çalışacağız.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Heidegger:

BP: The Basic Problems of Phenomenology
HCT: The History of the Concept of Time
MFL: The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic
S&Z: Being and Time

Sellars:

EPM: Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind
ITM: Intentionality and the Mental
LTC: Language as Thought and as Communication
ME: Mental Events
MFC: Meaning as Functional Classification
MOE: Metaphysics of Epistemology
PSIM: Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man
SRLG: Some Reflections on Language Games

Wittgenstein:

PI: Philosophical Investigations

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I shall attempt in this essay to contrast, Heidegger's and Sellars's thoughts regarding intentionality, meaning, and the status of the conceptual in our experience, broadly conceived. The guiding thread for my discussion through chapters 1—9 is going to be a critique of Hubert Dreyfus's APA Pacific Division Presidential Address of 2005, wherein professor Dreyfus criticizes, through a complex weave of argumentation, McDowell's conceptualism from the standpoint of existential phenomenology. Here I shall take issue, however, not with Dreyfus's arguments against McDowell *per se*, but with the core assumptions of his address regarding Heidegger and Sellars as the originators of the contrasted philosophical approaches. The following two chapters are a corollary to the argument contra Dreyfus, which aim to spell out my thoughts as to what really is at issue in the debate as to the role of the conceptual in our experience, as well as our difference(-in-continuity) with sublinguals.

Let me first try to lay out, then, what Dreyfus's assumptions with respect to Heidegger and Sellars may be, before my own suggestions to the contrary begin to unfold. Now, concluding his address, Dreyfus makes the plea that continental and analytic philosophy—more specifically, Heideggerian 'existential phenomenology' and Sellarsian 'conceptualism'—be reconciled in the "collaborative task of showing how our conceptual capacities grow out of nonconceptual ones—how the ground floor of pure perception and receptive coping supports the conceptual upper stories of the edifice of knowledge" (Dreyfus 2005, p.19) According to Dreyfus, the conceptualists in their efforts to "[articulate] the conceptual structure of our grasp of

reality” (*ibid.*, p.1) have done much to illuminate our linguistic and inferential capacities; yet they have presumed these capacities to account for all there is to human experience. Their ‘denial’ of the “nonconceptual perceptual and coping skills we share with animals and infants” (*ibid.*, p.19), out of which conceptual capacities are a growth, has committed them to an absurd view of the edifice of human experience as consisting of “upper stories all the way down.” (*ibid.*, p.1)

Furthermore, for Dreyfus, inasmuch as conceptualists insist on understanding “concepts as context-free principles or rules [which] guide actions or at least make them intelligible” (*ibid.*, p.15), they succumb to a “Myth of the Mental” (*ibid.*, p.7)

Those who are held captive by the myth, Dreyfus thinks, hold that our very skillful coping practices in the world are infused with “mindedness”, that is, with our rational capacities. They are latter day intellectualists who hold that our perceptual commerce with the world is thoroughly judgmental; that awareness of anything implies the implicit or explicit judging *that something is the case*—the registering of a fact. The dispersion of this Myth, and the related absurdity of a building with no foundations, requires conceptual capacities to be understood as a “transformation” or “conversion” from our ground-floor coping skills as studied by existential phenomenology. Since its inauguration by Heidegger, Dreyfus avers, existential phenomenology has shown considerable progress in describing the structure of these basic skills we share with sublinguals. However, work still needs to be done to show exactly how the upper-stories of human experience grow out of ground-level capacities; and it is at this juncture that insofar as they construe the conceptual as a transformation of the non-conceptual, analytic philosophers can help the phenomenologists. (*ibid.*, p.19)

It is possible to discern here two core assumptions that seem to inform Dreyfus's results: (1) The first assumption is that the claim, of existential phenomenology as practiced by Heidegger, to conducting a more primordial, fundamental, or "foundational" line of inquiry hitherto neglected by the tradition consists (a) in its having undertaken to articulate the structure of 'ground-floor abilities we share with animals and infants', and (b) in its having given the cue to construing language, broadly conceived, as a 'transformation' from these basic abilities. (2) The second core assumption is that the work of Sellars, while a breakthrough in epistemology, falls prey to a Myth of the Mental as it takes all human comportment to be mediated by implicit conceptual structures and reasoning.

I shall try to argue against both (1) and (2), hoping to show that the very metaphor that Heidegger-ians and Sellars-ians wish to "build" an edifice of human experience starting from opposite ends is highly misleading. My alternative suggestion will be that these thinkers problematize different aspects of our understanding of ourselves, with the full complexity of our existence in sight. On what can be deemed a shared commitment to reject Platonistic and Cartesian accounts of ourselves in the world, Heidegger and Sellars inaugurate not antagonistic, but different projects: Sellars seems primarily to attempt a radical *reformulation* of our *concepts* of ourselves as beings capable of intentionality, using language, doing science and reasoning, while Heidegger's central project of the S&Z-era concerns the *fundamentally-ontological* question as to bringing out the being of the entity capable of intentionality, and the world of its experience.

Having made this first adumbration, let us now try to unfold our arguments in detail.

CHAPTER II

HEIDEGGER'S "FOUNDATIONAL" PROJECT

We ought first to ask wherein Heidegger's claim to a fundamental new inquiry lies; or what it is that constitutes the 'ground-level' of explanation, for him. I suggest that Heidegger is interested not so much in the question as to how "[minds,] rationality and language grow out of subconceptual coping" (*ibid.*, p.19), as in explicitly laying out—thematizing—in a more fundamental explanatory order the ontological frameworks¹ in virtue of which rational beings / language users / knowing subjects and the objects to which they 'transcend' become at all intelligible—show themselves—as the entities that they are. Heidegger's project is one of *fundamental ontology*, insofar as he takes up the question pertaining to the most basic condition of the intelligibility of those ontological frameworks. In proper jargon, Heidegger asks about *Being*, "that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood" (S&Z 6), aiming to find out its *Meaning*, or "that in terms of which something can be conceived in its possibility as that which it is" (S&Z 324).² Now, the 1927 lectures make a clear suggestion as to

¹ cf. Blattner 1999, p.21. An ontological framework is the practical/purposive/discursive context in which we lead our lives, and encounter any entity as an entity at all. As the "ground" which makes any 'thing' show up as an entity, the ontological frameworks in which we exist are at first "hidden" to us—and most crucially, that which lets entities be encounterable as the entities that they are is not itself an entity that bestows existence on other entities. The "tradition" has so far neglected this ontological difference between frameworks and entities, and sought to render entities intelligible always in terms of other super-entities. This for Heidegger is a blind and fruitless way of understanding what it means "to be" at all. It requires a different sort of work (for Heidegger, phenomenological work) to thematize, to interpret, to explicitly lay-out this hidden ground.

² To reduce terminological perplexities to a minimum, let us make a quick preliminary overview of the terms we shall be putting to use. Further explication is available in the body of the essay proper.

The Question as to the Meaning of Being, is an inquiry into the most basic possibility condition of entities to show up as the entities that they are. The usage of the word 'meaning' need not confuse the analytically-oriented reader. Heidegger seeks not the *bedeutung* of the term 'Being'—what we are after is not a richer definition of the word '*Being*' that has been hitherto lacking—but the *Sinn* of Being, or that by virtue of which Being comes to be understood at all. (cf. White 2005 p.19, n.43)

what that-in-terms-of-which-entities-are-at-all-intelligible-in-their-possibility-to-show-up-as-the-entities-that-they-are could be: “It is only by means of the Temporality of the understanding of Being that it can be explained why the ontological determinations of being have the character of a priority.” (BP 325) It follows, then, that Heidegger’s explicit laying-out of that which renders intelligible ‘minds’ and the ‘world’ to which they transcend as the entities that they are, terminates as it were, nowhere else but in a ‘temporal’ account of ourselves as social, self-interpreting, death-bound finite beings who are who they are—who are in a ‘world’ at all—only insofar as we take up projects (coming towards ourselves ‘*futurally*’ (S&Z 365)), are already ‘thrown’ into a heritage (a ‘*Beenness*’, an originary-*past* (*ibid.*)), and who are always already absorbed in the tasks at hand, and the average-understanding of the society into which we are born (Making-

