

A HEIDEGGERIAN CONCEPTION OF KNOWLEDGE

ÇAĞLAR ÇÖMEZ

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2014

A HEIDEGGERIAN CONCEPTION OF KNOWLEDGE

Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in the Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Philosophy

by

Çağlar Çömez

Boğaziçi University

2014

Thesis Abstract

Çağlar Çömez, “A Heideggerian Conception of Knowledge”

This thesis is an attempt to develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of the first division of Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*. The first chapter is a brief introduction. In the second chapter, I analyze a series of concepts Heidegger presents in *Being and Time*. The crucial one among these concepts for this thesis is what Heidegger calls “the world.” According to my argument in the second chapter, the world can be regarded as the structure that constitutes the background of our everyday lives. In the second chapter, I also make a distinction between two types of knowledge. I call them “transparent knowledge” and “opaque knowledge.” Transparent knowledge has the world as its object. The objects of opaque knowledge, on the other hand, are present-at-hand entities. In the third chapter, I evaluate two prominent theories on the background. These theories belong to John Searle and Hubert Dreyfus. In the third chapter, I show that both of these theories are open to various objections. In the fourth chapter, I try to show what Heidegger’s views on knowledge amounts to in an important section in *Being and Time* and argue that Charles Guignon’s interpretation of Heidegger’s approach to knowledge is mistaken and depends upon a partial understanding of what knowledge is.

Tez Özeti

Çağlar Çömez, “Heideggerci Bir Bilgi Fikri”

Bu tez, Martin Heidegger’in *Varlık ve Zaman*’ının birinci ayırımı temelinde bir bilgi fikri geliştirmek için bir girişimdir. Birinci bölüm kısa bir giriştir. İkinci bölümde Heidegger’in *Varlık ve Zaman*’da sunduğu bir dizi kavram analiz edilmektedir. Bu kavramlar arasında bu tez için en önemli olanı Heidegger’in “dünya” adını verdiği kavramdır. Benim ikinci bölümdeki argümanıma göre dünya bizim günlük yaşamımızın arka planını oluşturan yapı olarak değerlendirilebilir. İkinci bölümde iki tür bilgi arasında bir ayırım da yapılmaktadır. Bu bilgi türlerine “transparan bilgi” ve “opak bilgi” adları verilmektedir. Transparan bilginin nesnesi dünyadır. Opak bilginin nesnesi ise mevcut-olan nesnelerdir. Üçüncü bölümde arka plan üzerine önde gelen iki teori değerlendirilmektedir. Bu teoriler John Searle’e ve Hubert Dreyfus’a aittir. Üçüncü bölümde bu teorilerin ikisinin de çeşitli itirazlara açık olduğu gösterilmektedir. Dördüncü bölümde Heidegger’in *Varlık ve Zaman*’ın önemli bir bölümünde bilgiye dair görüşlerinin ne anlama geldiği gösterilmekte ve Charles Guignon’ın Heidegger’in bilgiye yaklaşımı hakkındaki yorumunun hatalı ve bilginin ne olduğuna dair eksik bir anlayışa dayandığı iddia edilmektedir.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are various people who directly or indirectly contributed to this thesis. They have been an important part of the background that made it possible for me to write it. I am indebted to each of them. However, here it is possible to mention only a couple of them. I would like to thank Prof. Murat Ba. He has been both a mentor and a friend to me while I was writing this thesis. He and the other members of my jury gave me extremely valuable insights. Therefore, I would like to thank Prof. Johannes Fritsche and Prof. Kaan H. kten. And I am grateful to my colleagues Umut Eldem, Hseyin Kuyumcuođlu, Gizem Atalay and Cansu Akarsu for their friendship and support. Our discussions on many themes in philosophy were a great source for this thesis. I thank my family which has always been at the center of my life. Ali Kemal omez deserves a special place here. He is not only a wonderful brother but also one of my best friends. I am indebted to Aylin Yılmaz for checking the format this thesis. I thank TUBİTAK for the scholarships they provided me with since my undergraduate education.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: THE WORLD AS THE BACKGROUND OF EVERYDAYNESS AND TWO TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE.....	4
Introduction.....	4
The World.....	9
The World and Two Types of Knowledge.....	38
CHAPTER 3: TWO THEORIES ON THE BACKGROUND.....	49
Introduction.....	49
John Searle’s Theory of the Background.....	50
Hubert Dreyfus’ Account of the Background.....	69
Concluding Remarks.....	80
CHAPTER 4: THE STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE IN <i>BEING AND TIME</i> : A POSSIBLE OBJECTION.....	83
Introduction.....	83
Knowing the World as a Founded Mode.....	85
Guignon on Heidegger’s Approach to Knowledge.....	91
Response to the Objection.....	99
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	102
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	107

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to consider the notion of knowledge in a Heideggerian context in general, and to develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of the framework of the first division of Heidegger's magnum opus *Being and Time* in particular. It has three main chapters. This chapter is for introductory purposes and the last one is a brief conclusion. These chapters do not add to the content of this thesis. In other words, the claims, arguments, and interpretations I develop are in the second, third, and fourth chapters.

In the second chapter, I have three main purposes to realize. First, I will try to provide a brief historical background to what Heidegger was reacting to and what he wanted to achieve in the first division of *Being and Time*. I will show here how Heidegger tries to overcome the philosophical tendency to consider ourselves as beings with subjective "inner" mental contents that represent a world of objects. Second, I will try to present a number of concepts that are pivotal in Heidegger's discussion in the first division of *Being and Time*. The most important of these concepts will be what Heidegger calls "the world." I will argue that what we see in Heidegger's analysis of this concept is that our engagements with entities around us are of such a character that they are carried out by us always against a "background." Third, I will try to show that Heidegger's analysis also provides us with the opportunity to make a distinction between two ways of knowing the world. I will call the first one "transparent knowledge" and the second one "opaque knowledge." I will

characterize them by especially drawing on Heidegger's notions of readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand.

Since the idea of the background is a central one in the second chapter, I will move onto a discussion and an evaluation of two contemporary prominent theories of the background in the third chapter. First, I will consider John Searle's theory of the background that he developed in many of his books. The primary text for me here will be his book *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. I will show that Searle is committed to the idea that I defend in the second chapter. This is the view that in order for us to relate to entities around us in our everyday situations, we need a background. However, I will argue that Searle's theory suffers from two objections. I will develop the first objection on the basis of what he further says about the neurophysiology of the background in his book *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. The second will be an objection about Searle's critique of phenomenology. After these objections, I will move onto my analysis of Hubert Dreyfus' views on the background. I will show that Dreyfus agrees with the idea that having the background is a condition for us to intentionally relate to the world. However, I will again argue that Dreyfus' views on the background have two problems. The problems his theory of the background faces are due to his radical claim that the background involves nothing beyond skills and practices.

In the fourth chapter, I will try to formulate a possible objection to what I do in the second chapter. The literature on Heidegger's approach to knowledge creates the impression that for Heidegger the average everydayness of Dasein excludes all ways of knowing the world. Because of this, many Heidegger scholars tend to argue that developing a conception of knowledge on the basis of the first division of *Being and Time* goes against the very intentions Heidegger has there. I will argue, in the

fourth chapter, however, that once we make a distinction between different ways of knowing the world, we see that what Heidegger argue against is a certain characterization of what knowledge is. Therefore, I will claim that what I do in the second chapter has a legitimate basis in the first division of *Being and Time*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WORLD AS THE BACKGROUND OF EVERYDAYNESS AND TWO TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the distinction I make between two types of knowledge on the basis of the conceptual framework of the first division of *Being and Time*. I will call these types of knowledge “transparent knowledge” and “opaque knowledge.” As I will consider in more detail later, the reason why I use the words “transparent” and “opaque” is that transparent knowledge is of such a character that when we have it, it directs us to the world without itself becoming the primary object of our attention but opaque knowledge does not have this character. In this chapter, I will especially be following Heidegger’s analysis of what he calls the “phenomenon of the world.” I will explain his notion of the phenomenon of the world by making use of a set of concepts that Heidegger explicates in the first division of *Being and Time*. This set of concepts will be central to the whole of my thesis. By giving an analysis of what Heidegger understands from these concepts I will show that in order for us to meaningfully relate to the world around us, there must be a background against which entities are intelligible for us. I will argue that this background is not something that we are explicitly aware of. Our understanding of it is an implicit one. And this background is the object of what I call “transparent knowledge.” As I will show, however, we do not know the world only transparently. When entities around us are of the character of “presence-at-hand,” our knowledge of them is of a different

type. In other words, that type of knowledge which has present-at-hand entities as its object is different from transparent knowledge. I call this type of knowledge “opaque knowledge.”

I will begin this chapter by firstly situating Heidegger’s general concern in the first division of *Being and Time* into a historical context. I will briefly examine the way Heidegger tries to overcome some of the important assumptions that many modern philosophers made by making a reference to Descartes’ *Meditations*. This will be helpful in understanding the set of concepts that I mentioned above better. Having done that, I will move on to a discussion of these concepts.

Descartes, Heidegger, and the World

It can be confidently argued that the main philosophical problems the philosophers in the early modern period tried to address and solve were those which were produced by a skeptical attitude towards our relation to the external world around us and the relation we have to other beings like us. It can also be said that the responses that the philosophers in the early modern period developed to that skeptical attitude created, to a large extent, the philosophical atmosphere in which most of the subsequent modern philosophers will be working. Heidegger, however, considered his philosophical production as a whole, and *Being and Time* in particular, as a departure from this philosophical atmosphere and also as a bridge to a different way of doing philosophy.¹ Heidegger, in his deviation from the modern philosophical atmosphere,

¹ Here one can argue, concerning the relationship between *Being and Time* and modern philosophy, that *Being and Time*, even if it is a deviation from modern philosophy, is a book which is precisely within the modern philosophical spirit. I agree with this claim. As will be seen below, Descartes, as the father of modern philosophy, took human mind and subjectivity to be the center of his philosophy in the sense that human subjectivity is the source from which basic truths can be derived. In other words, human beings, for Descartes, are the entities that the philosopher must be primarily interested

aimed at revealing those aspects of human existence which were overlooked by the philosophical tradition. And one of the major philosophical figures that Heidegger reacted against was Descartes to whom Heidegger himself devoted important sections in the first division of *Being and Time*.²

Descartes, in his *Meditations*, was seeking an epistemological foundation for all the beliefs he had. He was convinced that this foundation must be free from all the doubts one can raise against it. In other words, for Descartes if we are to have an edifice of knowledge which comprises various elements such as scientific beliefs about the different structures of the universe or theological beliefs about the nature of God, we need a *clear* and *distinct* belief which would constitute an epistemological starting point. In his search for such an indubitable foundation for knowledge Descartes employed what is called the “methodological doubt.” This meant for him that we attain knowledge in the securest way possible only if every belief and every capacity of us which have even the smallest trace of doubt is discarded as false and unreliable.³

One can see at this point the important guiding element that I mentioned above in Descartes’ investigation. This guiding element is the need to fight against

in. One can say that many important figures in modern philosophy after Descartes took the human being as the center of their philosophies. This becomes more apparent when we turn to Kant’s “Copernican Revolution” in philosophy. For Kant the world as we experience it is a subjectively structured world and human knowledge about the world is always shaped by his subjectivity. Therefore, the philosopher must give an analysis of those subjective structures which make it possible for human beings to have a world. Similarly the entity that Heidegger will be primarily interested in at *Being and Time* is again the human being and Heidegger will be interested in the structures of Dasein’s existence which make it possible for it to have a world. Heidegger himself made the claim that the way of doing philosophy present in *Being and Time* was still not a strict break from modern subjectivity. However, I need to say that even if I accept that *Being and Time* was a book written within the modern philosophical spirit for the reason I just mentioned, I *do* believe that Heidegger’s main aim was to reject a certain modern traditional view of human beings and their place in the world and that he is to a large extent successful in his attempt. To put my point differently, I believe that *Being and Time* was a modern book which reacted against his own spirit in a successful way.

² See especially Sections 19, 20, and 21 of *Being and Time*.

³ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2003), p.67.

the skeptic who is in a position to reject nearly any claim to knowledge. One can, for example, believe that there is a world of objects and as human beings, who have perceptual and the relevant conceptual capacities, we can have empirical knowledge about the objects that we encounter around us. The skeptic can argue, however, that this belief in the external world and our capacities to gain empirical knowledge about it is far from constituting knowledge since the objects we have in experience, the skeptic could claim, are merely ideas or impressions that occur only in our minds. For the skeptic, therefore, if one is to prove that his empirical beliefs really constitute knowledge about an external world, one should justifiably make a leap from an internal subjective realm to the world of objects. In other words, insofar as there is an epistemological gap between the human mind and the world that is supposed to affect it, we cannot claim to have any empirical knowledge about the world.

Now, Descartes took this problem, which is usually called the “problem of the external world,” very seriously and provided his own solution for it. His own solution took its departure from the clear and distinct belief that he was after. This clear and distinct belief, for Descartes, was nothing other than “cogito, ergo sum” or “I think, therefore I am.” He reached this belief through a reasoning which is limited by his methodological doubt. His methodological doubt prohibited him from making any reference to those beliefs that he acquired through sense-perception. The reason why he was prohibited in this way was his observation that his sensory capacities deceived him many times concerning, for instance, the shape or the location of distant objects. According to how his methodological doubt operates, Descartes cannot rely on a capacity which has deceived him even once. The only entity whose existence Descartes could be certain was his own self. However, the crucial point we need to make here is that this self is not something that is embodied within the

physical world. The “I” in “I think, therefore I am” refers to a private mental sphere in which one finds a number of mental states ranging from various sorts of beliefs to sense impressions. In other words, Descartes’ self which lies at the foundation of his edifice of knowledge can be understood as an entity with private mental states without any reference to an external world around it. Descartes believes that he can develop such an understanding of the “I” of “I think, therefore I am” without making the doubtful assumption that it is situated within a world. Furthermore, the existence of the external world is proved by Descartes through a reference to the idea of an omnibenevolent God that this worldless subject could find in itself. So the important conclusion that Descartes derived from his meditations is that a proper ontology should primarily operate on the basis of a strict distinction between an “inner” realm referred to as subject, or “I,” with a number of mental contents, such as sensory impressions, that represent their inferentially arrived objects and an “outer” realm of objectivity.⁴

One of the main aims that Heidegger set himself in the first division of *Being and Time* was to consider human beings from a perspective that lays the basis to overcome exactly this distinction between an inner subjective realm and an objective realm of objects. According to Heidegger’s interpretation of the way human beings exist, we are primarily not worldless subjects that undergo different mental states but beings whose basic state is “being-in-the-world.” Once this unitary phenomenon is explicated clearly and understood in the way it deserves, we will see, Heidegger claims, that the skeptical problem of the external world is actually at most a pseudo-

⁴ One can easily see that most of the early modern philosophers who came after Descartes were committed to this distinction as well. One of these philosophers is John Locke who defended, as Descartes did, representationalism according to which the immediate objects of the mind are representations of an external world and in stepping outside itself the mind makes an inference to the objects that its ideas represent. It can also be seen that Hume, who was a phenomenalist, carried Descartes’ and Locke’s representationalism to its logical conclusion by denying any justifiable attempt to make such an inference.

problem which is a product of a derivative mode of comportment towards entities. He says in reaction to Kant that the “scandal of philosophy” is not that no philosopher has been able give a proof of the external world yet but that such a proof has been expected and given again and again.⁵ The world, for Heidegger, is not something that one makes a justifiable leap to from an inner realm but an indispensable element of the way human beings are. And the way Heidegger explicates the phenomenon of the world largely proceeds through his phenomenological interpretation of “readiness-to-hand” (Zuhandenheit), which I will explain below.⁶

The World

Existentials, Categories, Dasein, and the World

In order to appreciate Heidegger’s analysis of the world, we need to consider a couple of concepts that are of the highest importance not only for his discussion of the world but for the whole *Being and Time*. Two of these concepts are “category” and what Heidegger calls “existential.” The concept of category has a long history from Aristotle down at least to Kant and it has been made use of in many ontological contexts including the ones in which the nature of human beings were trying to be explicated. We will see that Heidegger, by using and contrasting these concepts to each other, is arguing against a traditional view.

⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1962), p.249.

⁶ In this thesis I will follow the Macquarrie & Robinson translation of *Being and Time* which renders “Zuhandenheit” as “readiness-to-hand” and “Vorhandenheit” as “presence-at-hand.” So I will not be using the words “handiness” and “objective presence.”

The concept of existential can be explicated easily if we turn back to Kant whose critical project was in many respects strikingly similar to that of Heidegger in *Being and Time*. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* what Kant was reacting against was a certain conception of the human mind which takes it to be something passive in its relation to the world that it relates to. According to this conception, when the human mind relates to the world, the world impinges upon it and produces empirical data that are already structured without any aid from the human mind. Kant's idea was that this view of the mind and how it empirically relates to the world around itself was mistaken because there are certain conditions that must be satisfied in order for the human mind to meaningfully relate to the world and these conditions are subjective in the sense that they are imposed upon what we experience by nothing other than the mind itself. This, Kant believed, was the philosophical counterpart of Copernicus' revolutionary hypothesis concerning the movements of the heavenly bodies.⁷

For instance, "space" and "time", for Kant, are two of those conditions.⁸ In any possible way in which we relate to entities around us in perception, our relation is always mediated by space and time. Therefore, our experience of the world is necessarily spatiotemporal. However, space and time are subjective structures of experience that are imposed upon the raw material, so to speak, of experience by the mind. This means that the human subject actively shapes and structures the way he or she experiences the world. It is not that the human mind is just a receptor of already structured sensory data. The important point here in Kant's picture is that the elements which are necessary for us to have experiences of the world are also the

⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p.110.

⁸ See *Transcendental Aesthetic* in *Critique of Pure Reason*

elements that make it possible for us to transcend our inner subjective realm and step into a world of objects. To put it differently, for Kant human beings are in a world by means of a set of subjective elements which both structures and make it possible for them to have experiences.

As I mentioned above, Heidegger does not want to build a theory on the relation between human beings and the world in a manner which rests upon a distinction between an inner subjective realm and an external world of objects. For this reason, he does not want to commit himself to the idea that we are “originally” within a subjective realm and “then” transcend ourselves by means of subjective mental factors. However, he does accept the Kantian idea that there are certain essential structures of our being that make it possible for us to meaningfully relate to entities we encounter within the world. Heidegger calls these structures “existentials.”⁹ In this sense, “the world” is one of the existentials that make us always be outside of ourselves.¹⁰ And one important feature of existentials, which they share with the Kantian conditions of the possibility of experience, is that even if they make us relate to a world, they work transparently. In other words, existentials make possible our relation to the entities around us without revealing themselves explicitly to us. Therefore, as we will see, Heidegger figures out possible ways in which the world as an existential reveals itself phenomenologically to us.

