

Beholdenness to entities and the concept of 'Dasein':

Phenomenology, ontology and idealism in the early Heidegger

The fear that Heidegger's early philosophy cannot ultimately be distinguished from a problematic idealism has a number of sources in his work. For example, Christina Lafont maintains—I think rightly—that the fact that '[w]e always move about in an understanding of being' (SZ 5)¹ lies 'at the basis of Heidegger's philosophy as a whole' (Lafont 2000: xiii). But she sees this as trapping us within that understanding such that '[t]here is no way to step outside of [it] in order to check its validity, to test whether or not our understanding of being coincides with the being of the things themselves' (Lafont 2000: xiv); and the only way to escape the scepticism to which such trapping would seem to lead is to embrace the idealistic notion that, in some sense, that understanding determines the being of such things.

A concern to avoid such conclusions drives the interpretation that John Haugeland offered in his later readings of Heidegger, which make up the larger part of his posthumously-published *Dasein Disclosed* (hereafter DD). The later Haugeland seems to have feared that his own earlier and influential papers, 'Heidegger on Being a Person' and 'Dasein's Disclosedness' (also published in DD), precisely set Heidegger on the road to a brand of communal or linguistic idealism of the sort that Lafont ascribes to Heidegger. As Joseph Rouse puts it in his editor's introduction to DD, Haugeland came to worry that his Heidegger could not 'allow the entities addressed or incorporated within [our] practices to be authoritative over how those entities are understood by the practitioners', leaving us with the sceptical worry that—in Haugeland's words—'the possibilities onto which entities are projected' by such practices 'are ultimately arbitrary', our understanding of the being of entities in

¹ References to Heidegger's work use acronyms given in the bibliography, followed by page numbers. I use the established translations of Heidegger's works in most cases. As the two available translations of *Sein und Zeit* also give the pagination of the German original, I give references to the latter, though generally I follow the translation of Macquarrie and Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962). I would also like to thank Adam Beck for access to his translation of EP.

danger of ‘float[ing] free as mere fantasy’ (DD xiv, 239, 149, cf. 46).²

But Haugeland came to think—if I might be allowed to put it this way—that where the danger is, also grows the saving power—that what he had missed in Heidegger’s work is that ‘show[ing] how ... understandings of being are beholden to *entities*’ is ‘an essential aim ... of *Being and Time*’ (DD 59). Indeed Haugeland goes so far as to claim that this understanding is ‘under empirical control’ (DD 240, cf. 257). While it’s widely believed—as Taylor Carman puts it—that ‘Heidegger remained committed to a kind of ontological apriorism’ (2002: 206, cf. also p. 214), Haugeland came to insist not only that, for Heidegger, ‘[s]ome understandings of being turn out *not* to be viable’, but also that ‘when that is shown, it is shown in the crucible of empirical investigations’ (DD 240).

I have discussed Haugeland’s later reading of Heidegger at some length elsewhere and made objections to it,³ some of which I will explore further here. But my principal concern will be with the notion central to that reading: the beholdenness to entities of our understanding of the being of those entities. I think that Haugeland is absolutely right in stressing the role of this notion in Heidegger’s thought. But I will propose that Haugeland misconstrues that role and offer an alternative construal of my own, according to which the notion is at work there on two levels. On the first, it identifies an achievement that distinguishes *dasein* from other entities, its possession of an understanding of the being of entities; on the second, it identifies the need for our philosophical reflection to be informed by that already-possessed understanding.

In support of this construal, I will argue that it not only provides us with a way of understanding problems that Haugeland encounters but also suggests a different take on another key source of the suspicion that Heidegger is committed to a problematic idealism, namely, his insistence that phenomenology is ‘the method of ontology’ (BPP 20), that ‘*[o]nly as phenomenology is ontology possible*’ (SZ 35). As William Blattner articulates this version of the suspicion, ‘[p]henomenology, as the description of ... way[s] in which things *show themselves* to us, cannot possibly be the method of ontology, unless one dogmatically assumes some form of idealism’ (1999: 9-10). The reading I will offer will show that this methodological commitment

² For the sake of consistency, I follow Haugeland in not capitalising ‘*dasein*’ or ‘being’, adapting cited texts by other authors to match.

³ See McManus 2015c.

need not lead to idealism,⁴ and resolve two further long-standing puzzles posed by the definitions of ‘being’ and ‘phenomenology’ that Heidegger presents in the introduction to *Being and Time*.

Where then will that leave us? Certainly not out of the woods: at best the problems Heidegger faces differ from those we may have thought he faces. But we will have arrived at a quite different picture of how we stand to the being of entities and of how that may elude us, a picture that is very much a different picture of *us*.

1. Later Haugeland on the beholdenness to entities of understandings of their being

The later Haugeland’s reading of Heidegger is tenaciously anti-idealist. Central to it is a vision of the ‘*genuine or honest scientist*’ as practising two forms of self-criticism, a practice which ‘giv[es] content to the idea’ of her claims ‘being correct or incorrect’ (DD 267). She draws on ‘communal norms of proper performance’ that govern her arriving at experimental results; and the first form of self-criticism seeks to ‘weed[] out ... results that are compromised by sloppy or improper procedures’ (DD 265)—by failure to conform to those norms. But crucially for the later Haugeland’s Heidegger, such criticism is supplemented by a second form, through which critical attention can fall on the scientist’s understanding of being.

Haugeland sees a paradigmatic realisation of such an understanding in the laws of physics—‘of motion, gravity, elasticity, thermodynamics, and so on’—determining ‘what mass, force, momentum, and energy – not to mention electrons, orbiting planets, springs, and gasses – *are*’; in doing so, these ‘basic laws’ ‘specify how [such entities] can and must relate to one another’ (DD 270-71, 192); and, in doing that, they ‘constrain how the results of ... different experimental procedures’ addressing those entities ‘would *have* to be related’ (DD 266).⁵

⁴ Other attempts have, of course, been made to deal with this difficulty. But I will concentrate here on my own.

⁵ Cf. also DD 176-78, 184-85, 228-30 and 238-39. Other relevant discussions include chs. 10 and 13 of Haugeland 1998.

If the scientist arrives at results incompatible with these constraints, her first suspicion must be that her ‘experiments [were] not properly performed after all’; hence, her first form of self-criticism is ‘careful and persistent double-checking’ of her experimental procedures (DD 266, 215). But if that checking exonerates the performance of those procedures, then doubt must fall on her understanding of the being of the entities studied: the constraints on how the results of her experimental procedures ‘*have to be related*’, which are dictated by that understanding’s constraints on how those entities ‘can and must relate’, will have shown themselves to be incompatible with how those results turn out actually to be. In this way, such ‘intransigent discovered impossibilities’—which cannot be traced ‘on closer examination ... to experimental error’—‘undermine a disclosure of being’; ‘the crucible of empirical investigations’ is that in which such disclosures are tested and they are shown ‘*not to be viable*’ if the results of those investigations ‘cannot be made to cohere’ (DD 240). In this way, an understanding of being is ‘beholden for its “success”’ to discovered entities and subject to ‘genuine empirical control’ (DD 218, 46).

