

## HEIDEGGER ON THE WORLD

## I

It is not uncommon in phenomenological circles to hear the discovery of the life-world presented as the final blow to a variety of epistemological problems, most notably the so-called problem of the "external world." It is the contention of these philosophers that a return to the evidence of ordinary life and experience will reveal the inseparability of man and world, and the consequent absurdity of supposing that the knowing subject might exist even though the world did not. Man and world, it is claimed, constitute an indissoluble whole, so structured that neither of its elements can properly be understood in abstraction from the other. In it the subject/object dichotomy is overcome and with it the necessity of choosing between a "realist" and an "idealist" explication of the relation between human consciousness and the world of which it is conscious. Thus William Barrett, for example, contrasts the Heideggerian concept of being-in-the-world with Cartesian dualism :

... For Descartes imagine the mind as a sphere hermetically sealed to the world without... Ideas in the mind are attributes inhering in a mental substance. There is no intrinsic characteristic of these ideas that makes them essentially refer to a world beyond the mind. ...

With Heidegger the walls of the sphere have disappeared altogether. We are not creatures enclosed in consciousness as in a sphere and gazing out through windows of this sphere on a world outside; on the contrary, as Heidegger puts it, man is already out-of-doors in the open air of the world.<sup>1</sup>

The appeal to Heidegger is typical. As John Wild has said, *Being and Time* is "the most basic and most disciplined study of the life-world and its existential structure that has yet been written."<sup>2</sup> The substantiation of the claims made for the life-world should therefore be found, if anywhere, in the pages of Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Accordingly, I would like to turn to that work in order to examine the "official" demolition of Cartesian dualism and the attendant problem of knowing the external world.

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Heidegger's own way of putting the matter is to say that the whole problem arises from a misunderstanding of the being of man. Human beings were understood by the tradition as things or substances that are merely "present-at-hand" (*vorhanden*, i.e. "existent" in the minimal sense of the word). This assumption together with the suggestion that such substances somehow contain "ideas" representative of the world outside inevitably leads to the difficulty: how can this substance know that its ideas correctly represent reality? But, Heidegger argues, if we abandon traditional assumptions in favor of a new way of understanding the being of man, one according to which his being is being-in-the-world, this problem does not arise. For if the only being who could ask the question is essentially in-the-world, then it does not make sense to ask it. In a much-quoted passage, Heidegger takes Kant to task for having attempted to prove the existence of "things outside us." Whereas Kant had said it was a scandal that philosophers had not yet found such a proof, Heidegger says:

The "scandal of philosophy" is ... that *such proofs are expected and attempted again and again*. Such expectations, aims and demands arise from an ontologically inadequate way of starting with *something* of such a character that independently of it and "outside" of it a "world" is to be proved as present-at-hand. It is not that the proofs are inadequate, but that the kind of being of the being which does the proving and makes requests for it has *not been made definite enough*... If Human Being (*Dasein*) is understood correctly, it defies such proofs because, in its being, it already is what subsequent proofs deem necessary to demonstrate for it.<sup>3</sup>

Heidegger's claim, then, is that if we give the problem of being priority over the problem of knowledge, no distinctly epistemological problem can be raised regarding the existence of the world.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, I will try to show that there is a distinctly epistemological problematic which cannot be bypassed in this manner. I will not defend the dualistic metaphysics which Heidegger regards as nonsensical, but I will attempt to see it as an answer, however inadequate, to problems which Heidegger in particular and life-world philosophers in general have failed to take seriously enough. But in order to do any of these things, it is necessary briefly to review Heidegger's penetrating description of man's being-in-the-world.