One of the reasons why Heidegger uses the term existential in order to explicate the ontological structure of human beings is that he wants to criticize and reject a traditional approach to the being of humans. This approach interprets the being of humans through a conceptual framework which is actually applicable to beings other than humans. And the conceptual framework which is used in this

⁹ Heidegger, p.70.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.79.

approach is that of “categories.” Heidegger says that existentials “are to be sharply distinguished from what we call *categories*—characteristics of Being for entities whose character is not that of Dasein.”¹¹ I can, for example, say that the pencil in front of me is a substance that has a number of accidents such as color and shape. In the same manner, I can also interpret myself, as Descartes interpreted himself, as a substance or as a subject who undergoes a range of mental states. For Heidegger this manner of interpreting humans does not capture what is distinctive about them. Rather it covers up the very distinctive features of the way human beings are. Therefore, in order not to commit himself to the same failure that many philosophers from the history of Western philosophy committed, Heidegger will not be preferring such notions as subject or mind to designate human beings but rather the term “Dasein.” Heidegger says in the first introduction to *Being and Time*, where he deals with the formal structure of the question of the meaning of being, that “this entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term “*Dasein*”.”¹²

The term Dasein refers to a being who is always already in the world. This means that Dasein is essentially neither a mind which can undergo mental states nor a substance which becomes determinate by having a set of properties. In order to explicate the being of Dasein, the traditional conceptual framework of categories cannot help us. A different conceptual framework must be developed, for Heidegger, to capture the being of Dasein and this different conceptual framework is that of existentials one of which is the world.

¹¹ Heidegger, p.70.

¹² Ibid., p.27.

Presence-at-Hand

Another important notion that we need to consider in order to understand Heidegger's discussion of the world is what he calls "presence-at-hand." Heidegger's notion of presence-at-hand will also play a central role in my conception of one of the types of knowledge I will develop later in this chapter. Heidegger will contrast presence-at-hand to what he calls "readiness-to-hand" which I will examine in detail later. We can easily see in Heidegger's explication of presence-at-hand the same motive that guides his thinking throughout the whole *Being and Time*. This motive leads Heidegger to characterize and eventually reject a traditional view through positing a different conceptual level that is not merely an alternative to the traditional one but also more primary. In other words, his notion of presence-at-hand is used by Heidegger to argue against a traditional interpretation of the entities around us and to claim that this interpretation not only overlooks but also rests upon a more primary phenomenon.

We saw above that Descartes took humans not as beings who are always already in a world but as subjects who are isolated and context-free beings. Descartes was also part of the long tradition which analyzed the being humans have by means of the conceptual framework of categories. Now, Heidegger will argue that this tendency to regard humans as subjects whose nature can be accounted for by means of the vocabulary of categories has a counterpart in the traditional understanding of our relation to the entities around us. This tendency takes entities that we relate to in our environment as isolated context-free beings. When those entities are interpreted in this way, for Heidegger, they become present-at-hand objects.

Present-at-hand objects are those objects which we are not practically engaged with. They are objects for us when we comport ourselves toward the world in a practically disinterested manner. As the objects of our practically disinterested manner of relating to the world around us, present-at-hand entities are also the objects of our theoretical stance. And another crucial feature present-at-hand entities have is that when we relate to them, our awareness of them is an explicit one. In other words, a present-at-hand entity is an entity that we explicitly focus on. For instance, one can take, as many figures in the history of philosophy for Heidegger did, an entity in front of him or herself and look at it without doing anything practical with it or without using it as a tool to produce something to give a characterization of it. In such a relation to the entity, one will end up determining, for example, the length, the shape and other categorical features it has and think that in such a determination one has a full grasp of the nature of that entity. For Heidegger, however, this mode of relating to entities is at most a derivative one which overlooks the fact that in our average everyday activities entities show up in a more primordial and totally different manner. In other words, Heidegger's claim is that the entities around us in the world are not decontextualized present-at-hand objects with context-free properties.¹³

Worldhood as the Aim of Heidegger's Investigation of the World

By making use of his notion of presence-at-hand, Heidegger at Section 14 of *Being and Time* distinguishes four different ways in which the notion "world" is understood. He is making this distinction in order to clarify what he is after in his

¹³ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (London: The MIT Press, 1991), p.84.

search for the phenomenon of the world and separate that distinctive sense in which he takes the notion of world from other senses. So it will be fruitful to consider these four senses in order to understand what Heidegger aims at in his investigation of the world.

The first sense in which the term “world” is used according to Heidegger is a categorical one. World in this sense is the totality of present-at-hand entities.¹⁴ For instance, one can say that the world is the totality of physical objects. So here one firstly identifies a set of objects which are interpreted independently of any practical context and which are unified by sharing a context-free characteristic such as being extended or being physical and then one conceives them as constituting a totality. This totality in this sense is what the world is. On the other hand, as Dreyfus makes it explicit, in this sense of the term, “world” does not necessarily signify only the world of physical objects. One can also think about the world of mathematical objects.¹⁵ The reason why in this sense of the term “world” does not signify only the totality of physical objects is that one can relate to nonphysical objects as present-at-hand entities. The mathematician’s case is a good example for this. He conceives of mathematical objects such as geometrical figures from a practically disinterested manner and insofar he is in this disinterested mode, he is able to determine the mathematical properties these objects have and consider them as constituting a totality of present-at-hand objects.

The second sense of “world” is based upon the first sense of the notion. In this sense “world” is taken to be designating the essential characteristics of the objects the totality of which is regarded as a world in the first sense. In other words, the world is not taken as a totality of entities but as an expression of the being of

¹⁴ Heidegger, p.93.

¹⁵ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p.89.

those entities.¹⁶ Heidegger also says that in this sense of “world” one can again talk about the “world” of a mathematician. One can do so because when the essential characteristics of mathematical objects are defined, one can know that what the mathematician will be dealing with are the entities that will have those essential characteristics.

Heidegger defines the third sense of “world” as “. . . that ‘where-in’ a factual Dasein can be said to live.”¹⁷ One must be aware here of that the word “live” in this definition does not primarily signify a biological phenomenon. The “where-in” in this definition refers to different “special worlds” in which human beings are meaningfully active on the basis of certain shared norms and values.¹⁸ Therefore, we can talk, as Dreyfus says, about “the business world” or “the world of fashion” as different particular special worlds or different where-ins in which human beings meaningfully act and relate to each other through shared norms.¹⁹ This means that when acting in such special worlds as the world of fashion or the business world, our activities are guided and make sense on the basis of a prior understanding of the norms, values, and expectations that govern those worlds. We have this understanding not through explicitly thinking about those norms or expectations but they become embedded in our activities without requiring us to be aware that we learn to act according to them. They are always already transparently present in and guiding our activities.

Finally the forth sense of “world” is what Heidegger calls *worldhood*.

Worldhood designates the ontological structure of any particular special world that I

¹⁶ Heidegger, p.93.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.79.

¹⁸ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p.90.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.89.

referred to in the previous paragraph. Heidegger says that “worldhood itself may have as its modes whatever structural wholes any special ‘worlds’ may have at the time; but it embraces in itself the *a priori* character of worldhood in general.”²⁰ So worldhood is the *a priori* constituting element of any where-in, or any special world, that Dasein can be said to “live.”

We can say that Heidegger is interested in both the third and the fourth sense of “world.” He will, for example, give a phenomenological description of the special world of the craftsman in which an account of how he relates to hammers or nails has its own explanatory function. However, his primary aim is not merely to give a phenomenological description of a couple of special worlds. Rather, Heidegger wants to lay out the *a priori* structure each special world we might be in by means of his phenomenological description. In other words, although Heidegger will also be using the term in its third sense especially when he is trying to explicate the special world of the craftsman, worldhood is the sense of “world” that he will be investigating.

If we contrast the third sense of “world” especially with one of the implications of the first sense of the term, we can see an important aspect of what Heidegger understands from the phenomenon of the world. We said that according to the first sense of “world,” the world is a totality of present-at-hand entities. So, as Dreyfus points out, according to this sense of the term the relationship between the world and entities in it can be taken as physical “inclusion.” Therefore, if one takes the sense of “world” to be the first one, one can say that Dasein is “in” the world as my computer, for example, is in this room. However, the way Dasein is in the world cannot be reduced to physical inclusion. The sense in which an entity which is not

²⁰ Heidegger, p.93.

Dasein is in a place and the sense in which Dasein is in the world are completely different.²¹ And if we interpret the way we are in the world by modeling it on the way other entities are in the world, then we completely miss the significance of the phenomenon of the world and reduce ourselves and the world into mere present-at-hand objects one of which includes the other.

Heidegger claims that the ontologies produced previously did not pay the due attention to the phenomenon of the world and it has been passed over.²² The primary reason why it was passed over was that the world has been interpreted only by taking decontextualized present-at-hand entities into account. However, as I mentioned above, presence-at-hand is a derivative mode of relating to entities around us. The mode of relating to entities relative to which presence-at-hand is a derivative phenomenon is the mode that we are in in our everyday life. Heidegger believes that the proper interpretation of the being that Dasein has must make it “show itself in itself and from itself. And this means that it is to be shown as it is proximally and for the most part—in its average everydayness.”²³ The kind of being that is closest to Dasein, Heidegger suggests, is its “average everydayness.” Heidegger will base his account of the world on his analysis of our average everydayness. His idea is that the phenomenon of the world can be understood properly only if one gives a proper analysis of the way Dasein dwells in the world in its plain average everyday situations. And the analysis of Dasein’s average everydayness will proceed through an examination of its daily environment. But this examination will in turn be developed on the basis of an understanding of those entities which are most closest to

²¹ Heidegger, p.81.

²² Ibid., p.93.

²³ Ibid., p.38.

us in our environment. In other words, we will be considering a special type of entity within the world in order to reach the phenomenon of the world.

Readiness-to-Hand and Reference

According to what I have been articulating so far, it has already been implied that the entities that Heidegger will be interested in his analysis of Dasein's average everydayness are not present-at-hand objects which show themselves to a practically disinterested subject. Here one can ask what else remains given the fact that nearly all the entities we have in our everyday life can be the object of a disinterested subject. Heidegger's answer to this question is that we do not need anything other than those very entities which *may* become objects for a disinterested subject. However, what we need to realize is that those entities can also show up in a very different way when we are actively using and manipulating them in the context of our average everydayness. In other words, an entity can be considered as a substance with a number of properties by a disinterested observer but the same entity is understood by another person who is practically engaged with that entity in a different way in which the vocabulary of substances and accidents has no place. Heidegger says that "in the domain of present analysis, the entities we shall take as our preliminary theme are those which show themselves in our concern with the environment."²⁴ Heidegger thinks that those entities which are understood and show themselves in such concern are "equipment" and the mode of being that belongs to equipment, for Heidegger, is "readiness-to-hand" and readiness-to-hand is that relative to which presence-at-hand is a derivative and deficient phenomenon.

²⁴ Heidegger, p.95.

One can also ask whether Heidegger is mistaken in his search for the phenomenon of the world because of his or her assumption that if we are to understand the real nature of an entity, we need to take a theoretical stand in which we perceive that entity without engaging practically with it and say that Heidegger is doing exactly the opposite and ruling out the very possibility in which entities around us show their real objective features to us when we are observing them from a theoretical point of view. Heidegger's answer is relatively straightforward since he rejects the very assumption that entities genuinely show themselves to us only in the theoretical mode. For Heidegger the ontological structure of the entities within the world does not reveal itself to us insofar as we remain in a theoretical mode in which we merely look at or observe things because the theoretical mode is just another instance of the mode that the disinterested subject has. Even if the traditional philosopher who takes the theoretical attitude towards entities within the world is very good at giving a detailed analysis of entities according to what he has in perception, he cannot reach the more primordial level in which those entities reveal their being by being used or produced. As Heidegger says "such entities are not thereby objects for knowing the 'world' theoretically: they are simply what gets used, what gets produced, and so forth."²⁵

Here one can also think that in Heidegger's idea that perception is something deficient when compared to using and producing an entity, there is something absurd because it is an obvious fact that we do perceive and observe entities in our practical activities in our average everydayness. Therefore, Gerner makes a very helpful distinction between what he calls "engaged perception" and "pure perception."²⁶

²⁵ Heidegger, p.95.

²⁶ Paul Gerner, *Heidegger's Being and Time: An Introduction* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.40.

Engaged perception is the perception I have when I use or produce a piece of equipment. In engaged perception I perceive the equipment that I make use of *as* something that is to be used in a particular manner. To give Heidegger's favorite example, I can use a hammer in order to nail two pieces of wood together. While doing so, I perceive the hammer "as a hammer that is used to make things fast." And insofar as I remain in that practical mode, I do not explicitly focus on the sensory qualities of the hammer. This happens only if the activity is interrupted. However, in pure perception, which is the ground of the theoretical attitude, I explicitly perceive a number of sensory qualities such as color or shape of an isolated substance. The entity is now perceived no more as a piece of equipment that I use in order to produce something but as a present-at-hand entity with a number of context-free properties.

What is helpful in this distinction is that when we say that for Heidegger perception is a deficient mode, we are actually referring to a particular mode of perception in which the "ready-to-hand as structure" has no role. The mode of perception we have in the context of our average everydayness is engaged perception. Therefore, for Heidegger engaged perception is more basic than pure perception. As Gerner says in favor of Heidegger, it is indeed an achievement to simply see visual colors or simply hear sounds.²⁷ What we primarily see and hear are the hammer and the creaking wagon, not such sensory qualities as colors and sounds.²⁸

Let's turn back to Heidegger's claim that the mode of being entities around us have relative to which presence-at-hand is derivative is readiness-to-hand in which entities are encountered in a more primordial manner. What is important here, as I

²⁷ Gerner, p.40.

²⁸ Heidegger, p.207.

mentioned, is that for Heidegger in our average everydayness, we are neither bare observers nor subjects who attentively consider each and everything that they do but beings that are absorbed within the activities that we pursue in our environment. “This is the way in which everyday Dasein always *is*.”²⁹ Thus, while giving a description of Dasein’s everydayness, Heidegger considers Dasein from a perspective which takes it to be as something completely absorbed in its practical activity. “This description,” as Guignon puts it, “focuses not on the situations in which we are passive spectators, but rather on the contexts in which we are active and engaged in the world.”³⁰

Reference

We are active and engaged in the world by using ready-to-hand equipment. However, Heidegger suggests that “taken strictly, there ‘is’ no such thing as *an* equipment.”³¹ The idea here is that a piece of equipment loses all its ontological significance when it is considered as an isolated object which has no relation to other pieces of equipment. One can even say that once we take a piece of equipment in isolation from other pieces of equipment, what we have is a present-at-hand entity. Therefore, Heidegger suggests that a piece of equipment acquires its equipmental character only by becoming a member of a totality of equipment. This is also one of the conditions for equipment to be intelligible. In other words, I understand a hammer as a piece of equipment that I can use in order to nail pieces of wood only if

²⁹ Heidegger, p.96.

³⁰ Charles B. Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983), p.86.

³¹ Heidegger, p.97.

I understand it as part of a totality of equipment. What this means is that for Heidegger equipment has a holistic nature and he explicates this holism of equipment by his term “reference.” Heidegger’s idea here is that pieces of equipment have constitutive dynamic relations between each other and these relations are called “references.”

One important point must be mentioned here in order to prevent a possible misunderstanding. As is well known, the term reference has a large area of application in different areas in philosophy. The term especially has a significant place in the philosophy of language. Philosophers working in this area are trying to understand, among others, the nature of the fact that some terms such as Venus refer to entities in the world and some do not. What we need to pay attention to is that what they understand from the term reference has nearly nothing to do with the way Heidegger characterizes it. As I just mentioned above, one type of Heideggerian reference is something that exists between different pieces of equipment. It is not something that obtains between linguistic entities and objects or facts in the world. However, when philosophers of language deal with the nature of reference, their basic assumption is that reference is something that exists between linguistic entities such as words and nonlinguistic entities such as objects or states of affair in the world. In other words, they understand the notion of reference in such a way that at the one end of this relationship there is a linguistic entity and at the other a nonlinguistic entity. Therefore, we need to be aware that when we are using the term reference in its Heideggerian sense, we are not taking it as a relation between linguistic entities and nonlinguistic entities. It is just the case that Heidegger and philosophers of language are using the same term to talk about different things. When we analyze what the other types of reference for Heidegger are, we will again

see that reference for Heidegger is not a relation between linguistic and nonlinguistic entities.

Heidegger points out the obvious fact that a piece of equipment is always “in order to” do something. The in-order-to of a piece of equipment specifies the totality of references of which that piece of equipment is a part. For this reason Heidegger says that “in the ‘in-order-to’ as a structure there lies an “assignment” or “reference” of something to something.”³² For example, when I am using this computer in front of me now, it is equipment for me in order to write my thesis. However, the very fact that this computer is something that I am using in order to write my thesis refers me to the light bulb that I need in order to see my copy of *Being and Time*. In order to read my copy of *Being and Time*, I need my glasses. What we see here is that there is a referential whole between my computer, the light bulb and my glasses. One can enlarge this totality of references by showing the references between these pieces of equipment and others as well. And for Heidegger the totalities of equipment we have in our average everydayness are actually much larger than the one we have in this example. This becomes clearer when he says the following: “Equipment — in accordance with its equipmentality — always *in terms of* its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, door, room.”³³ Therefore, the totality of references that I am engaged with when I am using the computer in front of me in order to write my thesis includes nearly all the pieces of equipment that make up my whole room which is itself a ready-to-hand entity.

At this point Heidegger warns us against a possible misunderstanding. In his analysis of reference, Heidegger does not think that we first understand particular

³² Heidegger, p.97.

³³ Ibid., p.97.

pieces of equipment and then combine them together so as to produce totalities of references. The reason for this is that such a characterization of ready-to-hand entities misses the point that I made above; that is, each piece of equipment is intelligible only as a part of a totality of references. Therefore, according to Heidegger the room as the totality of a set of references must show itself in order for other pieces of equipment in it to show themselves.³⁴ In other words, the room is understood by Dasein *before* the computer and the glasses are understood by it. What this implies is that a prior understanding of the totality of references must be available to Dasein otherwise particular pieces of equipment that it needs for its practical purposes cannot show themselves to it in a meaningful way. This takes us to the point I indicated above. I said that Heidegger reacted against the tendency that takes entities within our environment as isolated substances with a set of properties. Now we immediately see why Heidegger was not happy with this characterization of entities. This characterization does not see that the entities we are engaged with in our average everydayness are always embedded within a context of equipment on the basis of which they are capable of making sense to us.