Thus described, such testing might seem indistinguishable from more common-or-garden testing of scientific hypotheses. But the testing of ‘understandings of being’ differs because ‘the means of discovering entities ... themselves *depend on* the disclosure of the being of those entities’: ‘[w]ithout a great deal of accepted physics, for instance, no cloud-chamber image or statistical pattern from a cyclotron could so much as make sense, let alone reveal anything’ (DD 216). But if ‘[t]he design of scientific instruments and experiments and the interpretation of their results depend *essentially* on the very laws and theories they sometimes test’, and these results can undermine the very ‘disclosure of being’ in terms of which they are designed and interpreted, in doing so such results will ‘pull[] the rug from under themselves ... along with ... any other discoveries and abilities to discover’ premised on that same understanding (DD 216). Indeed according to later Haugeland, ‘[t]his is why’ Heidegger’s reflections on our understanding of being lead him to ‘speak[] of death’ (DD 216). While mere ‘factual mistakes’ can be ‘identified and corrected’ and ‘life goes on’, the collapse of a ‘disclosure of being’ undermines a whole way of seeing and investigating the world; in such ‘a systematic breakdown that undermines everything’, a whole ‘life’ ‘does *not* “go on”’ (DD 218).

2. Doubts about Haugeland's account

Haugeland's later reading is ingenious, thought-provoking and has rightly captured much attention. But I have philosophical and exegetical reservations about it. Some I have raised elsewhere,⁶ and some I will raise later; but I will sketch two here.

Firstly, it is difficult to see how the beholdenness that Haugeland envisages would allow our understanding of the being of entities to be guided by an appreciation (of some sort) of how entities are—how, for example, the 'persistent empirical recalcitrance' (DD 273) of entities in the face of one understanding of their being might lead us on to a better understanding of their being, one to which they are not recalcitrant but more successfully beholden. Instead Haugeland depicts the upshot of such recalcitrance as 'death', a 'systematic breakdown that undermines everything'. An underlying issue here would seem to be that, if we envisage an understanding of being collapsing in the face of patterns of observation that it cannot accommodate, it is unclear that we can make sense of those observations being accommodated more successfully by another such understanding, because—if such observations, like the 'the means of discovering entities', 'themselves *depend on* the disclosure of the being of those entities'—it is unclear how another 'disclosure of being' might make better sense of *them*.⁷

Secondly, I have a concern that other readers of *Dasein Disclosed* share: the ideas it sets out are fascinating, but are they *Heidegger's*?⁸ In particular, I struggle to see at work in *Being and Time*—or in the other works that might be seen as articulating and elaborating that book's project—the vision that Haugeland sketches

⁶ See McManus 2015c.

⁷ For a fuller statement of this objection, see McManus 2015c: sec. 2. Haugeland's 2007 essay, 'Letting Be', which effectively represents last words on these matters, seems to be troubled by a related concern in declaring it 'a difficult and vexing problem to say just what the relationship is between the ... sets of entities' that Newtonian and Einsteinian physics 'let be' (DD 177).

⁸ Cf. Carman 2014: 212: '*Dasein Disclosed* is best read not as exegesis or commentary but as a kind of creative dialogue.'

of understandings of being being ‘under empirical control’.⁹ To some extent, Haugeland might agree: he talks of the articulation of the above vision of beholdenness as ‘an essential aim and (unfinished) achievement of *Being and Time*’, identification of that vision resting on a reading of the ‘momentum’ of the writings we do have (DD 58, 45); and sadly, of course, Haugeland left his articulation of that reading unfinished too, a full appreciation of it requiring a similar reading of the ‘momentum’ of *Dasein Disclosed*. But rather than pursue that project,¹⁰ I will explore in what follows an alternative construal of the notion upon which Haugeland rightly insists—that our understanding of the being of entities must be beholden to them.

3. The feat of being dasein

Let us consider two more remarks of Haugeland’s:

Dasein is not people. In my experience, this cannot be said too often. (DD 132)

[D]asein is, *by definition*, the entity that understands being. (DD 222)

In Haugeland’s writings, these claims form part of the case for his ‘controversial reading’—‘approximately, me against everybody else’—that dasein picks out ‘*living-understandings-of-being*’ such that phenomena like sciences and language are dasein but individual people are not (even if dasein is ‘concretely embodied in their lives’)

⁹ For example, it is less than clear how the above vision might be extended outside of the domain of scientific inquiry. (Haugeland’s account of how ‘the same goes for the carpenter’ at DD 229 is very brief and not obviously compelling.) I am also unconvinced by Haugeland’s account of being-towards-death. For my own reading, see McManus 2015b.

¹⁰ Evidence relevant to that project might be seen in 1936-38’s *Beitrag* which contains some distinctly Haugelandian claims (see CP 125-29). But whether these—only stated a decade later—are where the momentum of *Being and Time* was meant all along to be taking us still seems to me doubtful.

(DD 224, 182, 223). Though Haugeland must count me among the ‘everybody else’ who finds this claim unappealing,¹¹ the remarks I quoted above nonetheless point us in what, I think, is the right direction.

I believe Haugeland misconstrues the truth in the claim that ‘dasein is, *by definition*, the entity that understands being’. The truth is that to be dasein, the entity in question must understand entities—what it is for them to be and for them to be thus-and-so or thus-and-so. A proper appreciation of the being of entities is not something dasein may or may not have: rather dasein is ‘that peculiar being which discloses other things and itself, not simply as a supplementary faculty but, rather ... [b]y virtue of its very being’ (BCAP 20). It is not that dasein must *ensure* that it grasps that being, such that it must test what it takes to be its understanding of being—in perhaps ‘the crucible of empirical investigations’. Rather to be dasein in the first place, it must grasp the being of entities.

‘Dasein’ is then a ‘success word’—like factives such as ‘knowledge’ and ‘recognize’. This thought finds an echo on what one might call a more ‘local’ level in Heidegger’s claim that grasp of particular entities—what they are and of the states of affairs in which they can figure—presupposes a mastery of the world in which they are found, in the form—for example—of particular ways of being adept around—Heidegger would say ‘*bei*’—those entities. This is most obviously true in the case of the *Zuhanden*. ‘The genuine relation’ of dasein to a tool ‘is to be occupied with it in using it’ (HCT 191): ‘[t]he less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become’ (SZ 69). But if that is true, a ‘genuine’ and ‘primordial’ grasp of such entities is a feat distinctive of those possessed of certain abilities or forms of know-how. As Mark Wrathall has put the point, ‘uncovering an entity ... demands something of us’—that we ‘struggle to foster and develop the right skills, the right attitudes, and bodily dispositions for dealing with it’ (2005: 347).