## II

Initially, we must note with Heidegger what being-in-the-world is not. It is not spatial inclusion. Human Being (*Dasein*)<sup>5</sup> is not in the world as the cup is in the cupboard or the water in the drinking glass. Nor is it a cognitive relation. Human Being is not related to the world merely or even primarily as knowledge of an object. Indeed, it is the tendency to take knowing as the paradigm of our relationship with the world that historically constituted a false point of departure for epistemology. Just how true this is may be seen in Descartes' correspondence with Princess Elizabeth. In a vain attempt to come to grips with another problem arising from his dualistic metaphysics, viz. the mind/body problem, he writes :

... those who never do philosophize and make use only of their senses have no doubt that the soul moves the body and the body acts on the soul; indeed, they consider the two as a single thing... Metaphysical reflections, which exercise the pure intellect, are what make us familiar with the notion of soul; the study of mathematics, which chiefly exercises the imagination in considering figures and movements, accustoms us to form very distinct notions of body; finally, it is just by means of *ordinary life and conversation*, by abstaining from meditating and from studying things that exercise the imagination, that one learns to conceive the union of soul and body.<sup>6</sup>

Now it is precisely this "ordinary life and conversation" — Heidegger calls it "everydayness" — which is the subject of careful study and reflection in the first half of *Being and Time*. The initial analysis of everydayness reveals : (1) that knowledge is a founded mode of being-in-the-world which first arises as a modification of a more primordial mode; and (2) that this more primordial mode may (initially) be characterized as "practical concern" (*Besorgen*). We are not first of all metaphysicians or mathematicians disinterestedly observing the world and taking note of its objective characteristics. We are workers and lovers, friends and enemies, in short, men with a practical interest in what we encounter within the world. And correlatively, the things with which we are thus practically concerned belong to a practical world. To appreciate the full significance of this claim, we must understand what Heidegger means by "world." A world, for him, is more than an aggregate of things. But what more ? As a way of approaching this question, Heidegger proposes to consider equipment or gear. An analysis of the nature of equipment will show what it is that constitutes beings *as* beings within the world and provide the needed clue to the nature of the world.

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What, then, is equipment? The answer is twofold: (1) An item of equipment has a reference or assignment (*Verweisung*) to something else. The hammer is *for* hammering, a shoe is *for* wearing, a clock is *for* telling time. Such references are what make a piece of equipment the sort of equipment that it is. (2) Equipment always belongs to other equipment. A workshop, for example, is a totality of equipment in which each item is referred directly or indirectly to all of the others. No doubt thinking of his own environment (*Umwelt*) at the time of writing, Heidegger suggested "pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room," as an example of an equipmental totality. I encounter my pen in picking it up and beginning to write; but I also need paper, a desk to write on, a lamp to give me the necessary light. In picking up the pen, I am already implicitly aware of a totality of equipment to which it belongs and without which I could not use it. It is this "circumspective awareness" (*Umsicht*) of other beings within my immediate environment which enables me to *use* any one of them.

But this is not all. I am aware of the pen together with the equipmental totality to which it belongs only *in terms of* the "work" to be produced or the end to be accomplished. Heidegger calls this the "towards-which" (*Wozu*) of the entire complex. As such, it binds together the references which are constitutive of the totality. It is what everything in my study, for example, is *for*. But the "towards-which" of a particular reference-complex is itself *for* something else. To use Heidegger's own example: the hammer is *for* hammering, and the hammering is *for* something else, say, holding something in place, and this in turn will be *for* protection from the weather; here we are referred to *someone* who is to be protected from the weather.<sup>7</sup> Whatever the totality of references, if one follows them up, they eventually lead to a final "towards-which" — an ultimate "for-the-sake-of-which" (*Worumwillen*) that is not *for* anything else. This is always Human-Being — since this being alone is such that it is not *for* anything else, but only *for* the sake of itself. For Heidegger, this is equivalent to saying that man's being is essentially "in question" or is "an issue," which is again equivalent to saying that he *exists*, i.e. stands outside of himself into possibilities for the sake of which he is. If Human Being were finished, completed, closed in on itself, there would not be anything like a reference-complex or an equipmental totality. If there were not, at the terminus of all references, a being who is *for* the sake of itself, neither could anything

else be "for" anything.