In later work (the 1935 lectures), Heidegger offers an alternative formulation, which probably has come to be better known: “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, p.1) What is at issue here is neither the idle apprehension that all the ‘stuff’ that surrounds us could just as well have been absent; nor is it the layman’s confused formulation of the question to which the best answer yet available is the theory of the Big Bang. The question concerns rather what determines entities as entities; how any ‘thing’ can at all be encountered as what it is. Now this question cannot be asked in isolation: Being is always the Being of an entity, entities show up to Dasein, and in its commerce with entities, Dasein always already has an ‘implicit’ understanding of Being. (S&Z 5-6)

Dasein, literally “being-there”, signifies in Heidegger’s usage our human existence in the world. Dasein, however, is no entity among entities—as we have just mentioned, in its commerce with other entities, it has ‘an understanding of being’. Dasein has an understanding of being in that it is concernfully involved in its environment; it is not ‘within’ the world, say, inanimate objects and sublinguals are, but *exists* in wholes of significance. Its existence has the character of self-interpreting openness to the world—in ‘understanding Being’, Dasein makes an issue of its own being. For Dasein to make an issue of its own being means that it understands itself in terms of the projects it takes up, the tasks it has at hand, and the cultural heritage into which it is born. It thus encounters entities within the world self-interpretingly. Its commerce with entities within the world is not a matter of registering ‘objects of the outside world’, but letting entities show themselves as the entities that they are in wholes of significance, in Dasein’s self-interpreting concernful activity.

It is with the analysis of Dasein’s understanding of Being that Heidegger begins his fundamentally-ontological quest. He first lays out the ‘existential structure’ of Dasein’s commerce with entities, which is then given a temporal interpretation. While a detailed exegesis of the concept of timeliness goes beyond the confines of this essay, we may note that Dasein in its concernful dealings in the world is ‘timely’, in that the very unity of its existential structures displays an ‘originarily-temporal’ structure with Future, Present and Past aspects. Dasein is ‘futural’ in that it understands itself in terms of projects it presses *ahead* into; it has an originary ‘past’ in that it finds itself in a cultural heritage already set; its originary ‘present’ is that it always busies itself with some task at hand.

These terms will ‘fall into place’ as we continue to use them in the text.

present, falling (ibid.,)) It seems Heidegger's fundamental project seeks to bring out the 'horizon' against which we are at all intelligible to ourselves in the full complexity of our existence, as opposed to a 'foundation' of the edifice of human experience.

To flesh out this last claim, we should proceed to account for the exact role played by our purely practical concernful-dealings, in Heidegger's exposition and working-out of the *question as to the Meaning of Being*. Let us now try to bring out the sort of primacy our basic practical comportment enjoys over 'the conceptual', and what it means for the use of concepts to be existentially-derivative therefrom. We shall finally try to see what, under this rubric, having succumbed to a Myth of the Mental and/or to have become trapped in a tyranny of language imply.

CHAPTER III

THE ONTOLOGICAL OBLIVIOUSNESS OF THE TRADITION AND “COPING”

The forgetfulness of the question as to the Meaning of Being which Heidegger imputes on the tradition hinges upon the proclivity, in Heidegger's estimation, of philosophers to give explanatory primacy to abstract, universal, immutable, detached structures in their accounts of both the constitution of ourselves, and the world of our experience. The paradigmatic example is to be found in the 1925 lectures where Heidegger asks whether Husserl's “elaboration of the field of intentionality raises the question of the being of the region” (HCT 102). According to Heidegger, none of Husserl's own “determinations of being” (*ibid.*, 103-107) offer any *concrete* insight into consciousness. Husserl's ‘field of intentionality’ or ‘consciousness’ is a ‘Pure’ or ‘Immanent Being’; an *ideal, abstract essence*, that is directed towards abstract ‘meaning’s, or Noemata, of which the unities are what make intelligible the world of our experience—for Heidegger, however, “It is not consciousness to the extent that it is *hic et nunc* real and mine, but instead purely in its essential content.” (*ibid.*, 106)

Problematizing the *mode of being* of the ‘field of intentionality’ requires that we first bring out that ‘the ego’/‘consciousness’ *hic et nunc real and mine* cannot be understood via ideal structures, but in the way it “*finds itself* primarily and constantly *in things* ... [for] each one of us is what he pursues or cares for. In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we care of.” (BP 159 [original emphasis]) Heidegger thus insists that the entity capable of intentionality be understood as a self-interpreting ‘who’ (cf. S&Z 45), as existing Dasein. That our ‘relation’ with ‘things’ in an ‘outside world’ has

hitherto been conceived in terms of an abstractly conceived, statically categorized subject ‘getting at’ transcendent objects has for Heidegger concealed the more basic phenomenon of *originary transcendence*, or *being-in-the-world* by not inquiring beyond cognitively construed “ontic transcendence” (MFL 135).

Heidegger annuls the model of an immanent ego reaching out to transcendent objects, arguing that what ‘transcends’ “out beyond itself” (BP 300) is rather Dasein: The ‘I-here’ and the object ‘yonder’ of the tradition presupposes the shared clearing upon which any entity can at all show up: the “there” (S&Z 132), opened-up by existing *Da-sein* (being-*there*). Dasein’s being-*in-the-world* is equivalent to its being “its there” (*ibid.*, 133); and being-*there* or being-*in* as such has for Heidegger four *equiprimordial* constituents: *Affectivity* (that things always already ‘matter’ to Dasein a particular way; that it is always already in a fundamental mood; that it has already been thrown into a world—corresponding to the temporal ecstasis of originary Past); *Understanding* (that Dasein understands itself only insofar as it projects onto a possibility of being; or, Dasein’s “ability to be”³; corresponding to originary Future); and *Falling* (Dasein’s absorption in the tasks at hand; its having abandoned itself to the everyday, the average—corresponding to originary Present) The fourth component, *Rede*, left untranslated for the moment⁴, does not ‘temporalize’ yet brings about the ‘Articulation’ of the other components (S&Z 349). Insofar as *Rede* constitutes the existential possibility condition for explicit understanding/interpretation and language in that capacity, we shall devote special attention to the concept below.

³ See Blattner 1999, Chapter 1

⁴ While the colloquial German meaning of the word ‘Rede’ is ‘speech’, we shall observe that each scholar infuses his translation with their own interpretation of Heidegger’s usage of the term. Before we attend to those interpretations, let us first introduce the term in its native form.

The ‘world’ *in* which Dasein thus exists, is most proximally not an aggregate of objects of knowledge, but an equipmental whole, or a ‘whole of significance’. The Available entities with which Dasein concernfully-deals are assigned to ‘in-order-to’ relations that are ‘wrapped up’, as it were, by a ‘towards-which’, ie., the task at hand—‘towards-whiches’ in turn have as their ultimate telos, a ‘for-the-sake-of-which’, that is none other than the possibility of being onto which Dasein projects itself.

Now this would suggest that Dasein’s understanding of the aforementioned ‘ontological frameworks’, or what constitutes the “sense and ground” (S&Z 49) of phenomena, ie. *Being*, takes place *implicitly*, in its concernful dealings in-the-world, or its ‘ability-to-be’-while-always-already-in-a-mood. What we ought to inquire is whether this ‘implicit understanding’ amounts to an *autonomous* layer of ‘subconceptual coping’ as Dreyfus seems to argue. Is ‘Being-in as such’ to be understood in terms of the coping skills “we share with animals and infants” out of which explicit understanding/interpretation and eventually language *grow*?—and if not, is the only available alternative to take the shared clearing in which Dasein exists to be constituted by the grammar of our language?

CHAPTER IV

OUR CONCERNFUL DEALINGS IN THE WORLD, LANGUAGE, AND *REDE*

To answering the question at hand, two general approaches can be discerned in recent scholarship: The ‘derivativism’⁵ epitomized in Dreyfus’s (1991) and (2005); and a ‘constitutive’ interpretation exemplified by Guignon in (1983)⁶. At the root of the differences between these two approaches is the type of normative space, or a background of Meaning, they take the ‘disclosedness’—the ‘there’—*in* which Dasein exists to be; and their respective construals of the concept of *Rede* in S&Z is what gives their interpretations their final shape.