Another peculiar feature of ready-to-hand entities for Heidegger is that the more genuinely they are ready-to-hand, the more transparent they are.³⁵ When Dasein is using a piece of equipment in order to produce something, that piece of equipment withdraws itself otherwise Dasein cannot attend to the work that it wants to produce or at least the smoothness of its activity gets impaired. This is the reason why we say that Dasein is absorbed in its activity in its average everydayness. Ready-to-hand entities are not “things” that we thematically or explicitly attend to. Heidegger says “. . . the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we

³⁴ Heidegger, p.98.

³⁵ Ibid., p.97.

seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment.”³⁶ In our average everydayness we “forget,” so to speak, the entities which we proximally relate to. In other words, they are very close to us but at the same time they are the farthest away. However, the farness and closeness of ready-to-hand entities cannot be reduced, for Heidegger, into distances that one can measure by meters.³⁷ A very good example for this is that when I am writing a text while wearing my glasses, I do not attend to them insofar as the activity is not interrupted. What I concern myself with in such an activity is the text that I am trying to produce on a sheet of paper, not my glasses. Therefore, in this sense of the term distance, even if my glasses are on my nose in front of my eyes, they are more distant than the text I write. My glasses need to withdraw from my attention in order to have the equipmental character that they are supposed to have. Heidegger says “that with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work—that which is to be produced at the time”³⁸ What is also crucial here is that not only particular pieces of equipment that we are engaged with in our practical dealings withdraw from our attention but totalities of references between pieces of equipment withdraw as well. Remember that a totality of equipment itself consists in different pieces of equipment. If it is in the very nature of a piece of equipment that it needs to withdraw itself from our attention, then totalities of equipment must do so as well. However, we need to make a point which is very important for my purposes in this chapter. We need to pay attention to the fact that even though pieces of equipment and totalities of equipment

³⁶ Heidegger, p.98.

³⁷ See Heidegger’s discussion of the spatiality of the ready-to-hand in Section 22 of *Being and Time*.

³⁸ Heidegger, p.99.

withdraw from our attention while we are engaged with them, they do not simply disappear. They withdraw in such a way that they still remain in the background of our dealings in our average everydayness.

I mentioned above that a piece of equipment is always in order to do something. For this reason, Heidegger calls the work that Dasein wants to bring about the “towards-which.” And for him there are references not only between different pieces of equipment one finds in one’s environment but also between a piece of equipment and the towards-which one wants to realize by manipulating it. For example, a carpenter uses his hammer in order to build a hut for himself. In his activity, his hammer refers him to the hut which is the work to be produced with his hammer. Therefore, we need to say that Heidegger is enlarging the entities that totalities of references include. Now totalities of references come to include the works we want to produce by using ready-to-hand entities. This also implies that by becoming a part of the totality of equipment through which ready-to-hand entities are intelligible for Dasein, the work to be produced becomes an element that has its own role in making entities show themselves to Dasein. In other words, without a prior understanding of the work to be produced, Dasein cannot meaningfully relate to ready-to-hand entities around itself in its everydayness.

The World Announces Itself

I mentioned above that in its practical activity in which it uses ready-to-hand entities in its environment, Dasein is absorbed in a context of references. This, Heidegger claimed, is one of the features of its engagement with equipment that enable Dasein to concern itself with the work that it wants to produce. If Dasein explicitly focuses

on the context of references of which the equipment that it is currently making use of is a part, it cannot be successful in its practical activity. At Section 16 in *Being and Time*, however, Heidegger points out that there are certain situations or moments in which the practical activities of Dasein are interrupted. In such moments, Dasein can no more act smoothly for the reason that the equipment that it is engaged with loses its readiness-to-hand. For Heidegger those moments must be phenomenologically interpreted because in them the referential context against which Dasein meaningfully relate to the entities in its environment becomes explicit. When this context is revealed in those moments, the world shows itself explicitly to Dasein. Heidegger, in Section 16, will be considering three moments in which Dasein's practical activity is interrupted and show how the world announces itself through the entities within the world. I will call these moments, "moments of interruption."

Before considering the three moments in which Dasein's activity is interrupted, Heidegger warns us by reminding us again that even if the world announces itself in certain situations, this does not mean that we come to understand the world in which we are engaged with equipment for the *first* time in these situations. He has a negative answer to the questions "Do we not have a pre-phenomenological glimpse of this phenomenon? Do we not always have such a glimpse of it, without having to take it as a theme for ontological Interpretation?"³⁹ As I mentioned above, the world is an existential that makes it possible for us to meaningfully relate to entities around us. As long as we are engaged with equipment in our average everydayness, it must somehow be disclosed to us. This means that the world is a phenomenon of which we always already have an understanding, though the understanding we have of it is for the most part an implicit one. One can

³⁹ Heidegger, p.102.

say that what happens when the world announces itself is that we come to see explicitly what we have already had or understood implicitly. Dasein, as Heidegger says repeatedly throughout *Being and Time*, has an understanding of being and this understanding of being always includes an understanding of its world.

The first moment that Heidegger will analyze is that in which a ready-to-hand piece of equipment is unusable because, for instance, it is damaged or the material constitution it has is not suitable for the activity to be performed. Consider a carpenter who made all his plans to produce a table. He prepares everything that he needs for the production of a table. In order to start working, he grabs his hammer but he suddenly realizes that his hammer is damaged and cannot be used for his productive activity. At this moment, Heidegger suggests, the carpenter discovers the unusability of the hammer and it becomes “conspicuous.” The conspicuousness of equipment further entails that the entity which is no more usable becomes un-ready-to-hand. Heidegger, however, claims that the entity which is not usable for our practical purposes is discovered to be a present-at-hand entity “. . . not by looking at it and establishing its properties, but rather by the circumspection of the dealings with which we use it.”⁴⁰ In other words, the carpenter did not come to see that the hammer is damaged by making it an object of “pure perception” in which any practical purpose that he would realize by using the hammer has no place. He discovered the hammer “as a damaged piece of equipment” which would have its own proper place in the practical context of equipment if it was not unusable. The un-ready-to-hand entity arises, so to speak, from a context of equipment on the basis of which Dasein *expects* entities around itself to fit into its practical purposes. When this expectation is not realized, Dasein encounters an un-ready-to-hand entity. For

⁴⁰ Heidegger, p.102.

this reason, Heidegger says that in all the moments of interruption “the presence-at-hand is still bound up in the readiness-to-hand of equipment.”⁴¹

The second moment of interruption Heidegger takes into consideration is the moment of “obtrusiveness.” Heidegger rightly observes that not only we find pieces of equipment damaged or of the wrong material constitution, we also find ourselves in practical situations in which a piece of equipment we need in order to realize a purpose is missing. Similar to what we have in the moment of conspicuousness, in the moment of obtrusiveness the equipment we are engaged with becomes un-ready-to-hand and our attention is explicitly drawn to it. As I mentioned above, however, the un-ready-to-hand entity that Dasein has in front of itself is not purely a present-at-hand entity. It is again discovered on the basis of the practical context of average everydayness that Dasein meaningfully operates. And for Heidegger the more urgently we need the missing equipment, the more un-ready-to-hand becomes the totality of equipment around us.

Lastly, the third moment of interruption is the moment of “obstinacy.” In the moment of obstinacy, for Heidegger, Dasein encounters an entity which constitutes an obstacle for its practical activity. Let’s modify our previous example in order to see Heidegger’s point here. Suppose again that a carpenter prepares everything in his workshop in order to produce a table and goes to the box in which his hammer lies. However, suppose further that he lost his keys and cannot open the box. The hammer he needs is in the box. So the box becomes an obstacle for him to start his activity. As an obstacle the box is something disturbing for him. Before anything else, he needs to concern himself with the box. Therefore, it is something “which ‘stands in

⁴¹ Heidegger, p.102.

the way' of his concern."⁴² On the other hand, Heidegger again suggests that in the moment of obstinacy, un-readiness-to-hand comes to the fore. The entity which is an obstacle for our practical activity is the un-ready-to-hand object. It stands before us and attracts our attention. We need to note here that the un-ready-to-hand entity is itself originally a piece of equipment that one uses. The box is normally used to store things up. But by becoming an obstacle, it loses its character of readiness-to-hand and introduces presence-at-hand into the context of equipment. For this reason, Heidegger claims that in the moments of interruption "the ready-to-hand is thus encountered under modifications in which *its* presence-at-hand is revealed."⁴³ (Italics mine.)

After considering the three moments of interruption in turn, Heidegger asks how far this consideration clarifies the phenomenon of the world. He answers this question by reminding us of his earlier analysis of the phenomenon of reference and repeats that the structure of the being of the ready-to-hand is constituted by totalities of references.⁴⁴ What is special about these moments of interruption is that in these moments the references that make up the structure of readiness-to-hand are revealed. We need to remember that part of the totality of references that constitute a piece of equipment is what Heidegger calls the towards-this which is nothing other than the work that the piece of equipment is used for. There is, as I mentioned above, a type of reference between equipment and work. This reference further is constituted by what Heidegger calls the "in-order-to." This means that the equipment is in-order-to produce a work. But when the reference between the equipment and the work is disturbed, the reference comes to the fore and explicitly reveals itself to Dasein.

⁴² Heidegger, p.103.

⁴³ Ibid., p.104.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.105.

This is exactly what is happening in these three moments of interruption for Heidegger. In these moments, the reference that a piece of equipment has to the work for which it is a means is manifested. And as the reference between the equipment and the work is explicitly revealed, the work itself is manifested for Dasein. Consider the example we gave in order to explain the moment of conspicuousness again. The hammer that the carpenter needs is understood by him as a tool that one uses in order to nail pieces of wood and produce a table. So the hammer immediately refers the carpenter to the table as the work he needs to produce and insofar as his productive activity is not disturbed, the carpenter has a nonthematic implicit understanding of this reference. But when the carpenter finds out that the hammer is damaged, he now explicitly recognizes the reference between the hammer and the work. Another point which is important here is that for Heidegger in the moments of interruption not only the reference between the equipment and the work is made explicit but the equipmental totality is also revealed. “When an assignment to some particular ‘towards-this’ has been thus circumspectively aroused, we catch sight of ‘towards-this’ itself, and along with it everything connected with the work—the whole workshop—as that wherein concern always dwells.”⁴⁵ Therefore, when the productive activity of the carpenter is interrupted because of a damaged hammer, he comes to have an explicit awareness of the fact that there are references between his hammer and other pieces of equipment which are necessary for the activity to produce the desired result. All these mean for Heidegger that in the moments of interruption the whole workshop of the carpenter, which is nothing other than the special world that he dwells, announces itself.⁴⁶ In other words, in the moments of interruption the equipmental context which is constituted by references is revealed

⁴⁵ Heidegger, p.105.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.105.

and with this context the special world of Dasein itself is also explicitly brought forth.

The Worldhood of the World

As it has already been evident in our analysis so far, the phenomenon of reference is central to Heidegger's conception of the world. The world that Dasein can be said to live in is a world of references in which pieces of equipment and the works it realizes by them are situated. We just saw that when the world announces itself in the moments of interruption, it announces itself by making the references that make up ready-to-hand entities explicitly reveal themselves. The fact that a piece of equipment has a reference to its 'in-order-to' means that the activities that Dasein carries out in its average everydayness are *purposeful* activities. In Section 18 where Heidegger finally spells out what he means by the worldhood of the world, he develops further his analysis of the purposefulness of our practical activities. In order to do this, he makes use of two important concepts: "involvement" and "significance." Now I will move on to present these two concepts and specify what their place in Heidegger's account of the worldhood of the world is.

We can say that involvement is a type of reference either between a piece of equipment and an activity or between different activities. Let's think once again about what a carpenter does when he works in his workshop with his hammer in order to see this point. The carpenter uses his hammer in order to make the pieces of wood which are needed to produce a wooden hut fast. In doing so the carpenter is engaged with the activity of hammering. In other words, the hammer is a tool for the carpenter with which he hammers. For Heidegger this means that "with" the hammer

there is an involvement “in” hammering and this relationship of the “with . . . in . . .” is, as a type of reference, what constitutes an involvement.⁴⁷ So, part of what an involvement is, as I just said, a relationship between a piece of equipment and an activity such as hammering. But Heidegger argues that the activity also has an involvement in another activity. “. . . with hammering,” Heidegger says, “there is an *involvement* in making something fast . . .”⁴⁸ (Italics mine.) And with “making something fast” there is an involvement in “protection against bad weather.” So the activity of the carpenter consists of different minor activities which constitute a relational whole.

This series of involvements, however, terminates in a final involvement which Heidegger calls the “for-the-sake-of-which.” What this means is that the activity that the carpenter pursues is an activity for the sake of an ultimate purpose that he tries to realize. To put it differently, Heidegger argues that each and every activity that Dasein carries out in its average everydayness is for the sake of a possibility of its being. He says that “the primary ‘towards-which’ is a “for-the-sake-of-which”. But the ‘for-the-sake-of’ always pertains to the Being of *Dasein*, for which, in its Being, that very Being is essentially an *issue*.”⁴⁹ And Dasein always has an understanding of the possibility that it tries to realize in its practical activity because this understanding for Heidegger is one of the conditions for it to meaningfully relate to entities around itself.

Here one can see a resonance of an idea that I mentioned above. We said above that Dasein perceives entities in its average everydayness “as” tools to bring about different works. Now we see that perceiving things “as” tools is based upon the

⁴⁷ Heidegger, p.117.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.117.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.117.

fact that Dasein carries out its activities for the sake a possibility of its being and the possibility that Dasein tries to realize constitutes the stand point from which it interprets entities around itself in different ways. To give the example that Dreyfus gives, a philosophy professor who is giving a lecture on Heidegger's *Being and Time* will consider the blackboard in his classroom as something through which he or she can become a good teacher because becoming a good teacher is the for-the-sake-of-which that guides his actions.⁵⁰ However, when the same blackboard is used by another person who acts through a different series of involvements and for the sake of another possibility, it is interpreted in a distinct way and regarded as a different tool.

Heidegger calls the relational whole made up of series of involvements "significance."⁵¹ And significance for Heidegger is constitutive for worldhood. In other words, worldhood, as the a priori structure of any special world that Dasein can be said to 'live,' cannot be divorced from Dasein's possibilities. The way Dasein understands itself in acting for the sake of a possibility of itself is part of the ontological structure of the world that it lives. Here we again see Heidegger's rejection of the Cartesian split between an objective world and a subjective inner realm. The world and the possibilities that human beings try to realize are interconnected to each other. When Dasein relates to the world through a different understanding of itself which puts a priority on certain possibilities and neglects others, it can be said to change the world in which it lives. When the traditional carpenter becomes a businessman who no more works with a hammer but is primarily concerned with financially enlarging his carpentry company, his world is no more a workshop but something different.

⁵⁰Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p.92.

⁵¹ Heidegger, p.120.

Now, after completing our analysis of involvement and significance, we shall ask the question what is it that Heidegger calls the worldhood of the world. In order to answer this question, we need to look at Heidegger's own statement on what the phenomenon of the world is. Heidegger gives the following definition.

Dasein always assigns itself from a "for-the-sake-of-which" to the "with-which" of involvement; that is to say, to the extent that it is, it always lets entities be encountered as ready-to-hand. *That wherein* Dasein understands itself beforehand in the mode of assigning itself is *that for which* it has let entities be encountered beforehand. *The "where-in" of an act of understanding which assigns or refers itself, is that for which one lets entities be encountered in the kind of Being that belongs to involvements, and this "wherein" is the phenomenon of the world.* And the structure of that to which Dasein assigns itself is what makes up the *worldhood* of the world.⁵²

This definition tells us that the world Dasein dwells in is a world in which it projects itself upon certain for-the-sake-of-whiches. And Dasein projects itself upon for-the-sake-of-whiches by using ready-to-hand entities in its environment. Heidegger argues here that an activity that Dasein undertakes with a piece of ready-to-hand equipment to realize a possibility of its being is a state where it implicitly interprets and understands itself in a particular manner. The world is the phenomenon in which such an understanding takes place. Moreover, this definition also reminds us of the point that I made above in my analysis of how the four senses that the term "world" is understood. We saw that the world in its third sense stands for a special world that a particular Dasein can be said to live. In this sense, we can say that the world of the carpenter is his workshop or the world of the university teacher is his campus. The world of the carpenter and the world of the university teacher are worlds where they understand themselves in terms of a for-the-sake-of-which by using ready-to-hand entities. And worldhood is the a priori ontological structure that all these special worlds have. In other words, special worlds are different exemplifications of

⁵² Heidegger, p.119.

worldhood in different forms and insofar as they are worlds, they have the structure of worldhood. And references, involvements, and significances, which I examined so far, are constitutive for the worldhood of the world. “The context of assignments or references . . . is constitutive for worldhood . . .”⁵³ Each special world has its own referential context, totality of involvements and significance whole. What they have in common is worldhood which provides them with their own references, involvements and significances.

We need to be cautious here about a point, however. As that which make up the ontological structure of any special world references, involvements and significances are the a priori structural elements of the worldhood of the world. This means, as I mentioned, that in order for Dasein to relate to any entity around itself, it must have that entity in a context of references, involvements and significances. Without such a context, Dasein cannot meaningfully make entities intelligible to itself within its average way of existing. The world is made possible by contexts of references, involvements and significances. The crucial point here is that Heidegger actually believes that the phenomenon of significance has a role that makes the other a priori structural elements of the world possible. In other words, significance has two roles that make it function as an a priori factor. First, it makes any special world possible. This is a role that it shares with involvements and references. Second, involvements and references depend upon significance to be possible. To put it differently, significance also makes involvements and references possible. Heidegger puts this point by saying the following.

Dasein, in its familiarity with significance, is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world

⁵³ Heidegger, p.121.

*with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves.*⁵⁴

So Dasein must always already be aware of significances in order to discover ready-to-hand entities and references and involvements in which they are situated.