Now we are in a position to see what it is that constitutes a being *as* a being within the *world*, as well as what Heidegger means by the expression "world." A being is within the world when it belongs to a totality of references which ultimately lead back to the purposes of Human Being. Heidegger calls this type of referential involvement *Zuhandenheit* — readiness-to-hand. Although he doubtless chose this term with the paradigm of equipment in mind, it is not solely a designation for tools. The cobbler requires an assortment of tools in his workshop, but he also needs leather, and this too, as the *material* out of which shoes are made, is ready-to-hand within the world.<sup>8</sup> Leather, of course, is the product of another activity, beginning with the killing and skinning of animals. Thus we come to "natural objects" which are also ready-to-hand within the world as materials out of which something else can be made but which do not themselves need to be produced.

Even those aspects of the environing nature (*Umweltnatur*) which are neither material nor equipment for working on material are in a sense ready-to-hand within the world.<sup>9</sup> They are what they are only in terms of human projects and concerns. There could be no "good weather" except for that being — Human Being — for whom it is good, no natural disasters except for that being to whom disasters can happen. To say that the natural environment is ready-to-hand is only to say that it is caught up in the human *world*: that all-encompassing network of references structured by human ends and aims. "World," then, is a totality of beings insofar as they are related to, referred back to, involved in Human Being. "The world reveals itself to Human Being as the actual totality of what exists 'for the sake of' Human Being."<sup>10</sup> "Worldhood," that which makes the world a *world*, is precisely this characteristic of being tied up in a referential totality which is ultimately for the sake of that being which is for the sake of itself.

It is in this connection that Heidegger brings in his difficult notion of "understanding." Understanding is (among other things) an act of "projection" (*Entwurf*) whereby human beings "throw" themselves into future possibilities. It is this "projection into possibilities," this determination of self in terms of possibilities, which causes there to be a world of beings determined by *correlative* possibilities. In understanding, not only ... is the world *qua* world disclosed as possible significance, but when that

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which is within the world is freed, this being is freed for *its own* possibilities. That which is ready-to-hand is discovered as such in its *serveability*, its *usability*, and its *detrimentality*. The totality of involvements is revealed as the categorical whole of a *possible* interconnection of the ready-to-hand.<sup>11</sup>

Thus when it is said that a hammer is *for* hammering, this means that it is a hammer only in terms of a *possibility*, a possibility which coincides with the human possibility of hammering something. I may not intend to hammer anything at present, but if and only if I understand myself in terms of a multiplicity of possibilities, of which hammering is one, does anything like a hammer find its place in my world. In this way, whatever is ready-to-hand, whatever can be encountered within the human world, is so only thanks to the act of projection which Heidegger calls "understanding." It is in this act of throwing itself into possibilities that Human Being "*throws* the world *over* beings."<sup>12</sup>

At this point, a difficulty arises. So much has been attributed to this act of world-projection that it is hard to distinguish it from an act of world-creation. How, it may well be asked, does the *projection* of possibilities differ from a totally arbitrary *invention* of possibilities? How does the world in which we *must* live differ from a purely imaginary one? If the understanding does not create the very conditions of human existence — and Heidegger must say that it does not for his is most emphatically a philosophy of human finitude — then there must be some principle of limitation. Something in human experience must be *given* and not merely produced by our world-projection. Otherwise it will be impossible to explain how I can have *in fact* before me pen, paper, lamp, desk, etc., and *cannot*, however much I would like, have the Grand Canyon or the Chicago Symphony or some other thing before me. If I want to realize these possibilities, there are certain things that I must do first: get up from my desk, walk out-of-doors, buy tickets, arrange for transportation, etc. I cannot accomplish my purpose simply by adjusting the way in which I project my world. If this were the only thing required, then there would be no *factual* as opposed to logical, impossibility; in the Camus play, Caligula could have had the moon.

It is not too difficult to see how Heidegger might respond to this challenge. The problem, he might say, results only from the one-sided character of our exposition. Does he not explicitly say that understanding always has its mood, and that mood is the way in which we *find ourselves*

thrown into the midst of a world of beings not of our own making? Is not this "finding of oneself" (*Befindlichkeit*) as limited by a certain facticity (*Faktizität*) or thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) precisely the factor required to limit the activity of the understanding?