This reveals a further—and more unsettling face—of dasein’s ‘beholdenness to entities’. The claim that ‘dasein is, *by definition*, the entity that understands being’ might be heard as bestowing upon ourselves by definition a certain facility with the world around us, an idealistic insisting into existence of abilities that we have no reason to think we possess. But its seeming so depends crucially on who in the

¹¹ See Carman 2014 for critical discussion of Haugeland’s reading.

preceding sentence the ‘we’ denotes. We human beings? Or we dasein? The fact that our capacity to uncover—indeed even to grasp or contemplate—an entity ‘demands something of us’ means—to adapt Haugeland’s words—that ‘dasein is not people’, because there is no obvious reason to think that all people—at least if we mean by that human beings—meet those demands, and thereby possess an understanding of being, or—on the more ‘local’ level—the particular forms of know-how that dasein exhibits. ‘[D]asein is its disclosedness’ (SZ 133), but human beings aren’t, because they may not achieve the forms of intentionality that characterise *dasein*, the ‘being-by [*Sein-bei*]-things’ (MFL 127)—the ‘*being familiar with* [vertraut sein mit]’ a world (HCT 158)—that makes an entity dasein.

It is this kind of presupposed ‘beholdenness’ that Heidegger identifies as a ‘truth’ deeper than that of a proposition’s correspondence to fact, such that ‘*dasein is “in the truth”*’ (SZ 221). Dasein is so by definition, but human beings are not; instead it is a success—required for the possession of true *or* false beliefs—that humans may or may not achieve. Hence ‘*dasein is in the truth*’ does ‘not imply a bad relativisation of truth to man, but rather the other way around’ (EP 155). We pick out those entities that are dasein—and test whether entities (such as human beings) are dasein—by determining whether they possess an understanding of the being of entities.¹²

The later Haugeland’s Heidegger worries that dasein’s understanding—supposedly of the being of entities—might ‘float free as mere fantasy’ (DD 149)—descending, as Haugeland’s one-time colleague John McDowell might put, into a ‘frictionless spinning in the void’ (1994: 66). But for the perspective sketched above, there is no such possibility, as it is only in an understanding of the being of entities and of the world they populate that—as Heidegger puts it—dasein ‘lives’; and without such understanding, we see before us not a failure on dasein’s part but the absence of dasein—‘an inability to apprehend at all’, a ‘not-having-access’ (L 177, 183). ‘If there isn’t this first moment of clearness, I would not even be in some sort of absolute darkness’ (DSTCM 39), because I would then not be—as dasein—at all.

The conclusion that beholdenness to entities is a feat that dasein must achieve

¹² Cf. Heidegger’s later contrasting of his depiction of ‘the understanding of being [as] the fundamental characteristic of dasein as such’ with a view that ‘isolates [dasein] as a *subject* in accordance with an anthropological representation of the human being’ (Z 189-90).

to so much as exist might seem a conclusion that Haugeland should welcome, as the non-viability of *dasein*'s understanding of being is what he believes Heidegger means by 'death'. Such a 'systematic breakdown that undermines everything' is something 'shown in the crucible of empirical investigations that cannot be made to cohere', that 'themselves *depend on*' that understanding's disclosure of being, and that, hence, 'pull[] the rug from under themselves'; the supposed understanding consumes itself, one might say, destroyed by investigations which only it would license as intelligible explorations of the world, investigations which, hence, vanish with it.

Commentators have worried—as Adam Beck puts—'about what happens next'; of that, Beck proposes, 'it is not at all clear that Haugeland can say anything (2005: 168, 175-76). Similarly, Dreyfus has asked whether anything 'remains aware of the collapse and survives to open a new world'; perhaps a 'a pure, isolated, world-needy mineness' (Dreyfus 2005: xxxv, n. 59)? Or would 'awareness and world-disclosing' simply be 'over for good' (p. xxxv)? But the perspective offered above suggests a deeper puzzle for Haugeland's vision. If the investigations that supposedly 'show' the understanding of being to be 'non-viable' 'pull[] the rug from under themselves' because they '*depend on*' that understanding, what did then take place? Was something indeed *shown*? The problem is not merely understanding how things look—if they *look* at all—to that which 'survives'—if anything does—into this supposedly Heideggerian 'death'; rather, if this collapse takes place because *dasein*'s understanding of being was non-viable, then 'awareness and world-disclosing' didn't take place, and hadn't taken place: *dasein* must have been 'dead' already.

4. Phenomenology as ontology: returning to the entity that understands being

Heidegger explicitly insists upon '[t]he peculiar *neutrality* of the term "dasein"'—its neutrality with respect, for example, to the species of animal in which the understanding of being is realised, in which it has its 'factual concretion' (MFL 136); and the fact that *dasein* must not be identified with humans is indeed widely acknowledged. It is not uncommon to find commentators alluding, say, to 'a *dasein* (a human being)' (Richardson 2012: 57) or 'dasein, meaning the human way of being' (Flynn 2006: 52). But I think such remarks are typically made for explanatory purposes; they belong, so to speak, to Heidegger apologetics—contrasting for the

benefit of the new reader that to which the unfamiliar term ‘dasein’ refers with that to which other unfamiliar expressions like ‘the *Zuhanden*’ or ‘the *Vorhanden*’ refer.¹³ Whether commentators allow such ‘apologetic’ thoughts to creep into and influence their understanding of dasein is another issue;¹⁴ and I believe that we Heidegger commentators have yet to see to the bottom of the statement that dasein is not people, that that has indeed not been said often enough.

In earlier work on Heidegger and Haugeland’s reading of him, I have drawn on a version of the previous section’s proposal in setting out an alternative response to the idealist worry that motivates that reading: in roughest outline, the beholdenness to entities explained there makes impossible the notion of better or worse understandings of the being of entities that Haugeland would seem to need to substantiate if those understandings are to be beholden to entities.¹⁵ If intending a particular body of facts requires that we have fostered and developed a particular set of skills, attitudes, and bodily dispositions, then we can make no sense of a supposedly rival understanding of that same body of facts embodied in a different set of skills, attitudes, and bodily dispositions. At best, this ‘rival’ will intend another body of facts, and hence not truly be a ‘rival’ at all: at best, its ‘rivalry’ will be a call to turn from considering the body of facts that we are currently considering to considering instead another body of facts, not to understand the former body better. I won’t rehearse this argument here. Instead I will turn to how the previous section’s proposal might help us address another apparent source of a problematic idealism—Heidegger’s phenomenological method.

What that method is and what significance it is meant to have are difficult questions. His understanding clearly differs markedly from that of his one-time mentor, Husserl, leading Iris Murdoch to declare that ‘[w]hether or not Heidegger *is* a phenomenologist is an interesting (even important) question’ (Murdoch 1993: 233, italics added). But I will confine my attention here to one particular, though crucial issue that his supposedly phenomenological method raises, namely, its relation to ontology. In his entry on phenomenology in the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of*

¹³ I am inclined to give the same gloss to Heidegger’s own occasional apparent identifications of dasein with the human. See, e.g., SZ 11 and SZ 25.

¹⁴ Whether Heidegger himself might have succumbed to an analogous failure is a genuine methodological worry that the final section below discusses.

¹⁵ See McManus 2015c.