The World and Two Types of Knowledge

The World as the Background of Average Everydayness

As I mentioned above, Heidegger used his notion of readiness-to-hand to explicate the ontological structure the entities we encounter in average everydayness have. And we saw that for Heidegger ready-to-hand entities are intelligible only within a referential whole. His idea was that when we are engaged with a piece of equipment, we act in the midst of a totality of references and these references are constitutive for the ontological structure of ready-to-hand entities. I showed that according to Heidegger's analysis of readiness-to-hand, there are three types of references: First, a ready-to-hand entity always has references to other pieces of equipment in its practical environment. In other words, a ready-to-hand entity is always a member of a totality of equipment. Second, a ready-to-hand entity refers Dasein to a work. This means that there is a reference between a piece of equipment and the work which Dasein wants to bring about by using it. Third, when Dasein deals with the entities in its environment in its average everydayness, with the piece of equipment it is engaged with there is an involvement in an activity. However, for Heidegger when

⁵⁴ Heidegger, p.120.

we deal with pieces of equipment, they do not refer us only to one activity. Heidegger argues that in our practical engagement with a ready-to-hand entity, there is actually a series of involvements. Therefore, with an activity that Dasein undertakes with a ready-to-hand entity there is an involvement with another activity. In other words, we undertake an activity with a piece of equipment to realize a further one. And this series of involvements between different activities terminates in a for-the-sake-of-which that is a possibility for Dasein. As we saw above, Heidegger calls this series of involvements “significance.”

I showed that all these references, including involvement wholes, and significances are what make up the world Dasein dwells in. In other words, the world that we most primordialily live in for Heidegger is a world of references, involvement wholes and significances. The crucial point we need to remind ourselves of here is that the world for Heidegger is not something that we thematically focus on in our average everydayness. As we saw in my analysis of Section 16 of *Being and Time* only in those moments where our practical dealings are interrupted does the world announce itself to us. However, according to Heidegger’s analysis our average way of dealing with the world is of such a nature that it does not show itself explicitly to us. Then our question here again is the following: If the world does not show itself explicitly to us in our average way of existing, what is its function? Or can the world have a function in our average everydayness without explicitly revealing itself to us? We actually gave an answer to these questions when I made a reference to Kant in order to explicate Heidegger’s claim that the world is an existential. I argued that existentials are not different than the Kantian conditions of the possibility of experience in that even though they make a meaningful experience of the world around us possible, they are not what we are explicitly aware of. They serve their

function by remaining in the background of our practical dealings in our everydayness. In other words, the world as a totality of references, involvement wholes, and significances function by making up the background of our average everydayness.⁵⁵ As an existential that belongs to the ontological structure of Dasein, Dasein cannot comport itself to the entities around itself without the world in its background.

Transparent Knowledge

The important point we need to realize here is that we must have an awareness of this background in order to carry out our activities in our average everydayness, and as the awareness of the background of our practical dealings in our environment, it must have the references, involvement wholes, and significances I analyzed above as its object. In other words, the world is the very object of this awareness.⁵⁶ Now I will characterize this awareness we have of the world as a type of knowledge and I will call it “transparent knowledge.” Even though he does not elaborate it, Heidegger is not unaware of the fact that there is a distinctive kind of knowledge that is involved in our activities in our average everyday situations. He says that “the kind of dealing which is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather

⁵⁵ I do not mean, of course, that Heidegger articulated a concept that he called “the background” in *Being and Time*. What I mean is that it is possible to develop such a conception on the basis of what he tells us in *Being and Time*. There are plenty of Heidegger scholars who developed different conceptions of the background on the basis of Heidegger’s early texts. As is well known, Hubert Dreyfus is one the prominent philosophers among them. One can see this especially in his commentary *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I*. One can also see Charles Taylor’s “Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger.”

⁵⁶ One can say that the notion “awareness” is not the best one to describe the kind of understanding we have of the world. I believe that this is right. The word “awareness” has unfortunate connotations. In other words, the term has a philosophical baggage which does not seem to be appropriate here. It is usually thought that when one has an awareness of something, one has a cognitive process in which one is explicitly aware of an object. However, as it will become clearer I do not use this term here in that sense. The reason why I still use term is that I could not find another one I can use instead of it.

that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of 'knowledge'."⁵⁷

When I am using this computer in front of me to write my thesis, I transparently know that it has a reference to my glasses and my copy of *Being and Time*. However, the type of awareness I have of this reference here is of such a nature that what we know by means of it is not a thematic object of our attention. As I analyzed above, when I write my thesis with my computer, what I primarily concern myself is the work that I want to produce with it. Because of this, even if I know transparently that the computer in front of me has references to other pieces of equipment around me in my room, I simply do not pay any explicit attention to them. It is due to the very fact that we do not pay such an attention to what we know about the background of our practical activity we can direct ourselves to the work we want to produce.⁵⁸ Otherwise our productive activity gets interrupted. Only in those cases in which our activity is interrupted can we become explicitly aware of the objects of transparent knowledge. This means that when we know the world transparently in the practical context of our average everydayness, we know it in such a way that what we know is not the primary object of our concern. However, even if this is the case, it is our transparent knowledge that guides and makes our practical dealings possible because transparent knowledge is the knowledge we have of the background that makes such dealings possible.

Furthermore, as I mentioned above in my analysis of Heidegger's conception of the readiness-to-hand, a consequence of Heidegger's idea that in our practical dealings with pieces of equipment what we primarily concern ourselves with is the work to be produced is that the more an entity is ready-to-hand, the more it is absent

⁵⁷ Heidegger, p.95.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.99.

from our attention. The peculiar characteristic of ready-to-hand pieces of equipment is that it withdraws from our concern and only in so doing they become ready-to-hand. To put it differently, a perfectly functioning piece of equipment itself has the character of transparency. However, not only pieces of equipment are transparent in this sense. All the references, involvements, significances that make up the world as the background of our everydayness are transparent. As it must have already been clear, the point I want to make here is that transparent knowledge, as its name indicates, has the same character. We act on the basis of the information that it provides us with but it also withdraws from our attention in order to direct us to the work we produce with it. The more it withdraws from our attention, the more it is capable of fulfilling its function. The more it becomes a thematic object for us, the more it loses its character of transparency and its capacity of making us capable of acting in the world.

Here we can also see another peculiar feature that transparent knowledge has. Because transparent knowledge withdraws from our attention and does not reveal itself thematically to us, when we have transparent knowledge of an entity, the knowledge we have of it is not coupled with higher order knowledge. When I am acting on the basis of what transparent knowledge provides me with, I know the background of references, involvements, and significances against which I carry out my activities. However, I do explicitly focus neither on that background nor on the knowledge I have of it. In other words, I do not know that I know the background which makes it possible for me to act. The easy way to see this is to realize again that if I pay explicit attention to what I know in my transparent knowledge, my activity gets impaired because in that case I focus not on the work I want to produce but on the knowledge that is required to produce the work and I can, therefore, no longer act

smoothly. What this means is that if we follow Heidegger's phenomenology of our average everydayness, we see that there are ways of knowing the world without explicitly being aware of the knowledge we have of it.

Here I want to point out an interesting fact. Both in contemporary epistemology and contemporary philosophy of mind, there are philosophers who are claiming that our awareness of the world is not necessarily coupled with higher order awareness. In his book *Knowledge and Its Limits*, Timothy Williamson makes exactly this claim.⁵⁹ He argues against a tendency that he finds in Descartes and Wittgenstein. He thinks that these philosophers took for granted that when we know the world, we have a higher order epistemic access to our knowledge.⁶⁰ In other words, for them whenever we know the world, we know that we know the world. Williamson suggests, however, that only in trivial cases we know the world in this manner. Thus, interestingly even if Williamson would dispute most of what Heidegger says in *Being and Time*, he reaches the conclusion that Heidegger explicates in *Being and Time* by claiming that "the conditions with which we engage in our everyday life are from the start" of such a nature that in those conditions we know the world without knowing that we know.⁶¹

The fact that in order for transparent knowledge to function properly, it must withdraw from our concern leads us to another characteristic it has. It shares this characteristic with ready-to-hand entities. Transparent knowledge is always used in "order to" for a certain purpose. Therefore, transparent knowledge itself has the character of readiness-to-hand. When a ready-to-hand entity is not used for a certain

⁵⁹ One can also see the same view in many of Fred Dretske's works. One can especially see his paper "Conscious Experience" where he argues against higher order theories of consciousness.

⁶⁰ Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 93.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.119.

practical purpose in our absorbed activity, it cannot remain as a ready-to-hand entity. In other words, in order for an entity to become a ready-to-hand piece of equipment it needs to play a role in our absorbed dealings for a purpose. Similarly, when a piece of knowledge is not used for a practical purpose in our absorbed dealings in our environment, it loses its transparent character and can become an explicit object of our attention. The information I have of the world through transparent knowledge is of primary significance only if that information is used by me for some practical purpose.

On the other hand, because transparent knowledge is the knowledge we have of the background which is constituted by the world and because the world has the references between pieces of equipment and the goals we try to realize by means of them as one of its elements, we need to say that it is transparent knowledge that informs us about the possibilities of our being that are available to us in our average everydayness. And Heidegger believes that by interpreting the world in certain ways “the they” we live in provides us with those possibilities. However, what is peculiar for him about the they is that it does not do so by explicitly presenting or explicitly teaching them to us. We internalize the possibilities available to us in our culture without thematically thinking about them and once they are internalized by us, our awareness of them becomes part of our transparent knowledge. Each time we use transparent knowledge to manipulate a certain piece of equipment for the sake of a possibility of our being, the understanding we have of that piece of equipment is shaped by the possibilities we know through our transparent knowledge. In other words, transparent knowledge enables us to interpret the entities we encounter in our average everydayness without revealing itself thematically to us.⁶²

⁶² A Heideggerian might point out rightly that the notion of truth has a large and special place in Heidegger’s investigation in *Being and Time*. He might argue that without taking into account

Opaque Knowledge

I argued that the world is the background of our practical dealings with our environment in our average everydayness and that as the nonthematic awareness we have of this background transparent knowledge has the world as its object. However, we saw above that the entities around us can have a mode of being that is different than readiness-to-hand. Even if presence-at-hand is a derivative mode of being, entities might become present-at-hand objects. What we need to pay attention here is that the type of awareness we have present-at-hand objects is different than the transparent awareness we have of ready-to-hand pieces of equipment. For this reason, I will now characterize another type of knowledge we have of the entities around us and call it “opaque knowledge.” Opaque knowledge is the type of knowledge we have of present-at-hand objects.

Because opaque knowledge is the knowledge we have of present-at-hand objects, it is not the knowledge of our environment we have when we are practically engaged with entities. Opaque knowledge comes to the fore when we are no longer absorbed in the references, involvements, significances against which we act with ready-to-hand entities. In other words, opaque knowledge is possible when we relate to an entity as a substance with context-free properties. It does not have the transparency that the kind of knowledge which we have of ready-to-hand entities has.

Heidegger’s discussion on truth in *Being and Time* any Heideggerian conception of knowledge would be incomplete. Even though I do not show the place Heidegger’s views on truth has in the conception of knowledge I am developing here, I want to indicate briefly that what I call transparent knowledge does have the expected relationship to truth. For Heidegger truth is in the first place not a property that propositions or statements have. He argues against what is generally called the correspondence theory of truth. In general terms, he believes that truth is more primarily our participation in the being of beings. Heidegger suggests in *Being and Time* that we participate in the being of beings by relating to them through the existentials and in terms of the possibilities that we project ourselves upon. And the epistemic source of those possibilities is our transparent knowledge and the involved existentials. This means that by informing us about the future possibilities we might project ourselves upon transparent knowledge makes it possible for us to participate in the being of beings.

It does not transparently direct us to a practical purpose *through* itself. To put it more metaphorically, when we have opaque knowledge, our attention cannot penetrate through the knowledge we have and focus on some future possibility of our being. As we can see now, this is a feature that opaque knowledge shares with present-at-hand entities. When I relate to a present-at-hand entity, I look at it from a practically disinterested view and it does not refer me to a possibility of my being through itself. And the fact that opaque knowledge does not refer me to any possibility of my being *through* itself is also the reason why I call it opaque knowledge.

Similarly, one can make the opaque knowledge one has the sole object of one's attention as one can make the properties of a present-at-hand entity the sole object of her attention. Once one does so, the opaque knowledge one has of a certain present-at-hand entity itself comes to have a present-at-hand character and it becomes possible to identify the context-free properties of the knowledge one has. Now one can analyze the knowledge one has independently of any practical context in which it can be used as I can say that the computer in front of me has this width independently of how I use it in different contexts. For example, one can argue that knowledge can be universally analyzed as "justified true belief."

Another important characteristic opaque knowledge has is that when we have opaque knowledge of a present-at-hand entity, our knowledge is coupled with the higher order knowledge that one has opaque knowledge. Therefore, when someone wants me to look at this computer and give a characterization of its properties, I explicitly focus on the computer and my knowledge of the properties it has is immediately coupled with the knowledge that I know these properties belong to the computer. Heidegger's analysis of three special cases in the Section 16 of *Being and Time* is a very good example to clarify this point. As I mentioned, in one of those

three cases, Heidegger draws our attention to the possibility that ready-to-hand entities might be broken. Before an entity is damaged or broken, the entity is used by us against the background of references which we are not thematically aware of. In other words, before it is broken, the type of knowledge we have of a ready-to-hand entity does not come with second-order knowledge. Heidegger argues that when the entity is broken, the whole referential background explicitly announces itself. It announces itself not as something which is seen for the first time. As Heidegger says, in such a case “the context of equipment is lit up, not as something never seen before, but as a totality constantly sighted beforehand in circumspection.”⁶³ This means that what we already knew in transparent knowledge before the entity is broken now comes to the fore as a thematic object of our attention. We now know that we actually already knew that there is a background against which we carried out our activity. What we knew in our transparent knowledge is now coupled with higher order knowledge that we know that there is a referential background to our activity.⁶⁴

Here, we need to consider what Heidegger said about the priority relation between readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand. As we hinted in our example from Section 16, Heidegger believes that an entity becomes a present-at-hand object for us only after it loses its character of readiness-to-hand. Again, Heidegger’s idea here is that in our everydayness we are not mere spectators who try to identify the properties objects have but rather beings who primarily manipulate entities for various possibilities of our being. Insofar as we are in this practical mode, entities have the character of readiness-to-hand. Only when our practical activities are interrupted do

⁶³ Heidegger, p.105.

⁶⁴ Therefore, we can say that the awareness we have of present-at-hand objects is not an implicit but an explicit one. To put it in Timothy Williamson’s vocabulary, the condition that one knows a fact about a present-at-hand object is a luminous condition.

we start taking them as present-at-hand objects. Simply put, presence-at-hand comes only after readiness-to-hand. This is one of the senses in which readiness-to-hand is more primordial and prior in comparison to presence-at-hand. For this reason, we can say that the type of knowledge we have when we are practically engaged with a ready-to-hand entity is prior to the type of knowledge we have when we are aware of a present-at-hand object. Here we see another dimension in which both transparent knowledge and opaque knowledge share a feature with readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand, respectively. As readiness-to-hand is prior to presence-at-hand, transparent knowledge is prior to opaque knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO THEORIES ON THE BACKGROUND: SEARLE AND DREYFUS

Introduction

In the first chapter above, I presented a set of concepts that Heidegger provides us with in the first division of *Being and Time*. The central concept was Heidegger's notion of the world. We saw that Heidegger developed his notion of the world on the basis of his phenomenological interpretation of our average everydayness in which we practically manipulate pieces of equipment. I tried to show that the world is a phenomenon constituted by references, involvements, and significances and argued that it is the background of our everyday dealings with our environment. As the background of our everyday dealings, the world is a necessary element that we need in order to comport ourselves to the entities around us in the context of our everydayness.

I also argued that the set of concepts I analyzed in the first chapter enables us to make a distinction between two ways of knowing the world. So I claimed that Heidegger's analysis of our average everydayness lays the basis for us to conceptualize two different types of knowledge. The world as the background of our average everydayness is the object of what I called "transparent knowledge" in which we do not consider entities around us from the point of view of a practically disinterested subject. However, when we comport ourselves towards the entities around us from a practically disinterested point of view, the knowledge we have of them is "opaque knowledge." The object of opaque knowledge is not the background

of our everydayness but present-at-hand objects which we characterize by means of the vocabulary of substances and properties.

Now, I will move onto a discussion of two prominent theories on the nature of the background. They belong to John Searle and Hubert Dreyfus. We will see that for Searle without the background our intentional states cannot have a representative content and cannot be directed at the world. Dreyfus is in agreement with Searle on this point. However, I will show that even if both philosophers think that the background is a condition for us to intentionally relate to entities around us, Dreyfus believes that Searle's representationalism makes his theory inadequate in explaining the nature of nondeliberate actions. And those nondeliberate activities for Dreyfus are the very components of the background of our everyday lives. On the other hand, in this chapter I do not merely aim at an exegesis of the views two prominent philosophers have on the background. I will also try to develop a critical evaluation of them. I will argue that both of the views I focus on in this chapter is open to objections. I will begin with an analysis of John Searle's account of the background and continue with Dreyfus' by showing how Dreyfus criticizes Searle's theory of action.

John Searle's Theory of the Background

John Searle presented his theory of the background in many of his works and depending on the kind of question that he is interested in, he applied his theory to problems in different areas of philosophy. For example, he used his theory of the background in his book *The Construction of Social Reality* in order to address the problem how objects such as pieces of paper come to have social functions that are

not found in their material nature.⁶⁵ He also used his theory in his book *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. He developed one of his extensive accounts of the nature of the background in *Intentionality*. As we will see, Searle needed the idea of the background in this book in order to solve a couple of important problems that he faced in his theory of mind. His account of the background in *Intentionality*, however, consists in Searle's early views. Even though he did not give up his basic characterization of the background that it is what enables us to have intentional states, he made an important revision in his views when he wrote his later book *The Rediscovery of the Mind*. I will begin my analysis of Searle's account of the background that we find in *Intentionality*. After my analysis of his account in *Intentionality*, I will consider what he further says on the background in *The Rediscovery of the Mind* and the revision he makes there.

The Background in *Intentionality*

As the title of his book suggests Searle in this book deals with the nature of what philosophers of mind call intentionality. Therefore, his views on the background in *Intentionality* are properly understood if we situate our discussion against his analysis of intentional states. Searle takes over the classical understanding of intentionality and says that intentionality is that property of mental states that makes them "directed at" or "about" an object.⁶⁶ For instance, when one has a belief, one believes that a fact obtains or when one has an intention, one has an intention to realize a state of affairs in the world. So such mental states as beliefs and intentions

⁶⁵ See Chapter 6 of *The Construction of Social Reality*.