*Befindlichkeit* has been translated in various ways: "state of mind," "finding-oneself," "situationality," etc. Literally, it means the manner in which human beings find themselves already thrown into a situation which limits the scope of their possibilities. Moreover, it is the way in which human beings find themselves already oriented toward a fairly definite future. "As essentially having a *Befindlichkeit*," Heidegger says, Human Being "has already got itself into definite possibilities." This means that Human Being is "being-possible which has been delivered over to itself — *thrown* possibility through and through."<sup>13</sup> In other words, there is no point in time when Human Being decides for the first time how it will dispose of its being, and correlatively, what sort of world it will project for itself. As soon as it *is*, it is *already* thrown into certain possibilities and cut off from others.

However, this last point does not by itself constitute an answer to the question: what makes projection non-arbitrary? For if we appeal to the "already" of projection, we are faced with the question: was the already accomplished projection of possibilities arbitrary or not, and if not, what was the limiting factor? If this further question is answered in the same way, to wit, that even then the projection was already performed, then we are launched into an infinite regress. It is a vicious regress because no one member of the series can serve *by itself* to limit the others; each requires another to perform this function. The act of understanding must in some instance be limited by something other than the fact that such an act has already been performed.

It may be objected that Heidegger's "already" is not meant to imply a temporal priority, but only to express the logical — better, perhaps, the "ontological" — priority of a "prehistoric" act of transcendence which is presupposed by any merely factual ("ontical") projection of possibilities.<sup>14</sup> Whatever such a claim might amount to, it does nothing to meet our criticism. An act of understanding, however transcendental, must be limited by something other than itself; and the "alreadiness" of projection, however construed, offers no clue to what that something may be.

There is, however, something more to the point in Heidegger's description

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of *Befindlichkeit*, viz. the claim that in moods I find myself to be thrown into a situation, a situation constituted by beings which are not the product of my projective understanding. This claim is briefly developed in "What is Metaphysics?" and in the Kant book :

Because of these moods in which, as we say, we "are" this or that (i.e. bored, happy, etc.) we find ourselves in the midst of being (*Seiendes*) in its totality, wholly pervaded by it.<sup>15</sup>

... Man is a being in the midst of other beings in such a way that the being which he is and the being that he is not are always already manifest to him...

In his comportment to the being which he himself is not, man finds it to be that which, for all his culture and technique, he can never master.<sup>16</sup>

On the basis of passages such as these, one might suppose that for Heidegger there are beings standing over and against Human Being which have more to them than what the human understanding projects into them, and which are therefore capable of limiting the activity of the understanding. If this were the case, they would have to have certain determinate characteristics quite independently of their involvement in the distinctively human world, characteristics which make them suitable candidates for projection onto some possibilities and not others. Moreover, Human Being would have to be in some way aware of them *as* having some such characteristics if they are to be "understood" in a way which is not wholly capricious.<sup>17</sup>

Two questions must therefore be asked. (1) Are moods as *Befindlichkeiten* by themselves adequate to the task of revealing to Human Being the factual situation within the limits of which he must project his future, and correlatively, the structure of his world? (2) Can the beings among which Human Being finds itself already thrown consistently be characterized by Heidegger in such a way as to permit them to perform the required limiting function? Or is there some aspect of the doctrines of *Being and Time* which makes it impossible to do so?

(1) It will not be necessary to pause long over the first question. Mood may well be an intentional disclosure, but there is no reason to suppose that it is so independently of the understanding. "Understanding always has its mood." But it is equally true that mood, as a *Befindlichkeit*, always "has its understanding, even if it merely keeps it suppressed."<sup>18</sup> Mood is not a disclosure of beings as they are independently of the understanding. It is a disclosure of the factual (*faktisch*) character (i.e. thrownness) of Human Being's relation to beings other than, and independent of, itself, a relation

which is not in any sense prior to the act of understanding or world-projection. It would not then be correct to say that the act of understanding is "founded on" or presupposes the disclosure of mood any more than mood is "founded on" or presupposes the disclosure of the understanding. They are, to use Heidegger's expression, "equiprimordial." Mood is the way in which Human Being finds itself in a factual situation whose meaning is *already* determined by its projection of possibilities.