Philosophy, David Woodruff Smith quotes the following definition from *The Oxford English Dictionary* as specifying the sense in which ‘the term is used’ ‘[i]n philosophy’: ‘[t]he science of phenomena as distinct from being (ontology)’ (2013: sec. 3). In that light, there is something distinctly odd about Heidegger’s claim that ‘[p]henomenological research is the interpretation of entities with regard to their being’ (HCT 306). If the OED is to be trusted, Heidegger would here seem to be looking precisely in the wrong place if he seeks to pursue ontology, the study of ‘being *qua* being’ (Aristotle 1928: Γ, 1 1003a21-22). But indeed he goes further and insists that ‘[o]nly as phenomenology is ontology possible’ (SZ 35).¹⁶

As noted at the beginning of the paper, this claim can seem to presuppose a brand of idealism. John Richardson, for example, has recently proposed that, in ‘investigat[ing] being by studying [dasein’s] understanding’, Heidegger adopts an ‘idealist orientation’, which ‘put ... roughly or simply ... has us the makers or projectors of being’, ‘humans as determining being’ (2012: 57-58, 212).¹⁷ But the previous section’s view offers a different perspective: if the experiences that phenomenology examines are dasein’s, then they are by definition experiences in which being shows itself. Being ‘appears’—reveals itself—in such experience, such that if we understand what dasein—in virtue of being dasein—understands then we understand being. As Heidegger observes in BPP, there might seem to be an odd ‘return to dasein’—an odd change of direction of attention, as it were—in the notion that ‘reference back to dasein and its compartments belongs to the essential nature of ontological inquiry’; but ‘[t]his return is at bottom no return at all, since dasein, corresponding to the nature of its existence ... as such always understands something like the being of an entity’ (BPP 111).¹⁸ The ontologist is not then turning away from her topic when she considers dasein because dasein ‘is ontological’ (SZ 12). To return to Blattner’s formulation of the idealist worry that phenomenology raises, there is no need to ‘dogmatically assume[] some form of idealism’ to turn ‘[p]henomenology, as the description of ... way[s] in which things *show themselves* to us’ into ‘the method

¹⁶ Cf. HCT 72, BPP 20 and PT 53.

¹⁷ For a non-idealist construal of Heidegger’s talk of ‘projection’, see McManus 2012: 174: n. 14. For an earlier statement of the objection that Heidegger’s phenomenological method is inherently idealist, see Okrent 1988 (e.g., p. 264).

¹⁸ Cf. BPP 73, 122, 154-55, 223, and 312.

of ontology' *if* the 'us' in question is dasein.

But this raises at least three obvious questions. To the first—'Isn't this a rather *big* "if"?—I will return in Sec. 6-7. Instead, the next section will address a second—'If dasein understands being and we are dasein, why do we *need* phenomenology?'—and a related third—'Isn't Heidegger convinced that we *don't* understand being?' One might restate the second question as follows: if, when we consider what dasein understands, we are considering being—such that dasein is, as one might put it, transparent to the ontologist, leading her straight to her object of inquiry—what is there that the ontologist, as an ontologist and as herself dasein, doesn't already know? One might restate the third question as follows: isn't Heidegger convinced that there is no such transparency, that we *lack* such access to being? Answering these questions will lead us on to a more subtle appreciation of why, according to Sec. 3's account, phenomenology is indeed 'the method of ontology'.

5. Phenomenology as ontology: ontological clarity is self-clarity

In one sense, the answer to the third question has to be 'Yes'. As Sacha Golob has recently observed (2014: 187), 'Heidegger's system is absolutely committed to a distinction between understanding an entity correctly and distorting it', citing as an example the following criticism of Descartes:

The kind of being which belongs to entities within the world is something which they themselves might have been permitted to present; but Descartes does not let them do so. (SZ 96)

Heidegger does indeed criticise philosophers repeatedly for misunderstanding the being of entities. But what then can such misunderstandings be if we, as dasein, already understand being?—the starting point for, and puzzle that provokes, our second question.

This touches on a broader issue concerning what one might call 'the epistemology of being'. If '[w]e always move about in an understanding of being', all our inquiries presuppose such an understanding. Hence, as Lafont worries, we are in no position to step outside of that understanding and evaluate it, comparing it—to use

her expression—with ‘the being of the things themselves’. Moreover, Heidegger often exhorts us to ensure that our thinking is governed by concepts appropriate to their subject matter: our thinking about entities can use concepts ‘drawn from the entities themselves, or [it] can wedge [them] into concepts out of keeping with their way of being’ (SZ 150). But we cannot ‘read off’ the being of entities from those entities if our capacity to ‘read’ them at all presupposes our understanding their being.¹⁹ As one also might put this worry, how *can* we live up to the phenomenologist’s slogan and go back ‘to the things themselves’ if we cannot step outside of our understanding of the being of entities?

In one way, Haugeland attempts to offer a solution to these difficulties: an understanding of being that fails to be beholden to entities will demonstrate that fact from within, as it were, by throwing up ‘intransigent discovered impossibilities’. But, in addition to the other worries raised above, it is difficult to see how this vision applies to the cases to which the previous paragraphs allude. In criticising other philosophers’ ontologies, Heidegger’s method is not to identify ‘empirical investigations that cannot be made to cohere’; instead he does phenomenology, a topic to which we perhaps should not then be surprised to note Haugeland devotes little attention.²⁰ But then how can we go back ‘to the things themselves’ by doing phenomenology?—by turning our attention to the ways we understand those things, an understanding which Heidegger is keen to show is so often a misunderstanding?

Let’s return then to how in practice Heidegger seems to understand ‘the epistemology of being’ and, with it, our second and third questions. The answers to both of those, I suggest, lies in the same fact: *dasein* can misunderstand itself. As *dasein*, it understands being but it need not understand its own understanding; *dasein*’s misunderstandings of being arise out of such failures, its misunderstanding its understanding of being. As Heidegger observes, ‘*dasein* is ontically “nearest” to itself [but] ontologically *furthest away*’ (SZ 16, cf. HCT 149 and BPP 155).

¹⁹ Cf. SZ 208.

²⁰ Though see DD 65-73 and 141. One might be tempted to depict the different forms of scepticism as relevant ‘intransigent impossibilities’ which ought to spell the ‘death’ of the ontologies from which they emerge. But whatever novel pressure Heidegger thinks he is bringing to bear on these ontologies, it cannot consist in his citing such already-well-known scepticisms.

Explaining how such misunderstanding comes about is not a simple matter and nor are the means of remedying it, which we will touch on only very briefly below. Here I will instead concentrate on the impact of the above proposal on our understanding in broad outline of ontological confusion and enlightenment.

In the context of the paper so far, the claim that we misunderstand ourselves may come as a bit of a disappointment. The previous section may seem to have identified a way in which we can indeed have some hope of grasping being, it being in our own nature as *dasein* to do so. But to be told now that we can misunderstand ourselves may seem to send us back to square one; and this move does indeed reinstate understanding being as a problem. But crucially it changes the nature of the problem.