According to Dreyfus, *Coping*, the theme for the 2005 Address, amounts to the “situated [practical] activity” by which Dasein “presupposes and produces a shared clearing”, i.e. the ‘there’. (Dreyfus 1991, pp.163-167; also p.185) Coping-practices, for Dreyfus, constitute the background of intelligibility against which any entity can at all show up, and any particular activity can at all ‘make sense’. Thus, basic *Meaning*, that is “that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself” (S&Z 151), is to be understood in terms of our background familiarity within wholes-of-significance—our *practical/purposive* knowing our way about within the “relational whole of in-order-to and for-the-sake-of-whichs”. (Dreyfus 1991, p.223)

Dreyfus argues that insofar as the wholes-of-significance with which Dasein is familiar have “natural joints” in their referential relations (nails to hammers to

⁵ The characterization ‘derivativism’ is introduced in Blattner 1999, p.67ff. Blattner’s own derivativism criticizes Dreyfus for his neglect of the communicatory aspect of *Rede* (*ibid.*, p.74)

⁶ Lafont in her (2000) argues for another constitutivism; in my distortingly simplified summary: Inasmuch as Dasein is always already ‘thrown’ into a world, the world cannot be an ontological determination of Dasein. Heidegger’s transcendental pretensions as to existing Dasein opening-up the clearing on which any entity can at all show do not work, for Lafont; she thinks that wholes of significance are “of a symbolic nature” (*ibid.*, p.48, also p.15), and this symbolic whole is constituted by language. Dasein does not disclose a ‘there’ but is thrown on a “site of world-disclosure” that is none other than language, as in the later Heidegger. (*ibid.*, p.85ff.)

wood, etc.) they can be said *already* to be “Articulated”—the fourth aspect of the disclosedness of the ‘there’, *Rede*, is thus to be understood as the ability to “tell things apart ... pick out [the joints] ... in using them” (*ibid.*, p.215) Hence, Dreyfus’s translation for *Rede*: Telling.

Now for Dreyfus, when the pure availability of the equipment with which absorbed-coping deals becomes disrupted, the referential relations picked out in simple Telling-in-use have to become explicit. Interpretation, or explicit understanding thus ‘grows’, as it were, out of absorbed-coping when the latter *breaks down*. The joints, (*already*-articulated ‘in use’) of the referential whole then become explicit in a hermeneutic as-structure. When as a result of further breakdown in the coping practices, Availability abandons the entities or relations in question, we enter the ontological domain of the Occurent—and “Theoretical Assertion”, now the deficient mode of explicit understanding, puts the Occurent into words in terms of “isolated predicates, and isolated subjects” (*ibid.*, pp.195-214; especially see Table 6). At this remote level of propositional talk about facts, entities are utterly divorced from the specific wholes of significance in which they first show up (hence, the isolation), and are statically categorized in accordance with pre-set criteria. Contrary to proponents of the Myth of the Mental, talk about facts thus shows up as a twice-derivative, and completely “detached” mode of dealing with entities. This, I think, is the Heideggerian background on which Dreyfus’s 2005 assertion that “we can *transform* our unthinking nonconceptual engagement, and thereby encounter new, thinkable, structures” (Dreyfus 2005, p.18) depends.

The character of Guignon’s constitutivism in (1983) on the other hand, can already be glimpsed at in his translation for *Rede*. He employs the term *Logos* for the “deepest level of articulation of a background of meaning” (Guignon 1983, p.112)

The “source of Logos”, is our shared ordinary-language; and the articulation it brings about is akin to “Wittgenstein’s notion of ‘forms of life’” (*ibid.*, p.113) For Guignon, a consistent reading of S&Z reveals that “it is the ‘grammar’ of our intentional language that determines the essence of Being of the entities found in [the] world” (*ibid.*, 129) This would imply that the ‘there’ *in* which Dasein *exists* is a normative space by virtue of the grammar of our language which *constitutes* it; *Rede*/Logos as the articulation of this space designates the tapestry of our language-games.

Both interpretations capture crucial moments of our being-in-the-world; yet they also seem to offer rather parochial exegeses of Heidegger’s analysis of being-in as such. Dreyfus’s exegesis seems to be insufficient as to explaining why *Rede* is an aspect of the very disclosedness of the ‘there’, *equiprimordial* with Affectivity and Understanding: If *Rede*/Telling amounts to heeding the jointedness of already-articulated referential wholes, it would follow that it is equivalent to a mode of basic knowing-our-way-about. Having thus defined the “existential-ontological foundation of language” and that which “underlies both interpretation and assertion” (S&Z 160-161) as a *mode* of basic coping, Dreyfus then has to have recourse to his schema of breakdown-situations of various severity in order to account for the ‘derivation’, the ‘growth’ of explicit understanding/interpretation and language from uninhibited knowing-one’s-way-about. This would make it seem that explicit understanding/interpretation and language use are appendixes, as it were, to being-in-the-world; or, as the 2005 Address puts it, that they are a “transformation” of basic perceptual skills. Yet, the “shared clearing” which *Dasein*’s coping practices open up is always already a discursive space—it is *Communication*, understood ontologically-existentially, through which the “Articulation of Being with one another understandingly is constituted [and] ... a co-[Affectivity] shared.” (S&Z

205) Dreyfus's explanatory strategy (i) to construe basic Meaning entirely in terms of purposeful/pragmatic coping-practices, (ii) to reduce *Rede* to an aspect of Understanding, and (iii) to posit the schema of breakdown-situations to account for the derivation of explicit understanding/interpretation and language from basic coping covers-up (a) why in the case of Dasein, concernful-dealings are always already a shared, communicative, public matter; and (b) why, by Dreyfus's own admission, we are at a loss articulating the 'exact' steps by which the Heideggerian derivation of language comes about (Dreyfus 2005, p.19)—Dreyfus's appeal to “[the skills] we share with animals and infants” to be the starting point for Heideggerian phenomenology seems to be unwarranted, then, however pertinent the issue may be from an evolutionary or anthropological standpoint. We shall build on this line of criticism below, elaborating on the inalienable communicative dimension of the practical/purposive competence that *we* seem to possess.

Guignon's constitutivism on the other hand, seems to overlook that “that there is no exit from the maze of language” (Guignon 1983, p.119) does not entail that the existential-ontological *possibility conditions* for the tapestry of our language-games cannot be studied at all. *Rede*, indeed, is “the existential-ontological *foundation* of language” (S&Z 160 [emphasis added]) and not an aspect of our fully-linguistically-instituted forms-of-life.

CHAPTER V
A NEW SUGGESTION

It appears that a fully accurate exegesis for *Rede* would have to explain the concept both as a primordial constituent of the ‘there’ (after the formulation in S&Z 133ff.) as well as the Articulation thereof (cf. S&Z § 34; also p.349); furthermore, although § 34, dedicated to *Rede*, is shot-through with linguistic metaphors, we are called to understand the concept as the “*ontological foundation*” (S&Z 160 [original emphasis]) for language and not *in terms of* language. We also have to be able to explain why the ‘shared clearing’ in which Dasein exists is a discursive space of *mit-Dasein*, *co-Affectivity* and *co-Understanding*.