(2) The answer to the second question is more difficult. There is reason to believe that beings cannot, in the Heideggerian scheme of things, be characterized independently of their insertion in some human frame of reference. To characterize something, for Heidegger, is to interpret it *as* something, to take it *as* this or that (*auslegen*), literally to lay out what is already *implicitly understood* in it. "... the thing," Heidegger says, "already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is one which gets laid out by the interpretation."<sup>19</sup> It is not therefore possible to characterize anything independently of the understanding, because to characterize is to interpret and because interpretation always presupposes an understanding of the matter in question. We can do no more than explicate the "as-structure" of what is already understood.

This is nothing other than the so-called "hermeneutical circle," and Heidegger is quite well aware of it. He insists that the circularity in this case is not vicious. The point, he says, is not to avoid the circle, but to get into it in the right way. We take hold of the "genuine possibility of knowing in the most primordial way" when and only when the understanding which we seek to "lay out" in an interpretation is not derived from "fancies" and "popular conceptions" but is worked out in terms of the things themselves.<sup>20</sup> But how can this be if *what* the things themselves are is determined by my act of projection? The difficulty is illustrated nicely in the following passage :

If, when one is engaged in a particular concrete kind of interpretation, in the sense of exact textual interpretation, one likes to appeal to what "stands there," then one finds that what "stand there" in the first instance is nothing other than the obvious undiscussed assumption of the person who does the interpreting.<sup>21</sup>

That the mind of the philologist is not a *tabula rasa* waiting to be stamped with the "objective" meaning of the text that "stands there" before him

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is undoubtedly true. But if nothing "stood there" other than his own presuppositions, if nothing else were *given*, or if the given were completely indeterminate apart from his presuppositions, then the interpretation would be completely arbitrary. Perhaps this is why Heidegger inserts the phrase, "in the first instance." But what could be given in the second or any other instance? Of course, Heidegger can answer, "beings." But *what* beings, with *what* determinate characteristics? In Heideggerian terms, there does not seem to be any way of answering this question. For according to him, beings have no meaning (i.e. determinate characteristics) apart from the projection of the understanding. "That which has been articulated as such in interpretation and sketched out beforehand in the understanding in general as something articulable is the meaning."<sup>22</sup> Meaning is thus nothing other than that set of possibilities in terms of which a being is understood; ultimately, it is the world itself. "In the projecting of the understanding, beings are disclosed in their possibility... Beings within the world generally are projected upon the world — that is, upon a whole of significance, to whose reference-relations concern, as being-in-the-world, has been tied up in advance."<sup>23</sup>

The obvious implication is that beings have no meaning apart from the human world, and our question — what is it about them which makes it possible to understand them in certain ways and not in others? — still appears to be unanswerable in Heideggerian terms. It may be thought, however, that Heidegger has in mind here only "human" meaning, i.e. meaning in the human world. Outside of that world, beings may have a "non-human" meaning or determination, which, for purely terminological reasons, he refuses to call "meaning." Such an interpretation would be in line with his reference to natural disasters as "absurd" (*widersinnig*: contrary to sense), "... only that which is unmeaning can be absurd. The present-at-hand, as Human Being encounters it, can, as it were, assault the being of Human Being; natural events, for instance, can break in upon us and destroy us."<sup>24</sup> This is plausible. But before it can be accepted, it is necessary to inquire into Heidegger's understanding of nature and of our awareness of natural objects.

When Heidegger speaks of nature, or of a natural thing, he generally has in mind either the scientific universe spread out in objective space and time, or the Aristotelian world of substance, accident, and natural change. But in either case, the "natural" thing is something which is *no longer* ready-

to-hand, but merely present-at-hand. The emphasis which falls on the "no longer" is heavy, for Heidegger contends that, so far from it being the case that our projection of a human world is founded on an implicit awareness of a natural world of things present-at-hand independently of that world, the exact reverse is the case — our awareness of the present-at-hand is due to a modification of concern (including *Befindlichkeit* and understanding) which, as has been seen, is our primordial mode of access to beings other than ourselves. Nor is this all, for Heidegger makes the further claim that our awareness of the present-at-hand is merely another way of projecting beings upon a meaning, a meaning constituted by a set of categories which *we* bring to bear on the situation. It is clear that the same question as before would have to be raised. *What* beings do we interpret in the light of our categories? *What* is it about them that makes the interpretation non-arbitrary? And what sort of awareness do we have of them? Are we not once again faced with a hermeneutical circle? And if we are, is not all knowledge finally reduced to self-knowledge?