For Heidegger, the failure involved in philosophical confusions of the sort alluded to above is a failure to set to work an understanding we already have. Hence, his recurrent invocation of the Platonic motif of ‘recollection’ and the corresponding motif of ‘forgetting’,²¹ most obviously in the key notion of *Seinsvergessenheit*. Remedying misunderstandings of being requires not further information which we as yet lack but the overcoming of a self-estrangement, of a misunderstanding of an understanding we already have. ‘[B]eing is never alien but always familiar, “ours”’ (MFL 147), *when* the ‘us’ of this ‘ours’ is *dasein*, that is; but we can become estranged from being by becoming estranged from ourselves and that familiarity that we already have. Ontology is difficult for the entity that understands being because, of all the modes of being that may become difficult for it, it is its own which is most difficult—that from which it is ‘*furthest away*’—and that distance distances us from the other modes of being that *dasein* understands too. So what ontological puzzlement requires of us is a ‘phenomenological reduction’, a ‘leading back’—a literal reduction—‘to the understanding of being’ that we have as *dasein*—to that ‘which was already once and already earlier understood’ but which is now ‘forgotten’ (BPP 21, 326-27).

The notion that what we need to come to appreciate is already there for us in our experience seems to be a shared presupposition of the many notions—in addition to that of ‘recollection’—upon which Heidegger draws in trying to articulate what phenomenology is. For example, phenomenology makes explicit that which is there

²¹ For further details of this use, see McManus 2013.

implicitly in our being able to ‘determine the nature of entities in their being without ... having the explicit concept of the meaning of being at [our] disposal’ (SZ 7, cf. HCT 144); phenomenology is interpretive, but where interpretation is a process through which ‘understanding appropriates understandingly that which is understood by it’ (SZ 37, 148); and it is formally indicative²²—a species of pointing—which presupposes that that which is to be discovered is—in some sense—there before us, fit to be pointed out. This tallies with the upshot of the difficult discussion of the notion of ‘phenomenology’ in SZ sec. 7—to which we will return—according to which it ‘means ... to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself’ (SZ 34): a thing that can show itself—if we let it (see SZ 96’s criticism of Descartes above)—is to be found in, so to speak, the same space in which we find ourselves.

Ontology is possible then because being is familiar to us as *dasein*. In addressing the question of being

if we do not wish to work merely imaginatively, we must keep a firm hold methodically on what makes something like being accessible to us: the understanding of being that belongs to *dasein*. (BPP 223, cf. IPR 1-2)

But ontological matters can become obscure to us when we have become obscure to ourselves; and correspondingly, ‘the being that is understood and meant’ in our understanding of being ‘becomes all the more suitably and originally accessible, the more originally and comprehensively the constitution of *dasein*’s being itself ... [is] brought to light’ (BPP 223). When being does become a puzzle for us, we resolve that puzzlement by ‘recollection’, by coming to appreciate again something we already grasp, something that already lies in us as *dasein*, as understanders of being; and thus, ‘being is what we recall’ (MFL 146-47). In sum then, only an entity possessed of an understanding of being can grasp ontological matters; such matters become obscure to it only by that entity becoming obscure to itself; and such matters can become once

²² For discussion of this notion, see McManus 2013.

again clear only by that entity becoming once again clear to itself. Hence, '*[o]nly as phenomenology is ontology possible*'.²³

This points us then to a second way in which our understanding of the being of entities must be beholden to entities: we must endeavour to ensure that our ontological reflection exploits the understanding we already have. The first form of beholdenness identified above requires that we—we human beings, say—be so beholden in order to be dasein. So, if we are dasein, we understand being. But it is also in our nature to misunderstand ourselves and thereby come to think in ways that express misunderstandings of the being of entities. This second sense in which we—we dasein this time—must be beholden to entities functions—as one might see it—indirectly. We maintain clarity about the being of entities by retaining clarity about ourselves, about what we already understand. Hence, as SZ 139-40 puts it, 'ontological interpretation' 'can only ... attach itself' and 'listen in on' Dasein's 'previous disclosure' of 'an entity with regard to its being'.

Our first form of beholdenness makes phenomenology a viable way of securing the second. If we embody an understanding of the being of entities, a proper beholdenness in our thinking to ourselves—and, for example, to the variety of forms our understanding of being takes—will be a proper beholdenness to the being of entities. The form of failure with which our first form of beholdenness contrasts is a

²³ One of the most interesting challenges arising for me out of the reviews of my 2012 came in that published by Charles Guignon. Though a very generous review, he wonders there 'whether McManus understands what *phenomenology* is' (2014: 604), and that this is a *difficult* question certainly is something that I think I feel more strongly than Guignon. Through its analysis of Heidegger's appropriation of Husserl's notion of 'constitution', my 2012 did propose an understanding of how phenomenology could shed light on ontological matters: turning our attention to the question of the form that subjectivity takes breaks up prejudices not only about subjectivity but also about objectivity, about the 'objects' of our intentionality (cf. 2012: sec. 1.1). But what that analysis did indeed not explain is why it is that '*[o]nly as phenomenology is ontology possible*'. What I have offered here is a possible explanation: when the 'subject' in question is dasein, turning attention to the question of the form that its subjectivity takes is what breaking up prejudices about objectivity—about the being of the 'objects' of our intentionality—is.

failure to be *dasein*—a form of non-understanding, perhaps—while the form of failure with which our second form of beholdenness contrasts is more recognizably a form of *misunderstanding*.²⁴ As Heidegger observes in the *Sophist* lectures, ‘something can be settled about entities with regard to their being only insofar as the entities are present, or, as we say, insofar as entities can be encountered at all’—that is, I would suggest, only in so far as we are already *dasein*; such a settling is ‘simply a matter of adhering to the beings encountered in their most immediate and most original way of being encountered’, remaining in touch with the understanding we already have of such entities; it is ‘within this’, that ‘questioning how the beings show themselves’ must be done: ‘this is the one direction in which the question of the meaning of beings, the question of being, is raised’ (PS 141).²⁵

Sec. 8 will extend this reading by showing how it resolves two further puzzles that Heidegger’s discussions of ‘being’ and ‘phenomenology’ in the introduction to

²⁴ What is arguably a third form of beholdenness to entities that our understanding of their being should attain—in the form of a recognition that the disclosures of being upon which particular propositional claims rest address only particular aspects of entities and occlude others—is an aspect of authenticity (see McManus 2012: sec. 6.4 and 2015a) and plays a role in Heidegger’s later reflections on technology (see McManus (forthcoming)).

²⁵ These are not merely claims about Heidegger’s philosophy; rather ‘the phenomenological way of consideration’ is ‘alive in every originally philosophizing work’ (PS 6, cf. OHF 57). Consequently, a ‘return to the subject’, where this ‘subject’ bears the hallmarks of *dasein*, is systematically present in philosophy too: ‘Man’s soul is, in a certain way, entities’ (*De Anima* Γ 8, 431b21, quoted at SZ 14), proposes Aristotle, an idea echoed in Aquinas in that of an ‘entity which, in accordance with its very manner of being, is properly suited to “come together with” entities of any sort whatsoever’ (SZ 14). But this, Heidegger insists, ‘has obviously nothing in common with a vicious subjectivizing of the totality of entities’ (SZ 14), and also must be juxtaposed with the theme that ‘*dasein* is ontically “nearest” to itself [but] ontologically *furthest away*’, a philosophical pedigree for which Heidegger also identifies: St Augustine, for example, in his discussion of memory and forgetting in book X of the *Confessions*, asks ‘But what is closer to me than myself?’ His answer is ‘I have become to myself a land of trouble’ (quoted in SZ 44, n. i.).