Taylor Carman in his (2003) sheds a new light on the problem: As a primordial aspect of the disclosedness of the ‘there’, and as the *existential-ontological possibility condition* for explicit understanding/interpretation and language, Carman suggests that *Rede/Discourse* is to be taken as “a wider spectrum of irreducibly expressive and communicative compartments that constitute a distinct, nonpurposive dimension of meaning in addition to the instrumental goal-directedness of practical activity.” (Carman 2003, p.5) The background of intelligibility, basic Meaning, should not be understood two-dimensionally as it were, in terms exclusively of the normative structure of our practical/purposive dealings or the ‘grammar’ of our language. For Carman, “cutting across” practical/purposive normativity, and “governing not our pursuit of ends as such, but rather our interpretive expressions and gestures”, there lies an *irreducible* layer of demonstrative normativity, in virtue of which practical/purposive understanding can at all be made explicit (or even, heeded in its ‘jointedness’)—“This normativity

specific to interpretation, governing the intelligibility of demonstrative practices as such, is what Heidegger means by [*Rede*, or] ‘Discourse’”. (*ibid.*, p.235) Explicit understanding/interpretation and language are made possible, then, by Dasein’s irreducible discursive ability to lay out the “how” of its competence (cf. *ibid.*, p.210)—a laying-out which is itself “sensitive to norms” (*ibid.*, p.215) and takes place in an irreducible normative space of its own: For the kind of entity that Dasein is, ‘meaningful’ showing-how seems to be as basic as ‘meaningful’ knowledge-how. Norms governing our showing and ‘saying’-practices cannot be reduced, according to Carman, to norms governing our purposive/practical activities. (cf. *ibid.*, 235)

CHAPTER VI

INTERWEAVED LAYERS OF COMPETENCE AS OPPOSED TO “STOREYS”

How can we best make use of Carman’s insights? First, we need to ask further, how the proposed “two irreducible levels of normativity” may work together. Now *strictly speaking*, purely practical/purposive Understanding takes notice neither of the referential whole of in-order-to relations, nor the Available itself—“That with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves. On the contrary, that which we concern ourselves primarily is the work ... [a] ‘towards-which’” (S&Z 69-70) For this basic competence, equipmental wholes are not merely not-thematized: They are *wholly transparent*—as absorbed-coping ‘gets its job done’ it does not heed a jointedness; or paradoxically, it would first appear, not even the Available: It seems, then, that Dasein does not *Tell*-in-use.

How does Dasein ever *enter* equipmental-wholes, then—how does it *first reach out for* a piece of string in-order-to attach it at the end of a needle with-which to sew pieces of leather in-order-to make a shoe with-which to, etc... if all these are transparent for absorbed-coping or practical/purposive understanding? Furthermore, how are practically/purposively transparent equipmental wholes *shared*, in co-Affectivity and co-Understanding?

I think this is possible because Dasein is discursively-competent about its practical/purposive competence: That which is Available as a ‘transparent’-whole is “taken apart” (S&Z 149) in its in-order-to relations and *only thus, becomes ‘jointed’*; things are only thus understood ‘as’ serving a purpose, ‘as’ being-Available—Dasein thus reaches out for a “needle”, or a “hammer”. The hermeneutic as-structure does not “transform” absorbed-coping as a result of breakdown-situations: Dasein’s

irreducible ability to lay-out (*Auslegung*: to interpret)—to ‘show’—the ‘how’ of its competence lets it pick for-the-sakes-of-which *as* for-the-sakes-of-which, and *enter* equipmental-wholes *as* equipmental-wholes *in* which its activity indeed is ‘absorbed’ and transparent. Any activity in which Dasein is pragmatically/purposefully involved makes sense as the activity that it is, thanks to the discursive space opened up by our communicative practices.

It seems that for the type of entity that Dasein is, ‘knowledge-how’ and ‘showing-how’ *essentially* form an inextricable weave: While the ability to show-how requires that one has prior knowledge-how, the type of knowledge-how which we possess seems to depend on being-shown-how, entering and exiting equipmental wholes *already* taken-apart by discursive communities, and the ability to heed the ‘how’ of our own competence—it seems to me, that it is sensible to talk about implicit understanding only if it harbors at the same time the *possibility* of being *made* explicit. This would imply that in the case of “animals and infants”, we cannot really speak of Dasein-like *coping*, for they cannot, as long as they remain animals and infants, lay-out, take-apart, ‘Articulate’, *make* explicit the skills that they possess; and neither do they have for-the-sakes-of-which, nor can their ‘tools’ be either transparent, or non-transparent.⁷

The above considerations as to the interweaving of implicit and explicit understanding in the case of Dasein is what Heidegger wants to stress in the crucial first paragraph of S&Z §32:

a) “*The projecting of the understanding has its own possibility—that of developing itself. This development of the understanding we call ‘interpretation’*”

⁷ We shall revisit this point below, after the exposition of Sellarsian anti-Platonism/anti-Cartesianism. The ‘edifice building’ model of making our conceptual/discursive capacities intelligible will then emerge not merely as lacking textual support from the work of the contrasted thinkers, but further, even difficult to make sense of.

(S&Z 148) Now, for Understanding to ‘have its own possibility [of development]’ could mean that just as Dasein ‘understands itself’, ‘takes a stand on itself’, ‘has an understanding of Being’ by virtue of projecting itself onto existential possibilities, Understanding too ‘understands itself’ *as understanding* only by virtue of this possibility of development.

b) “*In it the understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it*” (*ibid.*) Dasein can appropriate understandingly its own understanding, thanks to its two-layers of competence—by its discursive-competence laying-out and thus appropriating its practical-purposive competence. Interpretation is not a ‘growth’, or ‘transformation’.

c) “*In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself.*” (*ibid.*) It is worth noting, that Heidegger says not that ‘after’ interpretation, understanding ‘remains the same’, but that understanding *becomes itself* thanks to the possibility of being made-explicit. Yet the caveat needs to be immediately added in the next sentence.

d) “*Such interpretation is grounded existentially in understanding; the latter does not arise from the former*” (*ibid.*)—The caveat, namely that interpretation, however irreducible, is still ‘grounded’; for Dasein, it is a *basic upper-level* competence⁸.

⁸ Heidegger’s account for how the hermeneutic as-structure is grounded in the fore-structure of Understanding demonstrates as well, how Understanding in a sense ‘folds over itself’ in order to competently appropriate its own competence: Dasein is always already practically/purposively competent in transparent wholes of significance; it has these wholes in its fore-having (S&Z 150). The possibility to lay-out, to take-apart these wholes “takes a first cut” (*ibid.*) into the fore-having from a certain sharable point of view: the fore-sight (*ibid.*)—Understanding thus begins to fold over itself, as it were, discursively. The wholes which are thus taken-apart can be “forced [by the discursive community] into ... already decided” (*ibid.*) ways of grasping them, namely into fore-conceptions (*ibid.*) This scheme constitutes no ‘progression’, nor does it construct a layer-cake model of an ‘edifice’ with ‘fore-conceptual upper storeys’ and ‘practical foundations’—it is a vicious circle (S&Z 152): Dasein has its fore-having ‘after’ having already found itself in fore-conceptions; in turn, the fore-conceptions presuppose having been in a fore-having. Basic Meaning, against which anything can at all make sense, is the “‘upon which’ of a projection in terms of which something becomes

The background of intelligibility, basic Meaning, against which Dasein exists encompasses the intertwined ‘normativities’ of Dasein’s irreducible layers of competence—thanks to the existential analytic, Heidegger is able now to offer a full-fledged alternative to theories of ‘meanings’ as abstract, immutable essences: “Meaning is an existentiale of Dasein, not a property attaching to entities, lying ‘behind’ them, or floating somewhere as an ‘intermediate domain’. ... [*O*nly Dasein can be meaningful or meaningless.” (*ibid.*, [original emphasis])—For Meaning to be an ‘existentiale’ of Dasein is to say that that by means which something is intelligible is an aspect of Dasein’s concernfully involved existence in-the-world, and not a postulated ideality. Hence the meaning-pragmatism of Heidegger gets into motion: For Heidegger *Meaning is Dasein-ing, ie. practical/purposive/discursive competence.*

intelligible as something, it gets its structure from [the vicious circle of] fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception.” (*ibid.*, 151)

CHAPTER VII

THE “DERIVATIVENESS” OF THE CONCEPTUAL

The significance of the existentially-derivative nature of language, or of Assertion comes to the fore more clearly at this juncture. Now, Assertion is defined as “a pointing-out which gives something a definite character and which communicates” (S&Z 156) Based on our earlier results, we may say that that which is *pointed-out* is the Available entity taken-apart thanks to our discursive competence; *the giving of a definite character* should be understood, I think, in the sense that every discursive community—every ‘One’ (or ‘Anyone’, or ‘They’)—distills its showings-how into more or less standardized characterizations of which one type could be the concepts of its language.