Strange for a philosopher who likes to emphasize the fact that the finitude of the understanding in Kant's first *Critique* was due to the noncreative character of intuition! Not so strange, if it is noted that Kant's theory of the understanding conceals a comparable difficulty. If intuition without concepts is *totally* blind, how can it serve to limit the activity of the understanding? If there is no awareness (however implicit) of the elements of the manifold of sensibility *as* determined in some way independently of the understanding and its categories, then how can the act of synthesis which presents us with determinate objects fail to be a wholly arbitrary, *ad hoc* proceeding?

Partly due to his emphasis on the category of causality, Kant seems close to the view that *meaning* is a relation, that to be meaningful is to be *understood* in terms of a texture of relations (compare Heidegger's reference or assignment) to possible future givens. Certainly this is Heidegger's position. A being may be determined *as* something only by being projected onto a set of possibilities. The argument of this paper has been, not that there is no such projection, but only that an awareness of an actually determinate something, something which is given independently of the "practical" understanding, is the *sine qua non* of such an act.

There are passages where Heidegger seems to hint at just such a level of determinateness. For example:

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Anything ready-to-hand is, at worst, appropriate for some purposes and inappropriate for others; and its "properties" are, as it were, still bound up in these ways in which it is appropriate or inappropriate, just as presence-at-hand, as a possible kind of being for something ready-to-hand, is bound up in readiness-to-hand.<sup>25</sup>

Another such passage may be found in the discussion of what William Macomber has called the "moment of truth,"<sup>26</sup> i.e. the moment when a disruption or disturbance of some kind causes the complex of references constitutive of a piece of equipment to be "lit up" for circumspective concern. When this happens, Heidegger tells us that the present-at-hand *in* the ready-to-hand is brought to the fore.<sup>27</sup> Certainly it would be absurd to attribute the breaking of a tool, for instance, wholly to the projection of the possibilities which constitute its meaning as a tool. If, then, it is deemed necessary to refer to the present-at-hand *in* the ready-to-hand, should we not also speak of an *awareness* of the present-at-hand which is implicit in the *awareness* of the ready-at-hand?<sup>28</sup> Is there not a logically prior awareness of beings as characterized by meanings other than "human" ones, a level of awareness which constitutes the foundation for Heideggerian projection?

Husserl, of course, thought that there was. While agreeing that "human existence as such is always related consciously to an existent practical world as a surrounding world already endowed with humanly significant predicates," he held that the specifically human character of the life-world is given only "on the underlying basis of the Nature common to all." If "we abstract from all predicates belonging to 'Objective Spirit,'" that is, from "the sense-stratum that gives to the world of humanity and culture, as such, its specific sense," we still "retain the whole of Nature," and, "as included in Nature, the animate organisms of men and brutes."<sup>29</sup> Below the level of "practical" objects, one can always find the physical thing. And corresponding to the physical thing with its "objective" properties is an act of "objectification" on the foundation of which the thing may be understood in terms of its practical, human value. The act of valuation whereby, to use the language of Heidegger, a being is projected upon the specifically human world presupposes a consciousness — perhaps only an "operational" or implicit consciousness — of that being as it is independently of the value bestowed upon it. Husserl's claim is that the lower sense-stratum — in this case, the sense "physical thing" with such-and-such "natural" properties — must be explicated prior to and independently of any further strata of

sense which may be founded upon it. It is not a question of reducing one stratum to another; it is merely a question of explicating matters in their proper order.<sup>31</sup> The argument of this paper so far amounts to a defense of this Husserlian thesis. The "present-at-hand" *in* the "ready-to-hand" (i.e., the physical thing which is also a "thing of use") may be understood as a sense-stratum presupposed by the distinctively "practical" understanding which is emphasized by Heidegger.