Being and Time pose. But before doing so, I will address in the next two sections an objection that the reading invites, that it distances Heidegger's thought from a problematic form of idealism only by surreptitiously sneaking in an even deeper form.

6. Suspicions of a deeper idealism

The reading offered dispels the fear of idealism by stressing that *dasein* is intimately tied to being, but not to humanity—such that, for example, an examination of *dasein*'s experience can have a bearing on the being of the entities it experiences, whereas an examination of human experience could indeed only do so at the price of idealism. But in closing the gap between *dasein* and being, this may seem to leave a gulf between *dasein* and humanity, and one that can itself only be crossed at the price of idealism. So regarding the above treatment of Heidegger's phenomenology, doesn't it require that he assume (a) that there is such a thing as *dasein* and, even more worryingly, (b) that *we* instantiate it?—that when we perform a phenomenological examination of *our* experience we *are* examining *dasein*'s experience? If the 'transparency' of being for *dasein* does not entail a form of idealism because, as has been argued, being *dasein* is an achievement beyond our merely being human, mustn't we now worry whether we *have* achieved 'dasein-hood'? In trying to resolve the puzzle of how it could be the case that phenomenology is 'the method of ontology', I have effectively split that puzzle into two parts, corresponding to (a) and (b). The first asked which subject it is whose experiences could be relevant to questions of ontology; the second, to which I am turning now, asks whether we have any reason to think that *we* indeed *are* that subject. Heidegger may seem to be uncritical in assuming both (a) and (b). But I suggest that he would respond that we would be uncritical to doubt them: they may not be as easy to do without as we might think.²⁶

When we think about what *dasein* is, we think about what it is for entities to show themselves to other entities—what understanding the former entities would be like and hence what the latter entities (cases of *dasein*, to use a Haugelandian expression) would need to be like. To think that there is such a thing as *dasein* is then

²⁶ Though I won't explore them here, Heidegger's considerations in support of the 'ontic priority' of the question of being (see SZ sec. 4) have a bearing on these issues.

to think that there is such a thing as entities grasping other entities, that there is something—some activity—that, if it were realised in the life of a particular entity, would be its making sense of things. On this construal, (a) is the assumption that things—entities, states of affairs—are not, so to speak, inherently repellent to thought. But this then is equivalent to the assumption that the world is an intelligible place, somewhere hospitable to creatures with understanding—whether any such creatures exist being another question. (a) is, in essence, then the assumption that thought is possible; and it is not that clear that this is an assumption that any philosophy can do without.

But the above remarks may now seem to heap all the trouble on (b): why think *we* are thinking? Why think that there actually are creatures with understanding and that *we* are among them? But this too may not be as easily doubted as might seem, for reasons not dissimilar to those around the *cogito*. To doubt whether one is *dasein* is—among other things—to doubt whether one understands what it is for things to be thus and so. But what then is the object of that doubt? We seem to be being asked to consider whether it might be the case that we cannot consider things being the case—in particular, our being able to consider things being the case. It could be the case that we—as human beings—cannot entertain things being the case, because human beings are not, as such, *dasein*. But if we aren't, we also can't doubt whether we are. Heidegger's judgment of external world scepticism would seem to apply here too: such doubt 'persists only on the basis of a ... misunderstanding of the mode of being of the one who raises the question' (HCT 215). (b) is, in essence, then the assumption that my thinking is possible; and it is not that clear that this is an assumption that any philosopher can do without.²⁷

²⁷ A theme of Sec. 9 is what one can conclude on the basis of the abstract arguments that this paper presents, and here one might wonder just how much are we assuming when we assume (a) and (b), as we must if the present section's argument is sound. One might motivate this latter concern by citing Heidegger's stress on the diversity of ways of being that entities instantiate: perhaps I cannot doubt whether I understand what it is for things to be thus and so, but does that entail that I have within me—so to speak—an understanding of all ways in which entities might be? This is a complex question; but an initial response might point to the level of abstraction of Heidegger's own discussion, the breadth that such 'ways of being' cover. *Very* roughly speaking,

7. On dogmatic caution

It is so difficult to find the *beginning*. Or, better, it is difficult to begin at the beginning. And not try to go further back. (Wittgenstein 1979: sec. 471).

The suspicion of idealism that the previous section tries to counter feeds, I think, on a residual sense that—roughly speaking—grasping being can't be that easy. Perhaps it should be uncontentious that scrutiny of the experience of the entity that possesses an understanding of being should illuminate being—that, if we could start from *there*, then, yes, a grasp of being is possible. But can we? Are *we* that entity? Are *we there*? The response to that worry that I have offered is two-sided. Firstly, grasp of being is *not* easy in that being *dasein* is an achievement and self-obscurity is possible—facts corresponding to the two senses identified above in which our understanding of being must be beholden to the being of entities. But secondly, we must ask 'Easy for whom?' What assumptions are in place in the presumption of *difficulty* here?

Heidegger, I suggest, would see what one might describe as a suspicion of achievement or a dogmatic caution at work here—or rather, one might so describe them if one were to overlook the fact that there is one achievement of which those who insist on such caution are unsuspecting—about which they lack caution—namely, the capacity to bracket or distance themselves from such achievements so as to be suspicious of, or cautious about, them. If Heidegger is right that *dasein* is an essentially understanding entity, such dogmatic caution is unintelligible, in presupposing that understanding to be something that *dasein* may or may not have, a

what we have in the discussion of the ways of being in *Being and Time* is a discussion of what it is for something to be meaningful or matter (to be *zuhanden*), what it is to be an understanding of such things (to be *dasein*), and—with a certain derivative status, the complexities of which is a theme of McManus 2012—what it is for something to merely occur (to be *vorhanden*). If our ambition is to grasp those 'ways of being', it's not that clear that the content of what we must assume when we assume (a) and (b) leaves us falling short.

‘supplementary faculty’ that—if it has it—it has ‘by way of an extra’ (SZ 53). If Heidegger is right, such thinking never actually gets that creature—to use another McDowellian expression—‘in view’.

We see this failure in, for example, the difficulty that Cartesianism has in understanding the intentionality of inner mental states—their being *about* the world knowledge claims concerning which it now prides itself on being cautious; and I suspect we see something similar in Haugeland when the difficult question arises of *what* creature it is that insists on a commitment to the possibility of the non-viability of its understanding of being: the spectre of the ‘pure, isolated, world-needy mineness’ that Dreyfus envisages looms.