⁶⁶ John Searle, *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.1.

are directed at objects or states of affairs that obtain or might obtain in the world. Searle suggests, however, that not all mental states are intentional. As we will see later Searle believes that the background must be taken as something mental but this does not mean that it is intentional. In other words, for Searle there are mental states that are not about or directed at something. He argues that besides the background “there are forms of nervousness, elation, and undirected anxiety that are not Intentional.”⁶⁷ Therefore, for Searle intentionality does not stand for an essential property that mental states have. It is only the property of those mental states that are directed at something in the world. In his list of intentional mental states we see “belief, fear, hope, desire, love, hate, aversion, liking, disliking, doubting . . .”⁶⁸

In order to give an analysis of such intentional states as beliefs, desires, and perceptions, Searle makes a distinction between what he calls “representative content” and the “psychological modes” in which one has a representative content.⁶⁹ He makes this distinction since he argues that a psychological mode and a representative content are the two components of an intentional state. Let’s take, for instance, my belief that there is a computer in front of me. This belief is an intentional state with a representative content and a psychological mode. The representative content of my belief is “that there is a computer in front of me.” As its name indicates, the function of a representative content of an intentional state is to represent a state of affairs in the world to us. But Searle believes that a state of affairs in the world can be represented in different ways. This means that for Searle a representative content does not necessarily belong to only one type of intentional state. The same representative content can be shared by many other types of

⁶⁷ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.4.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.6.

intentional states. I can perceive, for example, that there is a computer in front of me. Now the representative content of my perception is again “that there is a computer in front of me.” However, the difference between believing that there is a computer in front of me and perceiving that there is a computer in front of me is the psychological modes in which I have the representational content. The psychological mode in the former intentional state is perception and it is belief in the latter. Searle’s idea here is that beliefs, fears, hopes, desires etc. have different psychological modes in which a state of affairs in the world can be represented differently.

The psychological mode of an intentional state determines the “direction of fit” between the world and an intentional state.⁷⁰ In order to see this point, consider again my belief that there is a computer in front of me. The belief that there is a computer in front of me has a mind-to-world direction of fit. This means that when one has that belief, we expect not the world but the intentional state to fit into the world. However, if one wishes that there is a computer in front of oneself, then the direction of fit is not mind-to-world but world-to-mind. The function of the representative content, on the other hand, is to determine what Searle calls “conditions of satisfaction.” His idea is that in order for an intentional state to be satisfied, a set of conditions must obtain in the world and what these conditions are determined by the representative content of the intentional state itself. Searle says that “the *specification* of the content is already a *specification* of the conditions of satisfaction.”⁷¹ We know that in order for my belief that there is a computer in front of me to be true or in order for my belief that there is a computer in front of me to be satisfied, there must be a computer in front of me. In other words, the condition of satisfaction of that belief is “that there be a computer in front of me.” If there really

⁷⁰ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.13.

is a computer in front of me, the condition of satisfaction obtains in the world and my intentional state is satisfied and true. What is important here is that for Searle by determining the conditions of satisfaction of an intentional state, a representative content represents its conditions of satisfaction. Therefore, my belief that there is a computer in front of me, if true, represents the fact that there is a computer in front of me by means of its representative content which determines a set of conditions of satisfaction.

Searle argues that intentional states do not have their representative content and determine their conditions of satisfaction in isolation from other intentional states. This means that in order for a mental state to be an intentional state with a certain representative content and have conditions of satisfaction, that state has to be located in a “network” of other intentional states. Searle says that “an intentional state only determines its conditions of satisfaction – and thus only the state that it is – given its position in a *Network* of other Intentional states . . .”⁷² In order to explicate this idea, let’s consider one of Searle’s examples. Suppose that there was a particular moment that Jimmy Carter formed the desire to become the next president of the United States and Carter said to himself “I want to run for the Presidency of the United States.” At this particular moment there was a certain neural configuration in a certain part of Carter’s brain which realized his desire. Now think of a Pleistocene man who lived a thousand years ago in a hunter-gatherer society. Suppose further that a neural configuration which is type-identical to the one Carter in his brain had occurred in the brain of the Pleistocene man. At that moment he uttered the phonetic sequence “I want to run for the Presidency of the United States.” Here the question is whether we will say that the Pleistocene man had the desire to become the next

⁷² Searle, *Intentionality*, p.13.

president of the United States. One can be inclined to think that both Jimmy Carter and the Pleistocene man had the same intentional state in which they desired to become the next president of the United States just because they had the same type of neural configuration in their brains. However, Searle argues that this is wrong. Even if we assume that the Pleistocene man had exactly the same type of neural configuration in the same part of his brain, we cannot say that he had a desire to become the next president of the United States. The reason for this, Searle argues, is that he did not have a number of other intentional states which make up a network and in which the desire to become the president of the United States must be located to become the intentional state that it is. Searle says concerning the Pleistocene man in our example the following:

In order that his desire be a desire to run for the Presidency he must have a whole lot of beliefs such as: the belief that the United States is a republic, that it has a presidential system of government, that it has periodic elections, that these involve principally a contest between the candidates of two major parties, the Republicans and the Democrats, that these candidates are chosen at nominating conventions and so on indefinitely (but not infinitely).⁷³

Searle argues, however, that a network of intentional states will eventually reach a “bedrock of mental capacities that do not themselves consist in Intentional states (representations), but are nonetheless the preconditions for the functioning of Intentional states.”⁷⁴ He thinks that these mental capacities constitute the background. What he understands from these mental capacities are practices, preintentional assumptions, our knowledge-how and of certain ways of doing things.⁷⁵ In order to understand better what Searle means by the background let’s

⁷³ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.20.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.142.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.143.

think about a couple of examples which he also uses as arguments to show the existence of the background. The examples are based on his view that the representative content of an intentional state can be interpreted and understood in many ways and no interpretation of the content of an intentional state is determined beforehand by its literal meaning.⁷⁶ One example is the following:⁷⁷ Suppose that I go to a restaurant in order to have a nice dinner and I say “Bring me a steak with fried potatoes.” There are many ways in which one can interpret this order. One may think that the person who is getting the order will deliver the food to the person’s home or that he will try to put the potatoes into his pockets. Of course, we do not interpret the sentence in these ways. However, Searle believes that the literal meaning of the sentence does not prevent us from interpreting the sentence in these ways. What prevents us from them is that when I give an order like this, I do so against a background of familiarity that I have of such situations. This background for Searle includes the assumption that the person who is getting the order will not try to bring the food to my home or that he will not put the potatoes into my pocket. I have this background assumption because I know how the practice of serving someone in a restaurant takes place. To put it differently, I know how restaurants and people in it behave before I encounter any restaurant or give an order in it. As I mentioned above, Searle’s idea here is that all these practices, assumptions and knowledge-how constitute the background against which I can order a meal in a restaurant.⁷⁸ And he thinks that this background is not something representational or intentional but rather is the condition for the possibility of having intentional states.

⁷⁶ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.154.

⁷⁷ John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), p.180.

⁷⁸ One needs to be cautious here. Searle uses both the word “know-how” and “knowledge-how.” It seems that he takes them to have the same meaning. In other words, these terms are not the opposites

Think about another example that Searle uses to show the existence of the background. Consider the sentence “Sally gave John the key, and he opened the door.” As one might expect, Searle believes that there is a normal way of interpreting this sentence. He says that “[a]n utterance of this sentence would normally convey that *first* Sally gave John the key, and *later* he opened the door, and that he opened the door *with* the key.”⁷⁹ However, Searle argues again that there is nothing in the literal meaning of this sentence that makes this interpretation a necessary one. For him there are numerous other ways of interpreting this sentence. He says that “[n]othing blocks the interpretation, ‘John opened the door with the key by swallowing both the door and key, and moving the key into the lock by way of the peristaltic contraction of his gut.’”⁸⁰ Of course, we do not interpret the sentence in this way and we do find this interpretation strange. Again the reason why we find this interpretation strange and we do not interpret this sentence in this way is that we know how to behave, how others behave, what to expect, and how the world works in situations like this. All this know-how and expectations in our practices are part of the background and they make it possible for us to have intentional states. The already existing practices about opening a door with a key disposes us to interpret the sentence in the normal way we interpret it and it rules out other interpretations that we find strange.

Now Searle believes that the problem that the way a sentence is interpreted is not fixed by the literal meaning it has can be perfectly applied to the representative contents our intentional states have and the conditions of satisfaction they determine.

of each other, neither is one of them used as in addition to the other. They are simply interchangeable terms.

⁷⁹ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, p.181.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.182.

To turn back to our previous example, I might have a belief whose representative content is expressed by the sentence “Sally gave John the key, and he opened the door.” According to what Searle argued for there are numerous ways that I can interpret this sentence. Depending on the way I interpret what is said in this sentence the conditions of satisfaction of my belief changes. And because intentional states, for Searle, represent their conditions of satisfaction, what an intentional state represents in the world depends upon the interpretation I have of its representative content. If I interpret the sentence to be saying that “John opened the door with the key by swallowing both the door and key, and moving the key into the lock by way of the peristaltic contraction of his gut,” then one of the conditions of the satisfaction of my belief would be “that he swallowed the key.” Therefore, with that interpretation of my belief, my belief would represent the condition in which John swallowed a key to open a door. However, if I take the sentence in the normal way we take it to be, then the conditions of satisfaction of my belief would not include anything like that and would not represent that condition. What it would represent as one of its conditions of satisfaction would be merely that there be a person who is John and who took the key from another person called Sally and opened the door with the key by using his hands. The important point here, as I mentioned above, is that the source of our interpretation of a sentence that expresses the representative content of an intentional state is the background. Therefore, Searle concludes that the representative contents of intentional states determine their conditions of satisfaction and represent states of affairs in the world only against a background of practices, capacities and our knowledge-how. He says that “it is this capacity for applying or

interpreting Intentional contents which I am saying is a characteristic function of the Background.”⁸¹

We also see Searle’s claim that the background not only functions to fix the meaning of sentences, but it also determines how we represent the world around us clearly in his view on the place of the background in perceptual experience. Searle suggests that “the Background enables perceptual interpretation to take place.”⁸² The basic idea here is that in perceiving the world we implicitly interpret it in a certain way and this interpretation is made possible by the background. When I see a chair, I see it “as” a chair or when I see a table, I see it “as” a table. “Any normal case of perception will be a case of *perceiving as*, where the perceiver assimilates the perceived object to some more or less familiar category.”⁸³ Therefore, for Searle when we relate to the world perceptually, we bring entities in it under certain categories. One needs to be cautious here, however. Searle argues that the idea that perception involves a categorical interpretation of entities does not necessarily imply that there is an “act” of interpretation in perception where we explicitly make inferences about objects. For example, when I look at a tree from one side, I normally see the object as a tree with a back side. In other words, in seeing an object as a tree from one side, I take it for granted that it has a back side. But in interpreting the object as a tree in my perception, there is neither an explicit act of interpretation nor a logical inference. Searle believes that it is a mistake to think that “we must have made an inference if, when we look at one side of a tree, we know that the tree

⁸¹ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.154.

⁸² John Searle, *The Construction of Social reality* (London.: Penguin Books, 1996), p.132.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.133.

has a back side.”⁸⁴ Similarly Searle also argues for the same view when it comes to understanding how we interpret sentences against the background. He again suggests that when we interpret a sentence in a certain way, we are not engaged in acts of interpretation. He puts this point in the following way:

One’s immediate, normal, instantaneous understanding of utterances is possible only relative to a Background, but it does not follow from that that there is some separate logical step, some *act* of interpretation involved in normal understanding.⁸⁵

Here we see an interesting and important point. We saw in the first chapter above that according to Heidegger’s phenomenological description of our average everydayness, we relate to the entities around us always in terms of certain purposes that we want to realize with them. This means that for Heidegger we interpret entities according to the possibilities of our being. In other words, the entities we manipulate in our average everydayness make sense on the basis of our goals and purposes. However, I also mentioned in the first chapter that when we relate to entities in our average everydayness, we do not relate to them in a thematic or explicit manner; rather, we are engaged with them in such a way that they become transparent to us and we are absorbed in their equipmental context. The important point here is that for Heidegger the kind of interpretation that takes place in our average way of dealings with the world is not an explicit “act” of interpretation. Therefore, we can say that both Heidegger and Searle agree that interpretation need not involve explicit acts of interpretation and the interpretation we have of entities in our everyday lives is not an explicit act of interpretation.

There is another related point concerning the Searlian notion of the background that I need to mention here. It is an important point because both Searle

⁸⁴ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, p.194.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.192.

and Dreyfus are in agreement with regard to it. One can explain how the background works by appealing to a capacity of us to manipulate certain rules. According to such an explanation we are able to interpret sentences and representative contents of our intentional states because the background is a system of rules. In other words, the capacities, practices, and the know-how that make up the background are actually rule structures that we manipulate. And one can argue further that these rules need not be conscious rules. So our minds can be regarded like a computer software which operates according to rules some of which are unknown to the software. Searle, however, rejects this explanation. His argument against this explanation rests upon his view that rules are not self-interpreting. He says that “it is important to see that rules only have application relative to the Background capacities. The rules are not self-interpreting, and in consequence, they require a Background to function.”⁸⁶ The idea here is that even if one has a set of rules to interpret sentences or the representative contents of intentional states, we still need another source to interpret these rules themselves and fix how we apply them. Here one can argue against Searle by saying that instead of making a reference to what Searle calls the background in order to explain how we understand a set of rules and apply them, we can make a reference to another set of rules. However, as it is obvious, the problem here is that this explanation leads us to an infinite regress. If one thinks that we can use and apply a rule by means of a second rule, then we need a third rule to explain how we apply the second rule. This would mean that we are not able to use a rule at all. Similarly, if we assume that the background is a system of rules, then we need another background, which is itself another system of rules, to use it. Again, we have a regress problem. Therefore, a rule is not much different the sentence “Sally gave

⁸⁶ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, p.193.

John the key, and he opened the door” in that we still need a background to interpret it independently of other rules. There is no way to avoid having a background.

The Rediscovery of the Mind: The Neurophysiology of the Background and an Objection

The Neurophysiology of the Background

Even if Searle says that the background is a background of practices, preintentional assumptions, our knowledge-how and of certain ways of doing things, he maintains that “practices, activities, skills, as well as lots of facts about the world contribute to the determining of conditions of satisfaction, but only mediately.”⁸⁷ What Searle means is that all these background practices, assumptions and knowledge cause in us certain neurophysiological states and what determines the conditions of satisfaction of an intentional state is nothing other than these neurophysiological states. So for Searle a theory of the mind which talks only about these practices, assumptions, and knowledge-how cannot explain how intentional states determine conditions of satisfaction and represent the world to us. On the other hand, he says in *The Rediscovery of the Mind* that “it is important to see that when we are talking about the Background we are talking about a certain category of neurophysiological causation.”⁸⁸ Therefore, Searle believes that the background is actually a neurophysiological state that we happen to be in and it can be accounted for merely

⁸⁷ Mark Wrathall, “Background Practices, Capacities, and Heideggerian Disclosure,” in *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), p.102.

⁸⁸ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, p.129.

in terms of a neurophysiological vocabulary. The reason why we use a vocabulary of practices, assumptions and knowledge is that “we do not know how these structures function at a neurophysiological level . . .”⁸⁹

An Objection

We need to pay attention here to the fact that when we put together Searle’s idea that the background is actually a neurophysiological state that we are in with what he says concerning his notion of the network, his theory of the background faces a problem. Remember Searle’s example I analyzed above. We saw that for Searle an intentional state does not determine its conditions of satisfaction and represent the world not in isolation from other intentional states. An intentional state must always be situated within a network of other intentional states. For this reason, even if one can say that a Pleistocene man had a neurophysiological state in the relevant part of his brain that is type-identical to the one Jimmy Carter had, one cannot claim that the Pleistocene man had Jimmy Carter’s desire which can be realized in that state since he did not have the network of intentional states Carter had. Now, what we need to pay attention to here is that for Searle both what he calls the network and the background are mental phenomena. He says that “. . . the Background capacities must be mental . . .”⁹⁰ So if it is possible to say that as a mental capacity of us the background is actually a certain neurophysiological state, why not say the same thing of the network? In other words, on the basis of what Searle says on the network and

⁸⁹ Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, p.129.

⁹⁰ See that part of the book *John Searle and His Critics* where Searle is responding to a criticism by Barry Stroud.

the background, we can say that there is no reason not to think that the network is actually a certain neurophysiological state we are in.

The problem that Searle's theory of the background faces is that he can no more claim that the Pleistocene man in his example does not have the desire that Carter had. The reason for this is that because one can say that the network is a certain neurophysiological state we can be in and because both the Pleistocene man and Jimmy Carter have type-identical neurophysiological states that constitute the network of intentional states needed to have the desire to become the next president of the United States, then one can say that the Pleistocene man had exactly the same desire Carter had. We see two important things here. First, Searle's idea that the background is actually a certain neurophysiological state of us can be reasonably interpreted to be in conflict with what he says in *Intentionality* about his notion of the network. Second, and more importantly, if we allow ourselves to say that the network is actually a neurophysiological state as the background is, then we come to the absurd conclusion that a human being who lived in a hunter-gatherer society a thousand years ago can have the same intentional state that a modern man had in the twentieth century has by having a type-identical brain state.

One can respond to this objection by saying that I am actually confusing Searle's views on ontology with a peculiar aspect of his view on the nature of intentional mental phenomena. One can indicate that from an ontological perspective, Searle is committed to metaphysical realism. This means that Searle's answer to the question "what is reality constituted by?" is that reality consists in mind independent "brute facts" which are described by physical sciences. As we will see below, Searle believes that the observer independent physical properties entities have are ontologically more primary than the ones that are dependent upon human

intentionality. Therefore, it can be said that Searle has a very clear position about the monism-dualism debate. He is a monist.

On the other hand, one can argue that even if Searle is committed to both metaphysical realism and monism, he does not want to claim that human intentionality can be totally reduced to physical states. In other words, one can say that for Searle a theory of intentionality which talks only about physical states cannot account for the nature of intentionality because we cannot eliminate intentional phenomena in this way. Thus, it can be claimed against my objection that because Searle actually believes that talking merely about physical states cannot exhaust the nature of intentionality but only indicates the ontological basis it has, the Pleistocene man and Jimmy Carter cannot be said to have the same intentional state and the network.