### III

Now we can return to our point of departure and ask, in the light of our critique of Heidegger, whether the Heideggerian analysis of Human Being truly eliminates all problems concerning the external world. Now it is certainly true that if Human Being is being-in-the-world, it makes no sense for a man who recognizes this truth to ask whether there is a world. But of course the question about the existence of the external world does not concern "world" in Heidegger's sense of the term: it concerns the existence of those *beings* which we encounter within the world. Heidegger has a possible response to this question about beings: they must exist, he might say; otherwise we could not encounter them in practical concern; nor could we project them upon our world. The existence of a being — man — whose way of being is being-in-the-world therefore requires the existence of beings other than himself. But this line of argument gives us no more than a bare, pinpoint reference to beings other than ourselves. It does not give us any way of saying *what* these beings may be independently of their relation to Human Being.<sup>32</sup>

A problem thus remains concerning, not the existence, but the nature of beings independently of their relation to Human Being. The argument of this paper has been, not only that they must in some way be determinate apart from the specifically human world — in order to provide a principle of limitation for the projection of meaning which looms so large in the Heideggerian analysis of being-in-the-world — but that we must be *aware* of them, in however implicit or "operative" a way, *as* having some such determinate characteristics apart from our own "projective" understanding.

If this last conclusion is accepted, we can go on to show just how spurious Heidegger's attack on the traditional problematic is. Let it be granted, then, that we have conscious access to beings as they are independently of the

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specifically human world. What sort of awareness is this? The obvious answer — perceptual awareness — reminds us of just how little Heidegger has to say about that vexing topic. This is not insignificant, since it means that, despite his polemic on the problem of the external world, Heidegger has nothing to say about the traditional epistemological difficulties concerning the nature and validity of perception which give rise to that problem.

Descartes, so often the whipping boy for the advocates of existential phenomenology, did not adopt the “representative theory of perception” in a wholly gratuitous manner. There were considerations which, in his estimation, at least, lent support to that theory. Natural as it was to suppose that perception is a direct and immediate disclosure of things as they are independently of the knowing mind, all the commonplaces of perceptual error, dreams, hallucinations, and the like had, he said, united to destroy his faith in the senses. But however often perception might be supposed to err, it could not be doubted that the ideas of all these things were given to consciousness. “... although I might suppose that all I saw or imagined was false, I could not at any rate deny that the ideas were truly in my consciousness.”<sup>33</sup> Descartes’ conclusion: the mind is immediately aware only of its own ideas or mental contents.

Whatever the merits of this famous argument, the point to be noted here is that Heidegger fails even to mention, much less answer, it. It cannot therefore be maintained that the epistemological problem raised by Descartes is settled simply by the existential analytic of Human Being. Perhaps the matter can be summed up in somewhat the following way.

For Heidegger, man is being-in-the-world, an expression which is hyphenated to express the fact that no one of the items constitutive for this phenomenon can be understood in abstraction from the others. World, then, is a constituent of Human Being (an “existential”). *So understood*, it is strictly relative to the project which Human Being is. But this does not imply that those *beings* which Human Being projects upon its world cannot exist independently of that world. Nor does it imply that we are wholly unaware of them as they are “in themselves.” Indeed, it has been seen that unless they are apprehended as having certain characteristics apart from the distinctively human world, Human Being’s understanding of them is wholly arbitrary.

Now if we investigate *this* level of awareness, the question would have to be raised all over again whether the meaning that beings have independently

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of the "practical" world is ontologically dependent upon human awareness.<sup>34</sup> It is at this level of analysis that the epistemological problem may legitimately be raised.