Heidegger criticises Cartesianism for presupposing both too much and too little. It ‘believes itself to be eminently critical’ but assumes ‘that at first only the ego is given’, which itself ‘is uncritical’ (WDR 162, 163). But Cartesianism also ‘presuppose[s] ... *too little*’, in that the character of the subject, in which Descartes believes he has found a ‘radical’ ‘new and firm footing’, is left ‘undetermined’ and ‘indefinite’ and its very ‘relation’ to an outer world—even through cautious doubt—left ‘ontologically baseless’ (SZ 316, 24-25). Ultimately, one might say that such a view presupposes too much precisely in presupposing so little, in an uncritical fantasy of being eminently critical, a dogmatic caution. It is my suspicion that the same is true of Haugeland’s outlook: it presupposes too much in demanding, and hence taking as intelligible, caution about our understanding of being—that it too be forced down into the ‘crucible’ of doubt.²⁸

To return to the quotation with which this section began, Heidegger adopted as mottoes for his 1921 Aristotle lectures, two passages from Kierkegaard. According to the first, from *Either/Or*, ‘what philosophy and the philosopher find difficult is stopping’ (1998: 39). To this, Heidegger appends ‘Stopping at the genuine beginning!’ (PIA 137) The second passage, from *Practice in Christianity*, accuses ‘[a]ll of modern philosophy’ of having ‘invited [us] to pride [our]selves on doubting and on having doubted’, a pride in ‘the pretence that humans could ... speculate themselves out of their own skin and into pure appearance’ (Kierkegaard 2015: 81).

²⁸ One might argue that Haugeland is alive to this issue in depicting the non-viability of our understanding of being as precipitating not a Cartesian isolation but death. But this returns us to the issues with which Sec. 3 closed.

As Heidegger translates the passage, this is a pretence—*ein Schein*—that we might live ‘*in den reinen Schein*’, the mere appearance of a cautious refusal to go beyond appearances. As we saw above, Richardson ascribes to the early Heidegger an ‘idealism of being’ and he proposes that the later Heidegger abandoned this when he came to recognize that ‘it expresses a hubristic assumption by man of full authority over the world’ (2012: 240). My reading entails that *man* certainly never had such authority; and I have gone on to argue that the authority we have over the world as *dasein* is simply that which is presupposed in our capacity to think about it.²⁹ But to take pride in entertaining the possibility that that is mere appearance can itself only be mere appearance.

If this argument is correct, then the residual need for a form of idealism, that the objection I have been considering in the present and previous sections claims my reading retains, is actually an illusion; echoing again Heidegger’s treatment of scepticism, the real problem we face here is not that we face a need which only an idealism can meet but that we think that this need is real: the latter and not the former is the real ‘scandal’ here (cf. SZ 205). Setting this objection aside then, I will turn once more to demonstrating the interpretive benefits of adopting my reading by showing in the penultimate section of this paper how it resolves two long-standing puzzles that emerge in the introduction to *Being and Time*.

8. On Heidegger’s Definitions of ‘Being’ and ‘Phenomenology’

The first concerns Heidegger’s definition of ‘being’ as ‘that which determines entities as entities, that on the basis of which entities are already understood’ (SZ 7). Many commentators clearly see this as an unhappy definition—one which throws together two quite different characteristics, calling for us ultimately to plump for either the first clause or the second. For example, in his explanation of ‘being’, Dreyfus quotes the second clause of the definition from SZ 7—‘[b]eing is “that on the

²⁹ Regarding how limited that authority is—and what follows from Heidegger’s claim that we necessarily understand the being of entities, the essence of things, one might say—see the explanation in McManus 2012 (sec. 5.4.2 and 7.2) of how Heidegger accommodates Crispin Wright’s notion of ‘cognitive locality’ (2004: 52).

basis of which beings are already understood”’—but not the first; he does insist that being is ‘a fundamental aspect of entities’ but the aspect is ‘their intelligibility’ (1991: xi). That Heidegger’s adoption of a phenomenological method plays a part in pressing such a choice upon us can be seen in, for example, Lee Braver’s recent proposal that, ‘for Heidegger, phenomenology is the way to study being, which means that we study it as it appears to us’; to make sense of this, he claims further that ‘[b]eing, for Heidegger, means to become manifest or to appear to us’ (Braver 2014: 20, 3). In light of the reading I have offered, these claims can be construed as true but only once the notion of ‘dasein’ and a corresponding re-construal of ‘us’ are in place.

Key to resolving the apparent tension in Heidegger’s seemingly unhappy identification—of ‘that which determines entities as entities’ with ‘that on the basis of which entities are already understood’—is the question, ‘Understood by whom?’ There is no reason to think that the answer is ‘human beings’ and every reason to think it is ‘dasein’. Thus understood, the definition is no idealistic privileging of some particular entity’s understanding—say, over that of some other entity—because ‘dasein’ simply refers to those entities that understand entities. Thus Heidegger’s definition identifies ‘that which determines entities as entities’ with that on the basis of which those entities that understand them understand them: an entity’s being is that which those who understand it grasp, grasping what it is for it to be and the states of affairs in which it might figure. One might then indeed say—in Braver’s wording—that ‘being means to become manifest or to appear to us’ but only as long as the ‘us’ is dasein, as being is that which shows itself to an understanding of being.

The second long-standing puzzle concerns the definition of ‘phenomenology’ that Heidegger develops in sec. 7 of *Being and Time*. The definition is both bafflingly abstract and can seem to deny phenomenology its very subject-matter: if phenomenology ‘means ... to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself’ (SZ 34), then the subject-matter of this ‘science of appearances’ seems now to be the entities that appear. That Heidegger should make such a claim is intelligible as it forms part of a case for believing that ‘phenomenology is the science of the being of entities—ontology’ (SZ 37). But the price of the plausibility of these claims seems to be a denial that phenomenology is a science *of* appearances. Heidegger’s successor to Husserl’s study of ‘pure consciousness’ seems simply to have a different subject-matter altogether—the

entities that any such consciousness might reveal.³⁰

The key to understanding this transformation lies, I suggest, in the further ‘purification’ that Heidegger insists phenomenology requires. Husserl distinguished phenomenology from psychology on the grounds that the former studies ‘pure consciousness’ rather than, say, merely human consciousness.³¹ But, for Heidegger, of course, there is a lingering ‘impurity’ in seeing our understanding as a form of *consciousness*, an ‘impurity’ which, Heidegger might propose, it is in the spirit of Husserl’s project to expunge. No more is it a concern of that venture to understand how entities show themselves to human consciousness as opposed to, say, dolphin or Martian consciousness than it is to understand how entities show themselves to consciousness as opposed to some other manner in which entities might be taken in. Rather ‘consciousness’ *is* ‘that which takes entities in’, the purity of Husserl’s project being to see what it is for entities to be taken in—and not, say, what it is for some consciousness or other understood in some less abstract, less ‘pure’ sense to take entities in. Hence, we find the further purification in Heidegger’s work of ‘pure consciousness’ to *dasein*—to an understanding of being, an understanding of what it is for things to be and to be thus-and-so.³²

³⁰ Heidegger goes so far as to deny that phenomenology is distinguished by a ‘subject-matter’, by the ‘demarcation’ of ‘the what of the object’ of its research, some ‘*regional category*’ or ‘*material content*’ as ‘theology, biology, etc.’ are (SZ 27, 34, OHF 60, 57, HCT 85, cf. SZ 34-35, OHF 53, 56-58). For a further argument that Heidegger’s ambitions for phenomenology—and in particular here its becoming a ‘universal science’—presuppose a brand of idealism, see Okrent 1988: ‘the phenomenological analysis and description of subjectivity are valuable insofar as transcendental subjectivity grounds the way all beings are ... It is for this reason that phenomenology, the science that investigates subjectivity, is the method of universal science’ (p. 242). (The argument of the present paper clearly has a bearing on the broader issue of the place of the ‘transcendental’ in Heidegger’s thought; but I have set that aside here.)