It is tempting to infer all too quickly at this point that *all* Assertion, and *all* language restricts its showings-how into abstract terms detached from the concernful-dealings in which Dasein finds itself, and is thus ontologically-oblivious. Yet Assertion for Heidegger is not a monolithic concept: “Between the kind of interpretation which is still wholly wrapped up in concernful understanding and the extreme opposite case of a theoretical assertion about something present-at-hand, there are many intermediate gradations” (S&Z 158)—let us provide a simple illustration for these opposite ends: (a) “*Look out! A ferocious lion!*” The about-which of this statement is not at all a merely Occurent entity. While the uttering of this sentence presupposes a ‘background familiarity’ with lions, the harm they are likely to cause, as well as the practice of alerting, it does not so much supervene on this background as make it explicit. (b) “*The lion partakes of the property of ferociousness.*” This sentence on the other hand, features generalization and

universalization: It is ‘about’ the relation between a type, an isolated subject (‘the lion’) and a universal, an isolated predicate (‘ferociousness’). The fore-having which makes possible this theoretical assertion has little to do with the practical/purposive ‘background familiarity’ of the previous example; it is rather a vocabulary employing which we might classify occurrent entities and the categories under which they are intelligible.

Heidegger’s emphasis on the existential derivativeness of Assertion serves, I think, to bring out that a fundamental source for the ontological-obliviousness with which the tradition has been beset since the time of Plato is to take *theoretical assertion* to be basic, and hence according *explanatory primacy* to the abstract, the universal, the immutable, and the detached over the concernfully-involved.

Heidegger’s case “against” conceptual content and “linguistic meaning” as fundamental elements in our experience amounts, I think, to a critique of the Cartesian-Platonist construal of conceptual content and “linguistic meaning”.

Understood pragmatically, that is, as an aspect of our practical/purposive/discursive competence in-the-world, the “conceptual” rather seems to be *there* for Heidegger, from the beginning; it is difficult to discern, in S&Z, an account of being-in-the-world that is utterly independent from explicit understanding and language—while his successors might have followed different paths, existential phenomenology the way it is practiced by Heidegger does not seem to articulate a purely sub-lingual, or at least purely-sub-explicit-understanding layer of being-in-the-world.

CHAPTER VIII

SELLARS'S PRAGMATISM OF MEANING, AND CONCEPTUAL CONTENT

Now let us proceed: With the above interpretation in mind, can we accuse Sellars of having succumbed to a tyranny of language, or to have fallen prey to a Myth of the Mental? Dreyfus employs another metaphor to answer in the affirmative: "Like a vulture, the Myth of the Mental feeds off the carcass of the Myth of the Given" (Dreyfus 2005, p.7) Quite the contrary, I shall suggest, Sellars's work against the 'Myth of the Given' pulls down myths of the mental down with it.

Far from being an isolated exercise in epistemology, Sellars's case against 'the given' is part of a wider effort to call into question the metaphysical underpinnings of traditional notions of intentionality, mind and knowledge. The philosophy of mind which follows the argument against givenism in EPM aims not to institute a new 'conceptualist mentalism' but to subvert Platonisms and Cartesianisms inherent in our vocabulary of the mental, so as to make space for a psychologically-nominalist and naturalist conception of ourselves as beings capable of having mental states, using language, and reasoning.

Now 'the given' is not a monolithic concept; and Sellars does not limit himself to overthrowing the perceptual given. In terms introduced by deVries and Triplett in their (2000), 'the given' may be defined as that "element in experience" which, solely by virtue of its occurrence—ie. *directly*—is both "epistemically efficacious", that is, able to play a justificatory role, and "epistemically independent" of any other such element in our acquisition of knowledge (cf. *ibid.*, p.104). This epistemically *foundational* 'given' may be something "non-propositional" (eg. sense-data, universals, etc.), or "propositional" (eg. reports about seemings, 'first

principles' etc.) (*ibid.*, p.xxxi); however, most urgent for our purposes is not to lay out Sellars's arguments as to why none of these alternatives satisfies the requirements of efficaciousness and independence, but to understand (a) how these givenisms both *presuppose and serve to sustain* a certain metaphysics of the mental; and (b) Sellars's suggestion as to how this metaphysics and epistemology may be replaced.

The 'metaphysics of the mental' which givenisms *presuppose* is, broadly conceived, Cartesian—hence the appeal to direct, foundational experience. These givenisms *help to sustain* Cartesianism by providing the *proxies* by virtue of which an 'ego'/'knowing subject'/'consciousness' can at all have access to the world, can at all render it intelligible to itself, and can at all communicate with other such 'ego's. Most crucial for the discussion at hand, is the role played by *abstracta* in the givenist-Cartesian conception of the mental: Bluntly put, according to this conception, the awareness, for example, of anything to have a certain color involves reference to a basic category, 'color', that is (a) either abstracted from repeated direct perceivings of the 'given', thanks to our mental ability to pick out resemblances and classify them (cf. EPM Pt.VI); or (b) a mind-independent abstract entity which itself acts as a sort of given. The abstract entities, immanent beings, etc. to which Cartesianism needs to have recourse include *meanings* that act in the capacity of the immanent-beings of linguistic expressions (cf. MOE, Lecture 1)

Now the epistemological dismantling of this picture—the case against the Myth of the Given—goes hand in hand with a *naturalist* refutation of its Dualism. Since an implication of Sellars's naturalism is his nominalism, abstract entities and universals are taken to be linguistic kinds, and not independent agents in cognitive phenomena. The interconnected philosophy of mind is thus *psychological-*

nominalist, “according to which all awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities—indeed all awareness even of particulars—is a linguistic affair.” (EPM 160)

CHAPTER IX

LANGUAGE, THOUGHT, INTENTIONALITY

The concepts—Cartesian Minds, ‘the given’, abstract entities—in terms of which the tradition sought to understand ourselves as beings capable of intentionality having now been divested of all explanatory power, Sellars has to reformulate our concepts of the mental in naturalistic/psychologically-nominalist terms. His analysis of the concept of Meaning plays a crucial part in this reformulation. Greatly simplified in view of space constraints, Sellars opposes the following two interpretations of which not only is ‘the tradition’ guilty, but, in the case of the second, to which even psychological-nominalism is susceptible (cf. EPM § 31): (1) The view that our concepts of meaning, either explicitly or implicitly, involve reference to intentional states; namely the Chisholmian thesis that the pre-linguistic intentionality of thoughts needs to be featured as a “primitive term” in our analysis of meaning (cf. ITM, esp. Chisholm’s letter, August 12, 1956) and (2) The view that statements of the sort “...’ means p” are *relational*—which ‘relation’, very roughly, may be of two kinds: (i) In thrall to Cartesianism and Platonism, it may designate the relation-mediated-by-a-mind between linguistic expressions, and abstracta such as context-free, immutable ‘content’s. A linguistic utterance on this picture is meaningful only insofar as the ‘mind’, of which the thoughts the utterance is an expression, directly ‘gets at’ abstract meanings. (ii) Even denying explanatory efficacy to abstract entities and Cartesian minds, the meaning, for instance, of a word may be taken to consist in the ‘association’ between this word and an object—eg. the statement “‘Rot’ (in German) means red” can be considered a “definitional shorthand for a longer statement about the associative connections of ‘rot’ [with red things.]”

(EPM 163) Difficulties quickly arise, however, when we try to interpret the statement “‘Und’ (in German) means and” on this model: Are we to speak of associative connections between ‘Und’ and and-things? ‘Und’ and the abstractum ‘Conjunction’? Are we to take ‘Und’ as a “universal which can ... have many instances [in, eg. ‘and’, ‘et’, etc.]” (MFC 430)?