I believe, however, that this response has its own problem. The problem it has is that it actually shows a weakness in Searle's theory rather than a weakness in my objection against it. It shows what it is not supposed to show. The reason for this is that what we see in this response is that Searle is actually committed to two views which are in conflict with each other. On the one hand, Searle believes that from an ontological point of view, reality does not have any place for an entity or a state that cannot be understood in terms of brute physical facts. On the other, he suggests that human intentionality is of such a character that any physical description of any fact cannot exhaust its nature. The problem Searle faces, then, is that how someone who is committed to the idea that what really exist are only those states or entities which can be understood in terms of physical facts can account for anything that cannot be eliminated by mere physical description. It seems that Searle cannot handle this problem successfully.

Realism, the Phenomenological Illusion, and An Objection

Searle believes that a good account of the phenomenon of the background has a peculiar metaphilosophical significance. He argues that many philosophical questions that philosophers have been discussing are actually the products of an inability to appreciate the nature of the background. He says that “many philosophical problems arise from the failure to understand the nature and operation of the Background.”⁹¹ In other words, many philosophical problems, for Searle, are pseudo-problems that can be resolved with a proper understanding of the background. One of those problems is the one that is centered around realism. Searle puts this by saying that “ a good illustration of this is the current and recurring philosophical dispute concerning something called *realism*.”⁹²

I mentioned in the first chapter when I briefly analyzed the epistemic endeavor that Descartes undertook. We saw that he was after an argument against the skeptic who claims that the belief that there is an external world around us that exists independently of our representations of it is a false one. As a realist, Descartes believed that he could prove that this belief is actually true. According to Searle both the skeptic and Descartes are wrong because of their assumption that realism is a hypothesis or a belief that can be proved or disproved. His reason for this is that realism is not an intentional state like a belief or a hypothesis.⁹³ Searle suggests that realism is a preintentional commitment we have. And since it is a constituting element of the background of our intentional states, this commitment is an essential

⁹¹ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.158.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p.158.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.158.

part of our actions. For him “my commitment to the existence of the real world is manifested whenever I do pretty much everything.”⁹⁴

So Searle claims that whether there really is an external world independently of my representations of it is a senseless question because “the very posing of the question, or indeed of any question at all, presupposes the preintentional realism of the Background.”⁹⁵ However, Barry Stroud rightly observes that the fact that realism is a background commitment of our acts does not necessarily mean that that commitment is a true one.⁹⁶ This means that one still can wonder whether our preintentional commitment that there is an external world independently of our representations is true or not. Therefore, one can say that the problem concerning realism have a philosophical significance and not senseless.

Now I want to sharpen Stroud’s criticism further from another perspective by concentrating upon what Searle says of the method that certain phenomenological figures used in his paper “The Phenomenological Illusion.” In this article Searle argues that there is a central problem in contemporary philosophy around which other important philosophical problems are situated. This central question is the following: How do we account for our conceptions of ourselves as a certain sort of human being in a universe that we know consist of physical particles in fields of force?⁹⁷ Searle claims throughout the paper that phenomenologists are not able to hear this central question.

Let’s see why Searle thinks that phenomenologists cannot hear this question by looking at how phenomenologists, for him, are unable to respond to a question

⁹⁴ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.159.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.159.

⁹⁶ See Stroud’s article “The Background of Thought” in *John Searle and His Critics*.

⁹⁷ John Searle, *Philosophy in a New Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.108.

that is derived from it. I will concentrate on what Searle calls “the problem of functions.” We know that materials around us have observer independent features. They are, for instance, under the influence of physical forces, gravitational attraction etc. The striking fact is that those meaningless materials with observer independent features can become meaningful ones by having functions that are significant for us.⁹⁸ So a piece of paper which is completely something material can be used as money or a piece of metal with a piece of wood can come to function as a hammer for a carpenter. The question is how come an object can have such a function given its basic observer independent nature. Searle believes that this question rests upon the assumption that “the observer independent is ontologically primary, the observer dependent is derivative.”⁹⁹ However, the phenomenologist, for Searle, does not believe that this assumption is true. Searle argues that because objects with observer independent features have no phenomenological reality in our conscious experience, Heidegger was led to take the ontology backwards.¹⁰⁰ In other words, as I already mentioned in the first chapter above, Heidegger thought that ready-to-hand entities with observer dependent functions are ontologically primary. What we need to see in Searle’s criticism of phenomenology is that for Searle phenomenologists are unable address central philosophical problems of contemporary philosophy because those philosophical problems are based on assumptions that have no reality in our conscious experience. In other words, Searle in his paper is against those who discard a philosophical problem by looking at whether something has a reality in our experience of the world or not.

⁹⁸ The phrase “meaningless materials” seems to sound strange. However, I prefer it since Searle himself uses it on page 118 in *Philosophy in a New Century*.

⁹⁹ Searle, *Philosophy in a New Century*, p.119.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.159.

Now, I argue that Searle's argument that the problem concerning realism is a senseless problem is actually open to the same objection that he raises against the phenomenologist. As I mentioned, Searle believes that if we look at the background of how we intentionally experience the world around us, we realize that we are preintentionally committed to the assumption that there really is an external world that exists independently of our representations of it. We need to note that the argument for the senselessness of the problem concerning realism is based upon this finding. Therefore, what Searle is doing in his argument for the senselessness of the problem concerning realism is that he firstly looks at how we experience the world and then conclude that a philosophical problem is a misguided one since part of how we experience the world already presupposes an answer to the question. In other words, he too is assuming in his argument that if a philosophical problem is based on something that has no reality in our conscious experience, then that philosophical problem is at most a pseudo-one. Thus, Searle needs to develop another argument for his claim that the problem concerning realism is a senseless one in order to save his argument from the same objection that he makes against the phenomenologist.¹⁰¹

Hubert Dreyfus' Account of the Background

I believe that one can gain a proper understanding of Dreyfus' notion of the background by concentrating on how he criticizes Searle's theory of action that Searle developed in *Intentionality*. A presentation of how Dreyfus criticizes Searle's

¹⁰¹ One needs to be cautious here. Even though Searle believes that the problem concerning realism is a senseless problem, he defends, as I mentioned, metaphysical realism. I indicated that for him there are brute facts that are ontologically more primary than observer dependent features of the world are. And he believes that those facts do not require a human mind to represent them to be real. A phenomenologist like Heidegger agrees with Searle that the problem concerning realism is a problem that needs to be resolved rather than solved. However, it is not much easy to regard Heidegger as a metaphysical realist. It seems obvious to me that it requires a very extended and detailed discussion to understand whether Heidegger was a metaphysical realist or a kind of idealist.

theory of action can also be helpful for us to see the theoretical context in which Searle develops his account of the background further. So I will begin my analysis of Dreyfus' account of the background by a presentation of some of the important notions that play important roles in Searle's theory of action and then I will show how Dreyfus disagrees with Searle.

A Brief Presentation of Searle's Theory of Action: Intention in Action

Searle argues in *Intentionality* that human action has the peculiar feature that whenever we ask a person while he is acting in a certain way "what are you now doing?", the person is in a position to respond to our question and immediately start describing the purpose that he wants to realize by means of his action. And Searle says the following:

We ought to allow ourselves to be struck by the implications of the fact that at any point in a man's conscious life he knows without observation the answer to the question 'what are you now doing?'.¹⁰²

Searle believes that one of the implications of the fact that at any point in a man's conscious life he knows without observation the answer to the question "what are you now doing?" is that whenever we are engaged with an activity in the world, our activity is accompanied by an experience of acting. In other words, for Searle our capacity to immediately tell what we are doing and the point of our activities while we are acting is explained by the fact that in our activities we always experience ourselves as actors who try to reach different goals. And Searle thinks further that such an experience of acting we have when we are acting is actually identical to what he calls an "intention in action." So given Searle's claims that whenever we act, we

¹⁰² Searle, *Intentionality*, p.90.

experience ourselves as actors and that this experience is an intention in action, it follows that for Searle it is impossible to act in the world without intending to do something. To put it differently, according to Searle's theory of action, there is no action without intention. "There are no actions, not even unintentional actions, without intentions, because every action has an intention in action as one of its components."¹⁰³

However, one should not misunderstand Searle's notion of intention in action. He explicates what he understands from this term by distinguishing it from what he calls "prior intention." As its name indicates a prior intention is an intention that we form before we engage in an activity. For example, now I am sitting on a chair in a room writing a text with my computer. But I can intend to go to a lecture tomorrow morning. So I can intend to do something in the future without realizing it now. My intention is formed prior to the action that I intend to carry out. Such intentions that we form prior to a desired activity is a prior intention. An intention in action, however, is formed in and exists during the duration in which one is engaged with an activity. I might happen to find myself in acting in a certain way without planning that action beforehand. In a case like this, there is no prior intention. Still, however, when I act, my action is accompanied by an intention action. In other words, there are actions without a prior intention but an action without an intention in action, which for Searle is nothing other than an experience of acting, is an impossibility.

A crucial point here is that Searle believes that an intention in action has two important roles to play in the formation of an action. Its first important role is a causal one. Searle believes that intentions in action are the causes of our bodily movements in our actions. For Searle there is also a phenomenological aspect to this

¹⁰³ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.107.

causal relationship between an intention in action and our bodily movements. He suggests that in our actions we continuously experience the causal link between an intention in action and the resulting bodily movements. Searle believes that the experience of acting contains in itself the experience that the bodily movement is being caused by the intention in action.¹⁰⁴ On the other hand, when an action is preceded by a prior intention, the prior intention works as a causal factor. In actions with a prior intention, a prior intention causes an intention in action which in turn causes a set of bodily movements. However, as I mentioned above, because there might be actions without a prior intention, an intention in action need not have a prior intention as a causal antecedent.

Furthermore, an intention in action can cause our body to move only by representing the bodily movements it causes to us. So an intention in action also has a representational function. This is its second crucial role in the formation of an action. We need to pay attention to the fact that this must not be surprising because according to Searle's theory of intentionality, intentions are representational states like any other intentional state such as a belief or a perception. As an intentional state, an intention in action must also have an intentional content by way of which it represents something in the world. And what an intention in action represents is a set of bodily movements it causes. What this means more is that an intention in action has conditions of satisfaction that may or may not obtain in the world and its conditions of satisfaction are determined by its own representative content.

Let's take a simple example. Suppose that while I am writing this text with my computer my back itches and I immediately raise my arm to reach a certain point in my back. According to Searle's theory of action, when I raise my arm and reach

¹⁰⁴ Hubert Dreyfus and Jerome Wakefield, "Intentionality and Phenomenology of Action," in *John Searle and His Critics*, ed. E. Lepore and V. Gulick (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p.267.

my back, I have an experience of acting in which I see my self as an actor who is trying to realize a purpose. And the experience of acting I have which accompanies my action is an intention in action. My intention in action both causes my arm to go up and represents my arm as going up. Remember that for Searle an intentional state represents its conditions of satisfaction. Therefore, because the intention in action in my activity represents my arm as going up, part of its conditions of satisfaction is that there be a certain bodily movement in which my arm goes up. If there really is a bodily movement in which I raise my arm to reach my back, then my intention in action is partly satisfied.

I say that when my arm goes up, the intention in action is “partly satisfied” and that that there be a certain bodily movement in which my arm goes up is “part of its conditions of satisfaction” because of another important aspect of Searle’s theory of action. Searle believes that intentions in action are “causally self-referential.” Searle’s idea here is that as an intentional state an intention in action includes part of its representative content that the bodily movement it represents is caused by it. In other words, an intention in action is causally self-referential because its very content posits itself as the cause of what it represents. This means that the intention in action in our example has the following representative content: “My arm goes up as a result of this intention in action.”¹⁰⁵ Therefore, when I raise my arm to reach my back not because I intend to raise my arm but because, for instance, some other person raised it, my intention in action to raise my arm is not satisfied even though what the intention in action represents obtains in the world. The causally self-referential nature of an intention in action puts a constraint on how an intention in action is

¹⁰⁵ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.92.

satisfied. The mere occurrence of a bodily movement represented by an intention in action is not sufficient to satisfy that intention in action.

Hubert Dreyfus and Absorbed Coping Activities

Dreyfus happily grants Searle that he does a good job in explaining a certain type of action.¹⁰⁶ Dreyfus makes a distinction between two types of action: deliberate actions and nondeliberate actions. He believes that what Searle's theory of action is good at explaining is deliberate actions in which there is "constant accompaniment of representational states which specify what the action is aimed at accomplishing."¹⁰⁷ However, Dreyfus believes that Searle's theory of action needs to be supplemented by another analysis of nondeliberate actions because it is incapable of helping us make sense of them. According to Dreyfus' critique, Searle ignores the type of actions that Heidegger took to be the basic ones. Remember our discussion of Heidegger's analysis of our activities with ready-to-hand entities in our average everydayness in the first chapter above. We saw that according to Heidegger's analysis the actions that we are primarily engaged with in our average everydayness are those in which we are nondeliberately absorbed in a referential context. Heidegger took these nondeliberate absorbed activities as more primary than the ones in which we explicitly confront a world substances. Dreyfus believes that Searle's theory of action cannot account for those activities in which we are absorbed in a practical situation.

¹⁰⁶ Hubert L. Dreyfus, "The Primacy of Phenomenology over Logical Analysis," *Philosophical Topics: The Intersection of Analytic and Continental Philosophy* 27 (1999): p.4.

¹⁰⁷ Dreyfus and Wakefield, p.263.

Dreyfus calls those nondeliberate activities that we undertake in the practical context of our average everydayness “absorbed coping practices.”¹⁰⁸ He believes that the fact that absorbed coping practices are not deliberate activities does not mean that they are not intentional. Dreyfus suggests that absorbed coping practices have their own special kind of intentionality. However, their intentionality is of such a nature that the agent undertaking an absorbed coping practice is not conscious of what he is trying to accomplish. Dreyfus claims that an absorbed coping activity “has intentionality but is not intentional in the strong sense that the agent must be able to be aware of what he is trying to do.”¹⁰⁹ What we see here is that for Dreyfus because Searle is committed to the idea that in all types of actions we have an intention in action with an intentional content which represents the conditions of satisfaction that we try to realize through our action, he overlooks a peculiar type of activity in which there is no representation of what one is trying to achieve. Absorbed coping activities, Dreyfus argues, do not have a representative content. And he believes that because Searle ignores these practices he overrepresentationalizes human action.¹¹⁰

Dreyfus says the following:

Searle’s analysis of comportment . . . is based on analysis of the intentionality of what Searle takes to be the important subclass of . . . [that] domain: in the case of comportment, ‘intentional action’, i.e., consciously (or unconsciously) trying to do something.¹¹¹

The idea that absorbed coping activities do not involve an intention in action with a representation of an end state that an agent desires to achieve implies for Dreyfus that absorbed coping activities are not coupled with an experience of acting. Dreyfus

¹⁰⁸ Dreyfus, “The Primacy of Phenomenology,” p.4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.22.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.23.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p.20.

believes that Searle's view that when we act, we necessarily have an experience of acting is at most bad phenomenology.¹¹² For him phenomenological investigation supports the idea that most of our activities are without any experience of acting. According to Dreyfus, when we consider how we act in our absorbed coping activities from a first person perspective, we simply do not find ourselves in an experience of acting. This means that from Dreyfus' point of view, Searle does not do justice to the first person perspective even if he says that "I presented a first person account of intentionality, real intrinsic intentionality, using the resources of logical analysis."¹¹³ By rejecting the idea that an experience of acting is a universal feature of our actions, Dreyfus also disagrees with Searle's phenomenological claim that in each action there is an intentional state that is self-referentially causing a bodily movement. Searle says that "the peculiarity of Intentional causation is that we directly experience this relationship in many cases where we make something or something else makes something happen."¹¹⁴ Again, Dreyfus objects that this is only bad phenomenology. He believes that in absorbed coping activities "one is absorbed in one's activity, and therefore, one has no self-referential experience of oneself as causing that activity."¹¹⁵

Even though Dreyfus is not happy with Searle's theory of action because it ignores a peculiar type of action that involves neither representative contents nor an experience of acting, he does agree with Searle on a basic theme. I mentioned above that for Searle there is a number of mental capacities that constitute the preintentional

¹¹² Dreyfus and Wakefield, p.263.

¹¹³ Searle, *Philosophy in a New Century*, p.114.

¹¹⁴ Searle, *Intentionality*, p.123.

¹¹⁵ Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Heidegger's Critique of Husserl's (and Searle's) Account of Intentionality," *Social Research* 60 (1993), pp.17-38

background of our intentional states with representative contents. And this background, Searle believes, is what makes it possible for us to have intentional states. In other words, the function that the background has in Searle's account is to make intentional states with determinate representative contents possible. Dreyfus agrees with Searle that there must be a background to our relation to the entities around us in order for us to have intentional states directed at them. However, what is of outmost importance here is that the absorbed coping activities that Dreyfus thinks cannot be accounted for in terms of Searle's theory of action are what make up the background against which we relate to the world. Mark Wrathall puts this point by saying that for Dreyfus "the background of coping makes possible thematic states, with a determinate content, possible because only on the basis of this background familiarity with things and a world is it possible to be directed towards things in such a way that our intentional states have a content."¹¹⁶ Furthermore, Dreyfus has no problem with Searle's view that the background must be something nonrepresentational. He believes, as I mentioned above, that the absorbed coping activities that make up the background do not have a representative content with conditions of satisfaction. However, for him Searle mischaracterizes the background because his theory of action takes each and any type of action as coupled with a representational experience.

Objections against Dreyfus' Account of the Background

I mentioned above that according to Dreyfus' phenomenology of absorbed coping, in absorbed coping activities we do not represent a goal to us. He actually carries this

¹¹⁶ Mark Wrathall, p.98.

view to an extreme and argues that in the background we do not find anything besides skills and practices. He says that in the background “there are no beliefs to get clear about, there are only skills and practices.”¹¹⁷ However, I believe that this radical claim has open at least to two objections.

My first objection basically says that the background provides us with much more than only skills and practices. As it is already obvious, both Dreyfus’ critique of Searle’s notion of the background and his own view are largely based on his interpretation of the first division of *Being and Time*. I mentioned in the first chapter that for Heidegger our practical engagement with ready-to-hand entities in our average everydayness is guided by various possibilities of our being. By manipulating ready-to-hand entities, we try to realize a chain of purposes that terminates in a for-the-sake-of-which. Heidegger believes that a piece of equipment we use refers us to a for-the-sake-of-which. Now the question we need to raise here is this: Is it the case that we try to realize a for-the-sake-of-which without having any knowledge about it? It seems to me an impossibility to try to realize a possibility of our being through an activity without being somehow aware of it. Dreyfus argues, as I mentioned above, however, that in absorbed coping activities, there are nothing besides skills and practices. What one needs to pay attention here is that even if Dreyfus’ view that in coping activities we are absorbed in the referential background of our everydayness is correct, our absorbed activities are still goal directed. And we transparently know those goals and possibilities. The crucial point is, as I argued in the first chapter above, that this knowledge of the possibilities that we realize with ready-to-hand pieces of equipment is of such a nature that its objects are not thematically known by us. It seems to me that Dreyfus mistakenly infers from the

¹¹⁷ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p.22.

fact that there is no explicit, thematic awareness of a goal in our absorbed activities that there is simply no awareness or knowledge of a goal. What he does not do is to make a distinction between different ways of knowing a purpose or a goal. As one can have an explicit awareness of a present-at-hand entity, one can explicitly know or be aware of a goal. That is a certain way of knowing the world or a goal. But that is not the only way to know the world a goal. By means of the transparent knowledge I have, I *transparently* know many aspects of the world and that knowledge includes the possibilities I try to realize by means of my absorbed coping activities.