³¹ See, e.g., Husserl 1998: 64 and HCT 100 and 106.

³² Of the many other extended discussions relevant here (such as OHF 53-60 and the ‘Preliminary Part’ of HCT), Part 1 of IPR is noteworthy as Heidegger’s first attempt at the redefinition of ‘phenomenology’ by reference to its Greek etymological roots, a

But phenomenology as the study of this ‘purified’ counterpart to ‘pure consciousness’ now becomes the study of how things show themselves to those entities to which entities show themselves; this is a study of how entities show themselves when they show themselves—of how entities are understood when understood, of how entities show themselves to those who understand them. But that, of course, is then a study of how those entities *are* and can *be*.³³ Thus, ‘*phenomenology is ontology*’ (cf. SZ 35), and ‘means ... to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself’ (SZ 34). This ‘science of appearances’ can be ontology if the subject of these ‘appearances’ is

redefinition central to SZ sec. 7; and conspicuously, IPR also addresses two further key themes from the reading I have offered. The first is the identification of a subject in whose experiences the world reveals itself, experiences an examination of which might then reveal that world. This is the entity that speaks, ‘[t]he world’s being and [its] being hav[ing] a quite *specific connection* with one another, thanks to *speaking’s being*’: ‘[i]n speaking, the world’s being is here as existing, pointed out from the ground up, taken hold of in itself’ (IPR 33, 18, cf. OHF 58-59, HCT 84-85 and SZ 25, 32-33). The second theme is Heidegger’s distancing of his broader conception of phenomenology from ‘present-day phenomenology’ for which ‘consciousness [has] establish[ed] itself as the field of research’; the Greeks, Heidegger proposes, embraced phenomenology in the former sense (see n. 25 above), but, ‘[i]n Greek philosophy, there is no concept of consciousness’ (IPR 38, 35, 36).

³³ The fact that Heidegger says that the object of phenomenology is ‘the *being* of entities’ and that this ‘lies *hidden* (SZ 35) might seem to count against its identification with how entities show themselves to those who understand them. But this, of course, returns us to themes from Sec. 5. Being may remain hidden in failing to be properly reflected in our philosophizing. But what makes the relevant uncovering possible is the fact that being ‘lies *hidden* ... but at the same time ... belongs to what shows itself’: it ‘shows itself unthematically’ in what we do—as *dasein*—understand (SZ 31, 35).

Dasein, because how entities show themselves to Dasein is how they show themselves to be, Dasein being the entity that understands them.³⁴

9. Are we out of the woods?

This paper has argued that the notion that our understanding of the being of entities must be beholden to those entities is—as Haugeland rightly claimed—crucial to Heidegger’s thought; but I have also argued that to understand how we must follow a different path from that which Haugeland proposed. In making a case for taking the path that I would have us follow, a central concern of this paper has been to show how it opens up quite a different view of the methodological landscape. This does not mean that Heidegger’s path is clear or that he no longer faces problems; but the problems he faces are not those we may have thought he faces.

I have offered an explanation of how in principle Heidegger’s methodology could make sense, an explanation which challenges certain suspicions that his way of thinking is wrong-headed from the off. But this explanation does not demonstrate that the conclusions he reaches when he sets that way of thinking to work are sound. On the basis of the resources that this paper has set on the table, very little follows about the substantive conclusions that make up the major part of Heidegger’s fundamental ontology. None of the above entails that Heidegger’s efforts to let show, point out, make explicit or interpret what we already understand being to be are successful—that he himself actually manages to escape dasein’s tendency to misunderstand its own understanding.³⁵

³⁴ Hence, Heidegger’s recurrent insistence that the ‘phenomena’ of ‘phenomenology’ are not semblances or *mere* appearances—not seemings but showings (cf. PS 406). Cf., e.g., BCAP 65, PS 6, 406, HCT 81, and SZ 28-31.

³⁵ Indeed a Descartes might claim to be insisting on just the kind of capacity to understand upon which the argument of Sec. 6-7 insists while, at the same time, disagreeing about what form it takes: he might claim to be turning phenomenological attention back on to the subject and to have found there a capacity to entertain clear and distinct ideas and an already-possessed—and hence ‘recallable’—concept of ‘God’ grounding our capacity to think our familiar world.

By way of example, let us consider in closing one issue that those efforts face. I discussed above the worry that Heidegger may seem to need to make the problematic assumption that when we perform a phenomenological examination of *our* experience we *are* examining *dasein's* experience. If the argument of Sec. 6-7 were to prove successful, it would show that we cannot doubt we are *dasein*; but that does not entail that when we describe our understanding of entities, we are *succeeding* in describing *dasein's* understanding as such, because what we are picking out may instead be features that are characteristic of our human realisation of *dasein's* understanding of entities. Heidegger insists in MFL that '[n]eutral *dasein* is never what exists': '*dasein* exists in each case only in its factual concretion' (MFL 137). If so, descriptions of our experience may capture features it possesses by virtue of our being *dasein* or merely by virtue of our 'factual concretion' of *dasein*.

Husserl saw Heidegger's analytic of being-in-the-world as wrongheadedly 'laying the foundations of philosophy' in a 'science of human being', philosophy 'supposedly now to be constructed entirely anew from out of human *dasein*' (1997: 485-86).³⁶ We can see now what's wrong with that view at the level of principle: *dasein* cannot be identified with humanity. But whether the fact that the descriptions one finds in a work such as *Being and Time* are *intended* to be descriptions of *dasein's* understanding rather than human understanding does not entail that they are, that they uncover 'not just any accidental structures, but essential ones, which, in every kind of being that factual *dasein* may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its being' (SZ 17).³⁷ Resources beyond those marshalled here would need to be called upon to demonstrate that.³⁸ But a case has been made here for thinking that the approach that Heidegger seeks to implement does not face an objection to which it has often been subjected—that his 'phenomenological ontology' (SZ 38) must rest on a

³⁶ Cf. also Husserl 1997: 284, 455 but also 469.

³⁷ The related issue of whether the project of *Being and Time* is inherently idealistic or subjectivist or instead merely runs the risk of being so must be borne in mind when we consider Heidegger's own later criticism of that work—for example, when he declares that it 'confront[s] the danger of unwillingly becoming merely another entrenchment of subjectivity' (N vol. 4 p. 141).

³⁸ Husserl, of course, faces a parallel charge. For further discussion of the pertinence of such issues to Heidegger, see Wayne Martin's excellent 2013.

form of idealism; and what has allowed us to see this possibility is a novel picture of ourselves and of how we stand to—and understand—the being of entities.

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