Sellars’s suggestion against these alternatives, is that “roughly to say what an expression means is to classify it functionally by means of an illustrating sortal. ... [M]eaning is not a relation for the very simple reason that ‘means’ is a specialized form of the copula.” (MFC 431) Thus, “‘Und’ (in German) means and” is to be analyzed into: “ ‘Und’s (in German) *are* ‘and’s ”, in which the ‘dot-quotes’ are to say, “[The use of ‘Und’] plays the same role in a certain linguistic economy, ... as does [the use of the word] ‘and’ [in another.]” (cf. EPM 163)

Now it *seems* that Sellars has thereby defined language as a functional-whole; a ‘space’ as it were, on which the coordinates of an expression designate its meaning—yet we still have important considerations to account for: (a) What is it for expressions to ‘play a role in a linguistic economy’; what roles can expressions play? (b) What is it to be able converse ‘meaningfully’; what is it for a full-fledged member of a linguistic community to ‘know the meanings’ of his or her utterances if not via mental directedness? (c) How do we arrive at our *concepts* of meaning, if not, as insisted by Chisholm, via concepts of mental acts?

The quick answer to (a) is that the ‘linguistic economy’ in which expressions play their roles may be understood in three main aspects: (i) Our *Language-Entry Transitions*, ie. our ability to elicit, in the case of sensory stimulus, a ‘correct’ response from within the functional whole of language; (ii) the *Intra-Linguistic Moves* we perform, or, very bluntly the ability to infer one conceptual episode from

another; and (iii) *Language-Exit Transitions*, ie. the ability to respond to conceptual episodes with appropriate behavior.

As far as question (b) is concerned, the key to understanding how we are able to use language *meaningfully* while making these moves and transitions is that we display a *two-layered competence* within the functional whole of a shared language: As the fledgling members of a linguistic community, we are at first conditioned to obey ‘ought-to-do’s (cf. LTC p.508ff.) in this normative space; our ‘finding our way about’ in the functional whole of language amounts to a *pattern-governed behavior*—at this stage, we cannot be said to be rule-following, or, strictly speaking, *using* concepts⁹. From this pattern-governed behavior of being-able-to-find-one’s-way-about-in-a-functional-whole develops however, the ability “to language about languagings, to criticize languagings, including [one’s] own” (MFC 425)—we, unlike sublinguals and creatures or machines that are able to parrot language, can reflect competently on our own competence at a meta-linguistic level; we can become our own “trainers”, at which level we can be said to *heed* ‘ought-to-be’s (or rules of criticism), *follow* rules, *use* concepts, *use* logic. Sellars emphasizes however that, Rule-Following Behavior and Pattern-Governed Behavior should not be understood in a “layer-cake model” of higher-storey competence ‘growing out of’ lower-storey abilities, but in a tapestry (MFC 425). Language-Entry Transitions, for example, never become Rule-Following Behavior (cf. SRLG § 34ff., MFC 424); and our valid inferences are at times ‘Humean’ (jumping from premise to conclusion) though they *can* become ‘Aristotelian’ (*conducting* the inference, using logic, articulating the steps of an argument) (ME 340ff.)

⁹ Sellars’s 1981 paper ME implies that there is no qualitative difference between this sort of behavior, and the capabilities of sublinguals in ‘referring to’ and ‘characterizing’ objects in the functional whole of their primitive representational systems. See esp. §§ 72-100.

To answer question (c), precisely this meta-linguistic ability to classify the functional roles played by our expressions explains, for Sellars, how we arrive at our concepts of meaning—his claim however is not merely that our vocabulary of the mental does not play a role in the ‘analysis’ of meaning. Through the Myth of Jones, he argues further, that our *concepts* of the very aboutness of “think[ing], observ[ing], ... [having] feelings and sensations” (EPM 179) are at all *intelligible*, only over against the semantic categories of language. Sellars dubs his suggestion towards the replacement of the bankrupt Cartesian-Platonist metaphysics of the mental an “anthropological science-fiction” (EPM 178); yet clearly the Myth of Jones is part of a transcendental inquiry as to *what our language must be like*, so that we may intelligibly speak of having thought episodes and claiming some sort of ‘privileged access’ to our own thoughts and feelings, without falling back on Cartesianism and Platonism.

Most emphatically, Jones’s fellow Ryleans possess the aforementioned meta-linguistic abilities, and hence do have concepts of meaning, lacking though they may any vocabulary as to mental events. Trying to understand how “his fellow men behave intelligently not only when their conduct is threaded on a string of overt verbal episodes ... but also when no detectable verbal output is present”, Jones the Rylean “develops a theory, according to which overt utterances are but the culmination of a process which begins with certain inner episodes” (EPM 186). These postulated inner episodes, or thoughts, are *modeled after* the semantic properties of ‘overt speech’—namely, our two-layered competence within functional wholes—and are not *equated* outright with verbal episodes.

Sellars’s suggestion is not that human intentionality is equivalent to operating upon a system of “context-free principles or rules” (Dreyfus 2005, p.15)—the very

‘conceptual system’ in question is an aspect of our competence as the members of a community. Neither is the functionalist construal of intentionality, made via the Myth of Jones, an attempt to reduce all our experience to a machine-like functionality. The most central thesis of Sellars’s philosophy of mind seems rather to be that our mental *vocabulary*, and our *concepts* of the intentional ‘grow out of’ our *conception* of ourselves as members of linguistic communities.

The Sellarsian ‘project’, it seems to me, does not consist in a sort of reverse-phenomenology of our experience, hopelessly describing perceptual skills in terms of the inferential. Rather, it seeks to render ourselves intelligible to ourselves, in anti-Cartesian/anti-Platonistic and critical-scientific-realist terms, as beings that are who they are only insofar as they belong in a “network of rights and duties ... [and] principles and standards” (PSIM 39-40). With the full complexity of our experience in view and not just upper-storey capabilities, Sellars appears to problematize our conception of ourselves as knowers, as beings capable of intentionality, or as social beings able to reason, and engages himself in the reflective task of analyzing and refining and re-formulating these conceptions. Indeed, his view of philosophy is to “understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term” (PSIM 37); the adumbrated reformulations of our mentalistic and semantic vocabulary are a step, for Sellars, in the effort to come up with a big, coherent, synoptic vision of ourselves in the world. I think that Dreyfus’s suggestion as to the reconciliation of analytic and continental philosophy remains an excellent idea—not, however, insofar as we subsume Sellarsian conceptualism under the allegedly foundational project of Heideggerian existential phenomenology. A more fruitful undertaking would be to regard these two approaches to be problematizing different aspects of ourselves in the world, aiming

to render ourselves intelligible to ourselves from within the infinite complexity of our existence. The traditional ways in which this self-reflective task has been undertaken need to be overcome for both Heidegger and Sellars; I think that far from instigating contradictory projects, they ask different questions, and pursue different methods in order to open up promising new paths in our self-reflective quest to understand who we are. Why not try to see their insights synoptically, as illuminating in different ways the 'bigger picture' of ourselves in the world?

CHAPTER X

KNOWLEDGE-HOW AND OUR INTERTWINED LEVELS OF NORMATIVITY

Now, in our account so far, we have been emphasizing (a) the *inextricable intertwinement* of ‘knowledge-how’ practices with ‘showing-how’ practices, and (b) our ‘metalinguistic’ competence *always already* at play in our conceptual openness to the world. In other words, our focus has been that our inalienable ability to ‘reflect’ on our goings about in the world—our ability to ask the question of Being / our ability to language about languagings—is not, in a McDowellian turn of phrase, even notionally separable from those goings-about themselves. Exactly this point is what ‘layer-cake’ models towards explaining our distinctly human rational capacities overlook.

Let us employ a thought experiment¹⁰ to illustrate this point. Let us pick a simple example—an example, however, that is apt in its very simplicity: Suppose we observe three “agents”: An adult human, a hypothetical jungle-man who is sublingual, and a chimpanzee all pour themselves a glass of water out of a jug, take it to their lips and take a sip. They surely do exhibit some ‘knowledge-how’ in doing so; yet our task is to understand whether it’s the *same* knowledge-how that is operative in all three instances.

Perhaps, we may be tempted to jump to the conclusion that in the adult human, some *further* “rational function” is operative, that some *further* “reflexive event” takes place, so that he reaches the jug *as* a jug, and the glass *as* a glass, and understands his action *as* one of “drinking water”; while the jungle-man and the chimp lack that further element beyond their basic bodily skills. Another temptation

¹⁰ The following is a modified version of the thought experiment suggested by Murat Baç.

may be to regard all three to be instances of the “same kind of knowledge-how”, since they accomplish the same task via similar behavior. We might yet be inclined to say that the two humans exhibit the same kind of knowledge-how, whereas the chimp, owing to its different physiognomy, exhibits a different kind.