The second problem with Dreyfus' view is that he ignores the extent to which the beliefs we have of the world influences the background familiarity we have of our environment. As I mentioned, for him the background, which is exactly our most basic familiarity with the world, has nothing to do with our beliefs. However, it seems to me obvious that our background familiarity with our world is of such a nature that it is at least responsive to a change in our beliefs about it. Charles Taylor argues exactly for this point in his rejection of any form of foundationism in epistemology. Taylor says the following:

our ability to cope can be seen as incorporating an overall sense of ourselves and our world; which sense includes and is carried by a spectrum of rather different abilities: at one end, *beliefs* which we hold, . . . ; at the other abilities to get around and deal intelligently with things.¹¹⁸ (my emphasis)

Taylor gives a very simple but illuminating example on how our background familiarity is responsive to and revised by a change in a belief we have of our world. Suppose there is a nice garden with a number of trees behind my house. Every morning I have my cup of coffee with joy while viewing it. But suppose that one

¹¹⁸ Charles Taylor, "What is Wrong with Foundationalism?: Knowledge, Agency, and World," in *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), p.117.

morning I learn that a tiger has just escaped the local zoo that is very close to my house. I now believe that my garden is no more a safe place to be around. How do I encounter it now? Or what kind of a background familiarity I have of it now? I see it now as a source of anxiety. The way I encounter the garden is now completely different than the way I encountered before I believed that it is no more a safe place to be around. By incorporating a new belief into my belief system my background familiarity of my garden has changed. What all these mean is that Dreyfus simply goes to an implausible extreme with his claim that the background of our relation to the world around us has nothing to do with the knowledge and beliefs we have but only with skills and practices.

Concluding Remarks

In the second chapter above, I tried to come up with a notion of the background on the basis of what Heidegger says in the first division of *Being and Time*. The reason why I focused on Searle's and Dreyfus' theories of the background in this chapter is to show first that those philosophers have already developed their own accounts of the background. Searle's account has not been much influenced by the figures from the continental tradition. He even says that even if he was writing on the topic which was also the main area investigation for Husserl, he learnt nothing from his work.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, Dreyfus has been heavily influenced by many philosophers from continental philosophy. His theory of the background has many Heideggerian motivations. One can see that his special emphasis on our coping practices that constitute most of what we are engaged with in our everyday lives is a Heideggerian

¹¹⁹ Searle, *Philosophy in a New Century*, p.112.

one. And his argument against Searle's representationalism draws upon many other Heideggerian themes.

As I argued in the second chapter, I agree with both Searle and Dreyfus that any relations we have to the entities around us does not take place in isolation. What this means is that I believe that one needs to agree with Searle' and Dreyfus' view that intentionality requires a background that makes it possible. However, the second reason why I considered Searle's and Dreyfus' views on the nature of the background is that by analyzing these theories, I can point out some of the important mistakes that one should avoid while thinking about the background.

What my objections against Searle's theory of the background firstly show is that one should not think of the background as something that can be analyzed and understood merely in terms of neurophysiological facts. If one does so, one ends up with the absurd idea that two people who live in totally different cultures and historical periods can share a number of intentional states. Therefore, we need to understand the background in such a way that any analysis of it needs to go beyond a set of statements about our neurophysiological make up. An account of our relevant neurophysiological features might be regarded as a requirement to understand how the background works. However, such an account is not sufficient to characterize what it is. The second point that needs to be taken seriously in thinking of the background is that when one points out that a fact about the background resolves a philosophical problem, one needs to be aware of the fact that other philosophical traditions might have already done so in a similar manner. This awareness has the important function to make one realize that he is actually closer to a tradition that he distances himself from than he believes. One should be open to arguments from different traditions to make one's own point.

On the other hand, my objections against Dreyfus' theory of the background imply firstly that explicitly representing a state or a possibility to us is only one way of understanding what knowing something is. On the basis of the distinction I make between transparent and opaque knowledge in the second chapter, one can realize that one can have knowledge of a possibility that we can realize without any thematic awareness of it. Given this alternative understanding of knowledge, one sees that knowledge has a close relationship to the background and has it as its object. In thinking of the background one needs to pay attention to this relationship. Moreover, what my objections against Dreyfus secondly show is that the background should not be thought of as something which has nothing to do with our beliefs. Even if one can grant Dreyfus that it is essentially not constituted by our beliefs, the background against which we relate to the world must be responsive to the changes in our belief system.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE STATUS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIRST DIVISION OF *BEING AND*

TIME: A POSSIBLE OBJECTION

Introduction

In the first chapter I made a distinction between two types of knowledge. I argued that one can develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of Heidegger's analysis of our average everydayness. According to this conception of knowledge, there is a background to our practical dealings with our environment. This background, I suggested, is nothing other than the phenomenon of the world. And in order for our practical involvement with our environment to take place, we need to have an awareness of this background. I characterized this awareness as a type of knowledge and called it "transparent knowledge." The reason why I called it transparent knowledge is that it has the character of transparency which it shares with its object. Transparent knowledge has the world as the background of our average everydayness as its object. Moreover, I contrasted transparent knowledge to opaque knowledge. I suggested that opaque knowledge comes to the fore only in those occasions where we are no more absorbed in our practical dealings with ready-to-hand entities. When we have opaque knowledge of an entity around us, the entity becomes a present-at-hand object which can be understood in terms of the traditional vocabulary of categories. In other words, opaque knowledge has present-at-hand entities as its object.

If we look at the texts written on Heidegger's approach to knowledge, we immediately recognize that many Heidegger scholars explicitly argue without hesitation that for Heidegger the activity of knowing the world does not have any place in our average everydayness. They believe that according to Heidegger's phenomenology of everydayness, in our average everydayness, we are not beings who know the world. In other words, being-in-the-world as our basic state is not a state in which we know the world. For this reason, one might argue against my idea in the first chapter that in our average everydayness, we have a type of knowledge of the world. And because of the same reason, one can also suggest that developing a conception of knowledge on the basis of the conceptual framework of the first division of *Being and Time* goes against the very intentions that Heidegger has there.

In this chapter, I have three aims to realize. First, I will try to analyze Heidegger's idea that knowing the world is a founded mode of being-in-the-world. I will do this by focusing on Section 13 of *Being and Time* in which Heidegger discusses the relationship between knowledge and being-in-the-world. Here I will try to show what Heidegger's basic view in this Section amounts to. Second, I will try to discuss Charles B. Guignon's work on Heidegger's approach to knowledge. I will be referring to his book *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*. I will show that Guignon is committed to the view that I mentioned above. Guignon believes that for Heidegger the activity of knowing the world does not have any place in our average way of existing in the world. Third, I will argue that Guignon is mistaken about two issues. One of these issues is an exegetical one. His idea that for Heidegger knowing the world is an activity that does not have any place within our average everydayness is false. My argument against him will be made possible by my analysis of Section 13 of *Being and Time*. The distinction I make between transparent and opaque

knowledge will also be helpful to me in developing my argument. The second issue that he is mistaken about is not an exegetical one. It is about Guignon's own claims about the nature of knowledge. I will argue that Guignon has a very partial understanding of what is involved in the activity of knowing the world. He thinks that when we know the world, we are "subjects" who relate to it from a theoretical and practically disinterested viewpoint. I will suggest that this is only one way of characterizing the activity of knowing and it does not realize the very possibility that Heidegger opens up in the first division of *Being and Time* to interpret what knowledge is in a much richer way. In other words, I will claim that there is another way in which we know the world as practically involved agents. The basic idea here will be Heidegger's own claim that our concerned dealings "[have] its own kind of 'knowledge'."¹²⁰

Knowing the World as a Founded Mode

Heidegger begins Section 13 of *Being and Time* by reminding the reader that being-in-the-world is the basic state that Dasein is in. This means, as I mentioned in the first chapter, that the basic state we are in is not one in which we relate to the world by means of such mental contents as ideas or sensory impressions. We are, according to Heidegger, beings who are always already alongside the world dealing with entities to realize different possibilities of our being. Therefore, Heidegger believes that to consider Dasein as a being with a subjective internal sphere is a fatal mistake. On the other hand, Heidegger argues that the fact that being-in-the-world is a basic state of Dasein implies that Dasein has an experience or an understanding of this

¹²⁰ Heidegger, p.95.

phenomenon even if this understanding need not be an explicitly articulated theoretical one. He says that “if Being-in-the-world is a basic state of Dasein, and one in which Dasein operates not only in general but pre-eminently in the mode of everydayness, then it must also be something which has always been experienced ontically.”¹²¹ Heidegger’s idea here is that our understanding of being-in-the-world constitutes the ground on which all our activities including knowing the world are intelligible and make sense to us. For this reason, he believes that a proper account of what knowing is must be developed in such a way that knowledge is understood as something with “*a kind of Being which belongs to Being-in-the-world.*”¹²² And he suggests that “. . . knowing has the character of a Being which is in and towards the world.”¹²³ In other words, for Heidegger we need to understand the activity of knowing as a practice that is undertaken by a being which is always already involved with some activity to realize various possibilities of its being.

Heidegger believes that the customary procedure in which the phenomenon of knowing the world is understood misses the very fact that knowing has that kind of being which belongs to being-in-the-world. He thinks that this procedure takes knowledge only in a formal and superficial manner. Heidegger’s reason for this is that this procedure is based on the idea that knowledge stands for a relation between a practically disinterested subject and a world of objects.

But no sooner was the ‘phenomenon of knowing the world’ grasped than it got interpreted in a ‘superficial’, and formal manner. The evidence for this is the procedure (still customary today) of setting up knowing as a ‘relation between subject and Object’—a procedure in which there lurks as much ‘truth’ as vacuity.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Heidegger, p.86.

¹²² Ibid., p.88.

¹²³ Ibid., p.87.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.87.

However, as Heidegger argues throughout *Being and Time*, subject and object do not coincide with Dasein and the world. And in Section 13, Heidegger gives a short presentation and a critique of a model which exemplifies this customary procedure. This is a model of knowledge in which knowledge is analyzed in a way that remains blind to the fact that knowing is a mode of being-in-the-world and belongs to that being which has being-in-the-world as its basic state. One can see easily that this model is the one that was dominant especially in the early modern period. One can also recognize that this model is the model that was put at the center of epistemology by Descartes. According to this model, the object of knowledge is an entity called “Nature.”¹²⁵ Although it is not much obvious, Heidegger here seems to be thinking that this Nature is a totality of present-at-hand objects. However, once one assumes that the object of knowledge is “Nature,” then one realizes that knowledge cannot be found in it. “Knowing, as such, is not to be met in this entity.”¹²⁶ If knowledge cannot be met in this entity that we call Nature, where is it to be found? The answer to this question in this model is that knowledge is something that can be found in the knower subject with a number of mental contents. But this answer, according to Heidegger’s characterization, produces a number of other difficult problems. For instance, we know that knowledge is not something that can be identical to a present-at-hand external characteristic that a knower has. “In any case, it is not externally ascertainable as, let us say, bodily properties are.”¹²⁷ Because of the fact that knowledge is not some external property that a knower has, this model forces us to assume that it must be something that is “inside” the knower. And at this important point, we face the traditional problems of epistemology.

¹²⁵ Heidegger, p.87.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.87.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.87.

For only then can the problem arise of how this knowing subject comes out of its inner 'sphere' into one which is 'other and external', of how knowing can have any object at all, and of how one must think of the object itself so that eventually the subject knows it without needing to venture a leap into another sphere.¹²⁸

Heidegger believes that this model cannot solve these problems. His reason for this is that even if it implicitly assumes the mode of being that the knower has, this model does not raise the question what kind of a being it is.¹²⁹ This means nothing other than what I mentioned above. That is, if one wants to develop a proper account of what knowledge is, one needs to consider it on the basis of the basic state of Dasein. In other words, an account of knowledge must remain true to the fact that we are beings who are always already absorbed in a number of purposeful practical activities with ready-to-hand entities. However, this model is not true to that fact and cannot be regarded as a proper conception of what knowledge is.

One might here ask what Heidegger's solution to the traditional problems of epistemology is. As I already mentioned in the first chapter, this question rests on an assumption that Heidegger clearly rejects in *Being and Time*. The mere fact that a problem is a traditional problem posed by many eminent philosophers in the history of philosophy does not mean for Heidegger that it is a question with absolute philosophical authority that a philosopher must in one way or another try to be loyal to. In his reference to Kant about the problem of the external world, we saw that Heidegger believes that the problem of the external world is not a problem that one needs to provide a solution to. For Heidegger, the traditional epistemological problems that I mentioned in the previous paragraph are not of a different nature. He believes that once the basic state of Dasein is clearly explicated, then the seeming

¹²⁸ Heidegger, p.87.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.87.

authority those questions have disappears and the existential phenomenologist is in a position to resolve them without providing any positive solution to them. Heidegger says the following:

But if, as we suggest, we thus find phenomenally *knowing is a kind of being which belongs to Being-in-the-world*, one might object that with such an Interpretation of knowing, the problem of knowledge is nullified; for what is left to be asked if one *presupposes* that knowing is already ‘alongside’ its world, when it is not supposed to reach that world except in the transcending of the subject?¹³⁰

If one looks at the model of knowledge that Heidegger criticizes in Section 13 of *Being and Time* and if one recognizes that for him knowledge has a kind of being which belongs to being-in-the-world, one realizes that what Heidegger’s critique of this model amounts to is that he is against a certain way of understanding knowledge. What he clearly argues against is taking knowledge primarily as a relationship between a decontextualized knowing subject whose basic character remains unseen and a realm of present-at-hand entities which he calls “Nature.” This means that he is open to the idea that one can develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of a phenomenology of our average everydayness insofar as one recognizes the fact that we are always already alongside the world without any need to transcend an inner private realm. In other words, Heidegger would have no problem with a view of knowledge which does not overlook that our basic state is being-in-the-world.

On the other hand, it is also clear that one needs to be cautious when one says that for Heidegger the activity of knowing the world is not something that one can find in Dasein’s average everydayness. What one cannot find in Dasein’s average everydayness is that activity of knowing that can be undertaken by an isolated subject that encounters a world of present-at-hand substances. The model of knowledge that Heidegger is not happy with is the model that rests upon such a

¹³⁰ Heidegger, p.88.

distinction between a subject and a world, not a model that recognizes the practical situatedness of Dasein. The fact that Heidegger actually believes that the activity of knowing has a place in the average everydayness of Dasein is explicitly shown by his statement at the very beginning of his analysis of readiness-to-hand in Section 15 of *Being and Time*. He says there the following:

The kind of dealing that is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of ‘*knowledge*.’¹³¹ (my emphasis)

So Heidegger states here clearly that the activity of knowing the world is not something that cannot be encountered in Dasein’s average everydayness. In concernfully dealing with entities in its environment, Dasein’s activity is guided by a special kind of knowledge. However, as I just mentioned, this knowledge must be distinguished from the kind of knowledge that he thinks has no place in our everydayness. The kind of knowledge that we have in our average everydayness is not the knowledge which can be acquired by a disinterested subject with a number of mental contents. As I argued in the first chapter, it is a type of knowledge in which we are practically absorbed in the referential contexts and significances of our everyday involvements. I gave the name “transparent knowledge” to this type of knowledge.

This analysis of Section 13 of *Being and Time* raises the question, on the other hand, whether I imply here that Heidegger can be seen as having an explicit perspective on knowledge or that one can *attribute* an epistemic perspective to him. In order to answer this question, we need to remind ourselves of Heidegger’s primary concern in *Being and Time*. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger is after an explicit

¹³¹ Heidegger, p.95.

understanding of what meaning being has. In other words, it is correct to say that *Being and Time* is a book in ontology. Heidegger's discussion of the relationship between knowledge and being-in-the-world must be seen as a part of an ontological project aimed at the meaning of being. Therefore, in *Being and Time* Heidegger is interested in knowledge only insofar as it is connected to his ontological investigation. What this means is that Heidegger is not after presenting a detailed perspective on knowledge. However, as I just argued he has an explicit perspective on knowledge to the extent that for him knowing the world is not a relation between a context-free being with mental states and a world of present-at-hand objects. Moreover, on the basis of what Heidegger says in section 13 one can attribute an epistemic perspective to him by developing a conception of knowledge that remains true to his idea that being-in-the-world is the basic state of Dasein and knowledge must be understood in terms of that basic state. So I imply both that Heidegger can be seen as having an explicit perspective on knowledge and that one can attribute an epistemic perspective to him.

Guignon on Heidegger's Approach to Knowledge

In his book *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, Guignon tries to introduce Heidegger's take on knowledge and a number of problems in epistemology to philosophers working in the Anglo-American analytic tradition. And Guignon says that his main concern is to discuss Heidegger's views on two issues. He states in the first chapter of the book the following: "My concern in what follows is to examine and evaluate Heidegger's radical approach to the traditional skeptical argument and

to epistemology in general.”¹³² So Guignon, in *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, will first deal with how traditional skeptical arguments are developed against knowledge claims and show Heidegger’s reaction to them. Then, on the basis of his analysis of what Heidegger says on traditional skeptical arguments, he will be making a generalization about how Heidegger considers the status of epistemology in general. As we will see, Guignon’s interpretation of Heidegger’s approach to epistemology will have important consequences for his view about what Heidegger understands of knowledge.

I mentioned in the first chapter that Descartes took the skeptic’s argument which is against nearly all claims to knowledge to be the starting point of his own thinking. He suggested that in order to reach any truth about the world, one first needs to fight against the skeptic. In other words, Descartes believed that in order to come up with any philosophical knowledge, one needs to show that the skeptic is wrong. I also mentioned in the first chapter that not only Descartes but many other modern philosophers who came after him felt the same need to argue against the skeptic. The need to show that the skeptic is wrong became a central element of modern philosophy. Because of the importance Descartes had with regard to the role skeptical arguments played in modern philosophy, Guignon bases his own discussion of the structure of traditional skeptical arguments on Descartes’ attempt in his *Meditations* to argue against the skeptic.