### NOTES

- 1 William Barrett and Henry D. Aiken, eds., *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century* (New York : Random House, 1962), II 135.
- 2 John Wild, *Existence and the World of Freedom* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey : Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 230.
- 3 Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen : Neomarius Niemeyer Verlag, 1957), p. 205. Cited hereafter as SZ. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York and Evanston : Harper and Row, 1962), p. 249. Cited hereafter as BT. I have used the Macquarrie-Robinson translation except for their rendering of *Dasein* as "Dasein" and of *Seiendes* as "entity." I have chosen to speak instead of "Human Being" (*Dasein*) and "being" (*Seiendes*).
- 4 SZ, p. 208. BT, p. 252.
- 5 *Dasein* is the being of man : hence the substitute expression, 'Human Being.'
- 6 Descartes, letter dated 28 June, 1643. Quoted from : *Descartes : Philosophical Writings*, ed. and trans. by Elizabeth Anscombe and Peter Thomas Geach (Camden, N. J. : Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1954).
- 7 SZ, p. 84. BT, p. 116.
- 8 SZ, p. 70. BT, p. 100.
- 9 SZ, p. 70. BT, p. 101.
- 10 Martin Heidegger, *The Essence of Reasons*, trans. by Terrence Malick (Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1969), p. 101. Cited hereafter as WG.
- 11 SZ, p. 144. BT, p. 184.
- 12 WG, p. 89.
- 13 SZ, p. 144. BT, p. 183.
- 14 C.f. WG (e.g., p. 91) on the "prehistoric happening" of transcendence, there equated with freedom; also *Being and Time*, p. 117 (SZ pp. 84-85) for the distinction between "ontological" and "ontical" "letting be." One is reminded in this connection of the comparable distinction in Kant between the transcendental and empirical synthesis and the difficulty of explaining the relationship between them.
- 15 Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" trans. Werner Brock, in Werner Brock, ed. and trans., *Existence and Being* (Chicago : Regnery, 1965), p. 334. I have changed the translation of *Seiendes* from "what-is" to "being."
- 16 Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. James Churchill (Bloomington and London : Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 235. I have changed the translation of *Seiendes* from "entity" to "being."
- 17 From the standpoint of Phenomenology, this claim is eminently justified. No being of which we are completely unaware — which, in other words, is not a phenomenon — can enter into the description of experience and its object in their essential correlation. Nothing can "motivate" consciousness (or experience) except by way of its meaning for consciousness (or experience).
- 18 SZ, p. 142, 143. BT, p. 182.
- 19 SZ, p. 150. BT, p. 191.
- 20 SZ, p. 153. BT, p. 195.
- 21 SZ, p. 150. BT, p. 192.
- 22 SZ, p. 153. BT, p. 195.
- 23 SZ, p. 151. BT, p. 192.

## HEIDEGGER ON THE WORLD

- 24 SZ, p. 152. BT, p. 193.
- 25 SZ, p. 83. BT, p. 115.
- 26 William Macomber, *The Anatomy of Disillusion: Martin Heidegger's Notion of Truth* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967).
- 27 SZ, p. 74. BT, p. 104.
- 28 I do not mean that it must be an explicit awareness. Nor do I mean to suggest that it is an exhaustive awareness of the thing that is present-at-hand.
- 29 Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), pp. 134, 135.
- 30 The awareness of one thing can be operative in the awareness of another. For example, my awareness of the features of a friend's face, while not explicit, enables me to recognize him.
- 31 C.f. Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: George, Allen and Unwin; New York: Humanities, 1967), sections 37, 116, and 117.
- 32 In this connection, Heidegger may be compared to Sartre. For Sartre, there is an "ontological proof" of "trans-phenomenal" being (i.e. being independent of consciousness). In order for consciousness to be of something other than itself (and hence to be at all), there must be something — being-in-itself — which is independently of consciousness. And since consciousness is an act of self-transcendence which brings it about that there is a world within which whatever one may be conscious of must be experienced, being-in-itself must be independent of the world as well. But *what* may it be apart from that worldly network of relations which consciousness brings to bear upon it? *What* is there to limit the freedom of world-projection? To this question, Sartre has no ready answer. "Being is Being-in-itself. Being is what is is." That is all he can say.
- 33 Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, trans. Laurence J. Lafleur (Indianapolis, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 23.
- 34 This is one of the problems with which Merleau-Ponty attempts to deal (under the rubric of the "in-itself-for-us") in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (trans. Colin Smith, Humanities, 1962). For him, there is a "natural subject" (the "body-proper") which perceives a thing in the context of a *natural* world (c.f. p. 293, e.g.).