Before formulating answers, however, we ought to bring into question the very question whether these three instances of knowing-how could be the “same” or not. What sort of question is it? What sort of answer does it admit? What would a *satisfactory* answer to this question be like? Why is this a *philosophical* question, or why does it turn up in a philosophical discussion—should it not fall under the domain of psychologists and neurologists and zoologists et al.?

Now the question that should be asked beforehand may be what it *means* at all to render an instance of knowledge-how *intelligible*. One way to do so—perhaps one that is most commonsensical for our 21st-century sensibilities—might be to conduct a “CAT” or an “MRI” scan of the body and the brain to determine exactly which neural operations take place when the “agent” performs a particular action. The scan results, on this model, would determine which instances of pouring out a glass of water may be deemed as exhibiting the same sort of knowledge-how. Would that, however, be a completely *satisfactory* answer? Can the descriptive language of MRI scans, or neurochemical reactions, or any other sort of laying out of the patterns exhibited in our commerce with our environment explain our responsible-responsive agency in the world?

I suggest instead that to render any instance of “filling a glass from which to sip some water” intelligible is to place that action in the holistic framework of our forms of life. Dasein, as well as self-consciousness, does not reveal itself as an extra feature in MRI scans, but in the social-historical/self-interpreting nexus into which it

is born. Wholes of significance in which we are at home cannot be constructed piecemeal, as it were, as the sum-total of evolutionarily reinforced neuro-chemical animal-directednesses to the world. Any instance of knowledge-how is made intelligible in terms of the practical/purposive/discursive/self-reflexive competence by means of which we are *in* the world at all. It is in *this* sense that the knowledge-how exhibited by the adult human in our thought experiment is categorically different from the bodily skills of the jungle-man and the chimp. To *interpret* the adult human's action is to place it in a world-picture and in a self-understanding. Insofar as the jungle-man and the chimp lack both "ontology" and self-interpretation, their knowing-how-to-do-anything cannot be interpreted on the same grounds as we humans. As we have already emphasized, nor can our being "ontological" be accounted for piecemeal, as an "add-on", so to speak, to basic animal skills. The neurological question whether the same mechanisms are involved in the adult human and the jungle-man is not our immediate philosophical question. The differences between the two specimens of Homo Sapiens and the Pan Troglodytes is yet another field of inquiry, which falls under the biologist's domain.

CHAPTER XI

A NEW PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS THE DISCUSSION AT HAND

What, then, *is* the philosophical import of the debate whether “mindedness”/language/rationality is an irreducible aspect of our commerce with the world, or and add-on, as it were, that grows over otherwise perfectly self-sufficient bodily coping skills? What is *really* at issue in our discussion so far? Are we in fact inquiring into the origins of language?—are we trying to come up with a phenomenological description of how highly situation-specific perceptual skills somehow get “transformingly” limited, neatly segregated, into talk about conceptually articulable ‘facts’?—is it going to be this phenomenological account, that will ‘solve the riddle’ of securing a place for reasons and normativity in nature?—are we trying to understand just how language functions in our cognitive makeup, trying to determine whether there exists a conceptual filter, so to speak, to our perceptual capacities for us to be aware at all of anything as anything, as opposed to just responding to it skillfully in use?—what are we to do with the moral of the tale of the centipede who lost his exquisite dancing skills as soon as he tried to reflect “rationally” on the movement of his feet; is that not proof that “mindedness” amounts to detachedness?—is not Sellars arguing for a patent absurdity, as he speaks of all awareness being a linguistic affair; is this not to say that animals are not really “aware” of the scents they trail, the food they gather, or pets, their loving human masters?

Hubert Dreyfus is concerned lest a full appreciation of the immense richness of our perceptual capabilities be forfeited in favor of intellectualist models with a pretense to having subverted foundationalist theories of perception, only to replace

those theories with equally obtuse notions of perception as staring-at-and-taking-note-of-facts-in-order-to-be-able-to-logically-manipulate-them. Yet, his worries are misplaced, I think, with respect to claims advanced by Sellars and McDowell as to the conceptual-permeatedness of our ‘openness to the world’. In the body of the essay proper, I have tried to counter the claims both that the Sellarsian position amounts to a ‘myth of the mental’, and that Heidegger develops a phenomenology of the ‘purely’ subconceptual—what is at issue, I think, in an account of the ‘two-layered normativities’ advanced by Heidegger and Sellars, is *not* the role of language in perception, but our distinctively human openness to the world as ‘responsibility to *truth*’.

It is trivial, of course, to note that language is unique to us; what is not so trivial is to understand what exactly this entails: On the Dreyfusian model, what sets us unique is that we have the freedom to ‘step back’ and reflect, presumably on ‘rational terms’ on our involvement in the world. I venture to say however that that very involvement is ‘critical’ in a non-trivial sense, and that reflection and absorption are inextricably intertwined, inasmuch as the objects with which we are involved make *normative constraints* on us—beyond our skills to *respond* to things in the world, we bear the *responsibility* to ‘get those things right’. Animals and infants are not only sub-lingual; they are sub-ontological in that lacking reflective-absorption, they cannot put a world-picture into play. In what follows, I shall be drawing on two papers by John Haugeland, (1998) and (2000) to elucidate this point.

Let us first consider the Sellarsian notion of pattern-governed behavior. There are evolutionarily reinforced patterns of correct functioning in all living creatures; and insofar as we may talk about ‘normal’ and ‘ab-normal’ functions, a basic sort of ‘naturalistic-normativity’ is in play at this level. Above, we have merely hinted at the

crucial role of this concept in Sellars's system; here we shall note only that at the level of biologically-evolved normativity, Haugeland discerns that propriety of function tells nothing about the answerability of those functions 'to the world'. In Haugeland's own terms, "there can be no biological basis for understanding a system as functioning properly, but nevertheless misinforming¹¹—functionally right, but factually wrong" (Haugeland 1998, p.310) In other words, a biological system cannot function-right, but get-something-wrong, in that the very criteria for what-is-to-be-got is internal to the normal function itself. Things themselves, as it were, do not 'resist' to such functions, but the functions themselves may fall short of them.

Does socially-instituted normativity fare any better? At the bedrock-level, so to speak, which is itself a sort of pattern-governed normative space, mere consensus and being able to do 'just well' within a coherent set of beliefs institutes once again a one-dimensional normativity. The criteria for what counts as such socially-instituted phenomena are internal to the social practices themselves. In his efforts to eradicate the concept of 'Truth with a capital T', Rorty, for instance, denies that our beliefs and practices are answerable to an 'outside world', and that scientific practice should be defined not as the endeavor to get at the truth of 'things themselves', but as essentially a matter of consensus among scientists as to what counts as the better metaphorical redescription for the purposes of their own community. Yet, postulating consensus to be the sole arbiter of truth cannot give a working account of what counts as legitimate dissent among scientists, or even how claims may be tested and former results revised or abandoned. Just how do 'things themselves', independent of our practices, restrain our world-picture—and force us to revise it, when necessary? Moreover, how can we attempt at all to answer this question without recourse to

¹¹ 'Informing' may sound out of place with respect to purely biological operations—what sort of information transaction may take place, eg. inside an amoeba? Haugeland's example is that of RNA molecules 'informing' the cell structures of which protein to produce. (309)

postulating divine sources of absolute ‘Truth’? The metaphor of steering a course between Scylla and Charybdis does not really suffice to describe what is at issue here; we are rather trying to navigate through an asteroid field: The myth of the Given, reductivist naturalism, mere coherentism, linguistic idealism, etc. in different guises, all occlude our understanding of what it means at all for us not merely to be able to find our way about in our environment(s) but to be able to have a commitment to *get things right, to share a common picture of the world, and to be able at all to reflect on this very ability.*

I think that the two-layered normativities for which I tried to argue in the body of the paper hold the key to a fruitful new suggestion. Let us first invoke Wittgenstein’s dictum that “Essence is expressed in grammar” (PI § 371)—“Grammar tells what kind of object anything is.” (PI § 373). Rather than try to unpack these statements, let us merely allow them to remind us that the constitutive rules for our language-games of which the tapestry make up our forms of life, ‘determine’ the phenomena that may show up as part of the game. (To give the simplest example, what it is to be a Knight depends on the rules of chess.)

Now, through dense argumentation which I shall not reproduce here, Haugeland dissects the concept of ‘constitutive rule’¹² into four constituents, which dissection I shall try to present in a roundabout (and not entirely orthodox) way: *Constitutive Regulations* (Haugeland 1998, p. 318) govern the actions of the players within the game, while *Constitutive Standards* (*ibid.*, p.320) determine what it is to be game phenomena (eg. the paraphernalia to be employed—‘what it is to be a football’, its proper weight, shape, etc. are determined by the ‘grammar of football’). Complying with these regulations, and in accordance with the standards, we exercise

¹² Haugeland’s point of departure is Searle and Rawls (Haugeland 1998 pp.318-320)

our *Mundane Skills* with which to engage in play—mundane skills, I think, may be understood in terms of our aforementioned practical-purposive-communicative skills.

We ought now to ask: By virtue of what, is any ‘regulation’ or ‘standard’ *Constitutive*? Now it seems that the objects of our experience are ‘constituted’, since for them to partake of ‘the game’, they have to comply with the grammar of our forms of life; yet ‘Constitution’ is neither ex-nihilo creation, nor a taking-as¹³—but rather a ‘letting be’¹⁴ in the Heideggerian sense. In proper jargon (again) it is the practice of disclosure. We bring the ‘ontological frameworks by virtue of which anything can at all can show up as the entity that it is’ (recall the beginning of the present essay) *into play*: We have an *understanding of Being*, in that we project entities onto their possibilities, thereby open up, or disclose, the ‘there’ upon which anything can at all be encountered—Haugeland’s gloss on this idea is that disclosure is no arbitrary ‘institution’, but a genuine *achievement* in that we *find* ‘the game’ to be *playable*, in our very efforts actually to *play it*: The exercise of our multiple practical-purposive-communicative skills counter-balance one another as we discover entities within the opening disclosed; we are heedful of the possible discrepancies in that we possess, as it were, meta-mundane-skills—vigilant over the exercise of our coping-skills are our *Constitutive Skills*, by the exercise of which, to put it bluntly, we monitor how our ontological frameworks are doing. We have a sort

¹³ Taking-as presupposes a prior understanding of objecthood, (only what is already an object can be taken-as another object)—if the criterion for objecthood is constitutedness, this leads to a vicious circle.

¹⁴ “Ontically, ‘letting something be involved’ signifies that within our factual concern we let something ready-to-hand be so-and-so as it is already and in order that it be such. The way we take this ontical sense of ‘letting be’ is, in principle, ontological. And therewith we Interpret the meaning of previously freeing what is proximally ready-to-hand within-the-world. Previously letting something ‘be’ does not mean that we must first bring it into its Being and produce it; it means rather that something which is already an ‘entity’ must be discovered in its readiness-to-hand, and that we must thus let the entity which has this Being be encountered. This ‘a priori’ letting-something-be-involved is ‘the’ condition for the possibility of encountering anything ready-to-hand, so that Dasein, in its ontical dealings with the entity thus encountered, can thereby let it be involved in the ontical sense.” (S&Z 85-86 [original emphasis])

of meta-competence that ranges over how the game is going; and I think this is the crux of the matter as far as the arguments of my original paper are concerned.

A constituted-object, or a phenomenon that shows up in the disclosing cleared, is, as it were, at the crossroads of mundane skills—as opposed to biological-normativity, or merely-instituted normativity, it is possible that our mundane skills ‘function right’, yet by virtue of their combinations, get their object wrong, or suggest a revision. Biological-error, as I’ve tried to put it, issues when practices fall short of the stuff of the world. *Our* errors involve the resistance of the ‘things themselves’. By virtue of our aforementioned ability to understandingly appropriate our understanding, or ‘language about languagings’, we may reflect on our absorbed goings-about in the world—hence, to repeat Wittgenstein’s powerful intuition, “...the whole, consisting of language and the action into which it is woven [comes about], a “language-game” (PI § 7) ‘Objects themselves’ are thus given a chance to resist our various practices, and prompt us to revise, enhance, or, when necessary, abandon our ways of dealing with them. What prompts us to take up such revision, is that for Dasein, “in its very being, that being is an issue for it¹⁵. ... It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its being, this being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein.” (S&Z 12-13)—and this, I think, supports the fourth constituent Haugeland discerns in ‘constitutive rules’:

Constitutive Commitment. We are beings with ontologies, thanks to our ability to competently appropriate our competence; and bluntly put, it *matters* to us how things

¹⁵ Let us recall as well from the body of the paper proper, that Dasein exercises an ability-to-be, or understands itself, while it discloses entities—in other words, while projecting entities onto their possibilities, it projects itself onto its own possibilities (See Haugeland 2000 for a rich discussion of this.) The disclosing of Dasein as a concernfully-involved ‘who’ in-the-world is inextricably intertwined to the disclosing of entities—now, let us just make brief mention of Heidegger’s insistence that Dasein is being towards death; or that anxiety is the fundamental mood for Dasein. The ‘who’, who puts Constitutive Regulations, and Constitutive Standards, and Constitutive Skills into play does so, while facing the ever present possibility of a breakdown, a crisis. Exercising the ability to understand being is a constant effort, in the face of imminent Death.

appear to us the way they do. In ‘breakdown situations’ briefly mentioned in the the essay proper, we are *able* to ask why and how the inconvenience came about. For Dasein, I dare say that ‘breakdown’ and ‘absorbed coping’ too are intertwined, and should not be conceived of as ideal categories: We do not merely develop the optimal grasp of our tools, and exercise our skills ever more precisely at the ‘purely subconceptual’ level—we are constantly heedful of the way our tools interact with the world, and aware of their inalienable shortcomings, we improve our tools, alongside our skills; in short, we are *inventors*. For a hammer to ‘breakdown’, its head need not fly off, or its handle split in half; it always already has its shortcomings-in-use; it is used breakingly-down. And, in contradistinction to the evolutionarily reinforced yet ‘static’ nest-building skills of birds, for instance, our architectural skills are in evolution themselves.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

The above is my first intimation into the intertwinement of seemingly disparate philosophical problems—seemingly antagonistic schools of thought, even. I would like to re-emphasize, however, that what is at issue is not the hidden affinities between such disparate approaches, but rather, how they illuminate, each in their own way, the bigger picture of ourselves-in-the-world—how they ‘hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term’. Hence, I shall conclude by hinting at one meta-philosophical implication of my theses so far. In the essay I have tried to advance the claim that what ‘sets us apart’ is our ability to competently reflect on our competent goings-about-in-the-world—philosophy, I venture to say, consists largely in the sustained effort to understandingly appropriate our understanding-appropriation-of-our-understanding. In the words of Sellars:

The ideal aim of philosophizing is to become *reflectively* at home in the full complexity of the multi-dimensional conceptual system in terms of which we suffer, think, and act. I say ‘reflectively’, because there is a sense in which, by the sheer fact of leading an unexamined, but conventionally satisfying life, we are at home in this complexity. It is not until we have eaten the apple with which the serpent philosopher tempts us, that we begin to stumble on the familiar and to feel that haunting sense of alienation which is treasured by each new generation as its unique possession. This alienation, this gap between oneself and one’s world, can only be resolved by eating the apple to the core; for after the first bite there is no return to innocence. There are many anodynes, but only one cure. We may philosophize well or ill, but we must philosophize. (*The Structure of Knowledge*, p.3; quoted in O’Shea 2007, pp. 10-11 [original emphasis])

If, that is, Haugeland is right in arguing that our rationality consists in our *responsibility to truth*, then, philosophy is the responsible exercise of that responsibility in the utmost level—may Socrates the gadfly never cease reminding us of our responsibility to ‘know ourselves’.

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