Guignon divides the Cartesian inquiry into three stages. Before he analyzes these stages, however, he makes a very important claim. He believes that for Descartes there is a condition that must be met because of the nature of his inquiry. Guignon states this condition by saying the following: “The first requisite Descartes

¹³² Guignon, p.13.

lays out for his method of inquiry, then, is that we disengage ourselves from active involvements in the world in order to achieve the vantage point of an unprejudiced spectator.”¹³³ So for Guignon the Cartesian philosopher is in exactly that state that Heidegger takes as something to be deficient with regard to the mode of being we have in our average everydayness. Remember our discussion in the first chapter. We saw that for Heidegger we are primarily not unprejudiced spectators but beings who deal with entities as practically involved agents.

According to Guignon’s characterization, in the first stage of the Cartesian inquiry, the philosopher reviews his beliefs and the procedure by means of which he arrived at those beliefs. In this stage we have “. . . a straightforward, commonsensical statement of what we believe in our everyday lives and how we come to hold these beliefs.”¹³⁴ This step also constitutes for Guignon the first structural element of skeptical arguments. In other words, the first step in the formation of skeptical arguments is to give a descriptive account of our plain epistemic situation. In the second stage of the Cartesian inquiry, we are made to realize, however, that those beliefs are actually far from being justified so as to count as knowledge. Remember again what we saw in the first chapter above. Descartes started his investigation by stating the beliefs he ordinarily has. But the skeptic can easily show that what Descartes ordinarily has is nothing more than subjective mental contents. So if the Cartesian philosopher thinks that there is an object that exists in the external world, the skeptic responds in such a way that what Descartes takes to be a real object is actually a sensory impression or an idea in his mind. Therefore, the second component of the skeptic’s argument is his reduction of the beliefs that were stated in the first stage into mere mental contents. And Guignon says that “as a result of the

¹³³ Guignon, p.24.

¹³⁴ Ibid., p.24.

stage-II reduction, we are led to see ourselves as thinking subjects within a veil of ideas.”¹³⁵ We are led to see ourselves as thinking subjects because in the second stage, the only belief that we are certain of is the “cogito, ergo sum.” There is an important point that we need to pay attention to here. This state that we find ourselves in the second stage is actually a radicalization of the state that the Cartesian philosopher puts himself into in the first stage. In the first stage, he already disengaged himself from any practical involvement he could have within the world and took the position of a subject who merely tries to think and consider his beliefs. The state he is now in is a radicalization of this because he now comes to see that the beliefs he had are actually nothing more than subjective mental contents.

Now we see the two important structural components of skeptical arguments. They are those in which it is shown firstly that we have a number of beliefs about the world and secondly that those beliefs are nothing more than inner mental representations. The third stage of the Cartesian inquiry is the one where the Cartesian philosopher shows that the skeptic’s argument is misguided by providing his own arguments against it. In this stage of the inquiry, “. . . an attempt is made to rationally reconstruct the set of common-sense beliefs we found in stage-I on the basis of what is given in the new understanding of our epistemic predicament.”¹³⁶

Guignon argues that the description we have of our plain epistemic situation in the first stage of the Cartesian inquiry is accepted as unproblematic not only by the Cartesian philosopher and the skeptic but also by the whole epistemological tradition. “The stage-I description of our ordinary beliefs and how we come to arrive

¹³⁵ Guignon, p.29.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p.25.

at them is generally accepted as unproblematical.”¹³⁷ However, Guignon argues from a Heideggerian point of view that this description of our ordinary relationship to the world is totally mistaken because it “. . . misrepresents our everyday situations in the world.”¹³⁸ For Guignon, this picture of our ordinary situation in the world takes us as subjects who are contemplating what they find in their environment. “The picture of the quiescent observer contemplating the world around him might be a distorted portrayal of our actual epistemic predicament.”¹³⁹ And the reason why Guignon is not happy with this picture becomes more obvious once we remember the fact he approaches our ordinary way of existing in the world from a Heideggerian perspective. He opposes what he calls “philosophical epistemic situations” and “plain epistemic situations”.¹⁴⁰ Guignon argues that the stage-I picture of our ordinary epistemic situation is actually a philosophical construct. According to this philosophical construct, “In our epistemic predicaments we are seen as fundamentally observers collecting data about the world through the senses and forming beliefs on that basis.”¹⁴¹ This means that, this picture depends upon the assumption that our basic mode of comportment to the entities around us is the one that Heidegger characterizes as theoretical. And subject-object structure is an integral part of this mode of comportment. In other words, it is a central assumption of this picture of ourselves that we consider ourselves “. . . as subjects distinct from a world of objects about which we come to have beliefs.”¹⁴²

¹³⁷ Guignon, p.29.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p.30.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p.30.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p.32.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.31.

¹⁴² Ibid., p.30.

Another central assumption this picture has, Guignon argues, is about the conditions for the intelligibility of the practices that one finds in the stage-I description of our ordinary epistemic situation. For Guignon, the Cartesian philosopher and the skeptic takes it for granted that if a practice that we undertake in our everyday lives is not grounded in a ground that is intelligible to us, then that practice cannot be taken by us as a source of true knowledge. For this reason, Guignon says that “[t]he rationalist enterprise can therefore make our beliefs and practices fully intelligible only if it shows them to be grounded in a ground that is itself immediately intelligible.”¹⁴³ This means that besides a metaphysical assumption that represents us as subjects distinct from a world of objects, the Cartesian philosopher and the skeptic is also committed to a rationalist assumption about the conditions for making our everyday situations fully intelligible.¹⁴⁴ The reason why the skeptic and the Cartesian philosopher has this rationalist assumption for Guignon is that their inquiry is motivated from the outset by the idea that there is something deeply obscure and unclear about our daily practices by means of which we relate to the world. They believe that our daily affairs require a justification through philosophical reasoning.¹⁴⁵ Guignon rightly suggests that Heidegger challenges both the ontological and the rationalist assumption of the Cartesian philosopher and the skeptic. As I mentioned above, Heidegger argues that our plain epistemic situations are not structured according to the subject-object schema.¹⁴⁶ Guignon shows that for Heidegger in our actual involvements within the world, “. . .

¹⁴³ Guignon, p.36.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.37.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.33.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.38.

there is no role to be played by the contemplative subject set off from a world of objects that are to be known.”¹⁴⁷ And Guignon also rightly observes that for Heidegger the practices we have in our everyday lives need not have to be rationally grounded in order to serve the function they serve.¹⁴⁸ Heidegger believes that our practices open up a meaningful world to us without any support from a rational justificatory procedure.

Now we come to a point that is of outmost importance for my purposes in this chapter. Guignon believes that for Heidegger the two assumptions about our plain epistemic situations that the Cartesian model and the skeptic have are actually built into the very notion of knowledge. Guignon begins by claiming that Heidegger criticizes the Cartesian tendency to take the activity of knowing the world as the primary way we interact with things.¹⁴⁹ And he goes on saying that what Heidegger suggests is that whenever we characterize ourselves primarily by focusing on knowing, then we will end up imagining ourselves as subjects who are cut off from the world and just staring at the world around them.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, according to Guignon’s interpretation, Heidegger believes that knowledge is a state of us in which we passively observe the world as practically disinterested subjects and once we form representations about the world on the basis of passive observation, then we face the problem of determining whether our representations match what they represent.¹⁵¹ And Guignon claims that for Heidegger the metaphysical assumption that we have on the one hand “inner experiences” that are in the mind, and things that

¹⁴⁷ Guignon, p.38.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.40.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.39.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.39.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.39.

are in the external world on the other is a dogmatic presupposition that the “theory of knowledge” has. What this means is that for Guignon, Heidegger believes that the metaphysical assumption of ourselves as subjects contemplating a world of objects is found not only in the Cartesian picture but also in “epistemology” in general. In other words, on this interpretation of Heidegger, each and every theory of knowledge is committed to the view that knowing is a relation between a practically disinterested subject and world. Similarly, Heidegger argues for Guignon that the rationalist preoccupation with grounding and justification is actually at the heart of epistemology. In other words, according to Guignon’s Heidegger any theory of knowledge is based on the idea that if something is to count as knowledge, then the person who has it must somehow justify it through a rational procedure.

Guignon’s idea that for Heidegger knowledge involves both the ontological and the rationalist assumption leads us to say that knowing the world does not have any place in our average everydayness because of Heidegger’s argument in the first division of *Being and Time* that subject and object do not coincide with Dasein and the world and in its average everydayness Dasein has the need to justify its practices only in those situations where its practical dealings in the world are interrupted. As I mentioned above, this is an interpretation on Heidegger’s approach to knowledge that is not rare among Heidegger scholars. For instance, in his paper on the kind of intentionality we find in the first division of *Being and Time*, Harrison Hall says the following:

In Division I of *Being and Time*, Heidegger discovers that our fundamental sense of things is not as objects of perception and *knowledge*, but rather as instrumental objects (equipment) that fit naturally to our ordinary practical activity.¹⁵²

¹⁵² Harrison Hall, “Intentionality and World: Division I of Being and Time,” in *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.125.

It is clear that Hall interprets Heidegger in the same way that Guignon does. He believes that for Heidegger once we take Dasein as a knowing being, then we miss the special nature of its average everydayness. Harrison takes it for granted that for Heidegger knowledge is not something that we can find in Dasein's everyday involvements. This might also be taken to mean that one cannot develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein in the first division of *Being and Time*.

Response to the Objection

The objection that can come from such Heidegger scholars as Guignon and Hall against what I do in the first chapter is that to develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of the first division of *Being and Time* goes against the very intentions Heidegger has there since it is assumed that for Heidegger Dasein is not a being that knows the world in its average everydayness. As it must have been clear already, I developed the basis of my response to this objection above in my analysis of Section 13 of *Being and Time*. I argued in my analysis there that for Heidegger if one needs to develop a proper understanding of what knowledge is, one needs to remember that knowledge has a being that belongs to being-in-the-world. In other words, knowing the world must be taken as an activity of a being that is practically dealing with entities within the world. Let's remember again his idea that our concerned activities with ready-to-hand entities have its kind of knowledge. If one does so, it is seen that this objection against my idea in the first chapter that one cannot develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of what Heidegger says in the first division of *Being and Time* is based on a misunderstanding of Heidegger's approach to

knowledge. This is a misunderstanding because it does not realize that Heidegger does not argue in Section 13 of *Being and Time* that our average everydayness excludes each and every way of knowing the world. What he argues for is that we are not primarily beings who need to transcend an inner subjective realm and that knowledge must not be understood in terms of such a subjective realm of mental contents. Therefore, we can say that Dasein is a being that knows the world in its average everydayness. However, this is a knowledge that needs to be distinguished from the one that Heidegger is not happy with. In knowing the world in its average everydayness, Dasein does not experience itself as a subject who is distinct from its world and who only reaches that world through mental representations. In this way of knowing the world, Dasein does not have a theoretical stance toward the world where it explicitly makes judgments about it.

As I argued in the first chapter, the kind of knowledge we have of the world in our daily engagements with entities must be distinguished from the one we have of present-at-hand entities. I claimed that that kind of knowledge is what I called “transparent knowledge.” In transparently knowing the world, our knowledge is not coupled with a higher order awareness of ourselves. Therefore, by having transparent knowledge of the world, we do not consider ourselves as knowers collecting data about it. This happens when our activities in our everyday lives get interrupted and we come to have opaque knowledge of the world. To put it differently, transparent knowledge is a conception of knowledge in which we can see that it is possible to see ourselves as knowers without being committed to the prejudice that in knowing the world we necessarily become worldless subjects encountering decontextualized objects. Guignon is committed to this because he has a partial understanding of what knowledge is. He subscribes to the view that he attributes to Heidegger. He thinks, as

I mentioned above, that the metaphysical and the rationalist assumption are built into the very nature of what knowledge is. However, the idea that knowledge necessarily involves these assumptions is a very partial understanding of knowledge that does not see that type of knowledge which I analyzed under the name transparent knowledge. In order to have transparent knowledge, we do not need to consider ourselves as “subjects” who have to justify their practices by means of a rational procedure. In our plain epistemic situations we acquire knowledge without being involved in any justification procedure. Transparent knowledge is gained not through rational justification but by simply being in the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I tried to develop a conception of knowledge on the basis of the first division of *Being and Time*. In the second chapter, I began by situating Heidegger's concern against a historical background to show what he was basically reacting to in the first division of *Being and Time*. I suggested that Heidegger tried to shake the Cartesian conception of ourselves as beings that represent the world by means of mental states. Heidegger thought that we need to radically rethink this conception in order to see ourselves in a totally different light. For Heidegger we are not subjects who need to transcend an inner realm to relate to entities around us. He argued that we are primarily beings that cannot be conceived without taking the world as an essential aspect of us. On the other hand, even if Heidegger was not content with many assumptions in modern philosophy, he believed that Kant was right in his idea that there are certain a priori conditions that must be met in order for us to have a meaningful world. He called those conditions existentials.

Heidegger claimed that in order to come up with a proper account of the being humans have, we need to focus on how they relate to the world in their average everydayness. Once this is done, he claims, we will see that we are not beings who just stare at the world from a practically disinterested point of view but beings who are engaged with pieces with of equipment to realize a number of possibilities. The crucial point we need to realize here is that for Heidegger our engagements with pieces of equipment do not take place in isolation. This means that we are always already absorbed in the practical context of our dealings. Heidegger explicates this

practical context through his notion of reference, involvement and significance and believes that what constitutes the world are references, involvements and significances. They are the a priori structures of any special world we can inhabit. I argued in the second chapter that the world can be thought of as the background of our everyday lives which makes it possible for us to relate to entities around us by making them meaningfully intelligible to us.

The pivotal point in the second chapter is that our awareness of the background of everydayness is radically different than the one we have of present-at-hand entities that Heidegger describes by contrasting to pieces of equipment. The kind of awareness we have of this background is of such a nature that it and its objects are not explicitly experienced by us. I called our awareness of the background of our average everydayness transparent knowledge as I believe that it can be understood as a type of knowledge. Transparent knowledge has a ready-to-hand character because it directs us to the world without explicitly presenting itself to us. It is not coupled with any higher order knowledge. Moreover, the kind of awareness we have of an entity when we relate to it from a practically disinterested point of view does not have this nature. I called this kind of awareness opaque knowledge. When we have opaque knowledge of an entity, the entity and our knowledge of it are thematic objects for us.

When one looks at the literature on *Being and Time*, one recognizes that the idea that even if Heidegger himself did not have a systematic account of knowledge, one can develop a positive conception of knowledge that goes beyond an analysis of what Heidegger was not happy with in epistemology on the basis of the framework he provides us with in *Being and Time* is not taken into consideration by many Heidegger scholars. Therefore, I believe that my attempt to develop such a

conception of knowledge has important novelties for Heidegger scholarship. It can open up new possibilities for Heidegger scholars to work on something different in Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time*. Moreover, my discussion in the second chapter is important not only for Heidegger scholars who are looking for something new in Heidegger but also for those philosophers who want to enrich our understanding of what knowledge is. My discussion is an attempt to show that much of our knowledge of the world around us cannot be analyzed in terms of processes in which we explicitly represent something to ourselves.

The third chapter is about two prominent philosophers who already developed their own views on the nature of the background. Besides a presentation of the views these philosophers have on the background, the chapter also aims at seeing how one should develop a conception of the background by indicating the mistakes those philosophers did. I began the third chapter by evaluating Searle's notion of the background. Searle argues that our intentional states such as beliefs or perceptions require a nonrepresentational background. His argument for the existence of the background depends upon his claim that the representative contents of our intentional states can be interpreted in various different ways. Our background makes it possible for us to favor one interpretation and discard others. I argue that Searle is mistaken in thinking of the background as something that can be understood in terms of neurophysiological states we have. I showed that if one does so, then one ends up with the implausible idea that people from different cultures and historical periods can have exactly the same intentional states. So I argue that the background of our intentional states goes beyond the neurophysiology we have. This is one important lesson we see in Searle's mistake.

Dreyfus agrees with Searle that intentionality requires a nonrepresentational background. He believes, however, that the background is constituted by what he calls “absorbed coping practices.” His motivation for this comes from Dreyfus’ reading of Heidegger. Heidegger, as I showed, puts a special emphasis on our activities in our average everydayness. In my objections to Dreyfus’ views on the background, I argued that he goes to an implausible extreme by claiming that the background has nothing to do with our knowledge or beliefs. First, I suggest that in thinking of the background, we need to realize the possibility in which we can take knowledge as a state where we do not explicitly represent anything to us. I believe that when one characterizes the background, one needs to be aware of the fact that our awareness of it is not something that we thematically focus on and that this awareness might be regarded as a type of knowledge. Second, Dreyfus also misses the fact that the background of our everyday lives is responsive to the changes in our belief system. I believe that one needs to think of the background as something that is connected to our beliefs about the world.

In the fourth chapter, I tried to formulate an objection that can be raised against what I do in the second chapter. Many Heidegger scholars tend to think that it goes against the very spirit of what Heidegger does in *Being and Time* to say that in our average everydayness we are knower agents. I responded to this objection by first giving an analysis of Section 13 of *Being and Time*. The main aim in this analysis is to show that Heidegger actually argues against a particular model of knowledge. He claims that knowing the world is not something in which there is a self-contained subject encountering a world of present-at-hand entities. Heidegger argues that knowledge must be understood as a state that belongs to being-in-the-world. This means that Heidegger is open to a conception of knowledge which takes

the idea that being-in-the-world is the basic state of Dasein. I suggest that what I develop in the second chapter takes this idea seriously. However, in his book *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, Charles Guignon argues that for Heidegger our average everydayness has no place for anything like knowledge. I claim that Guignon has a very partial understanding of what knowledge is. Both his own views on the nature of knowledge and his interpretation of Heidegger's take on knowledge are mistaken. I believe that the fourth section of this thesis will strengthen the conviction that Heidegger scholars can find something interesting and positive in *Being and Time* if we realize that Heidegger's conceptual framework provides us with the opportunity to understand knowledge in a richer way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 2003.
- Dretske, Fred. *Perception*, “Conscious Experience.” In *Perception, Knowledge and Belief: Selected Essays*, edited by Ernest Sosa, 113-137. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Dreyfus, L. Hubert. *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I*, London: The MIT Press, 1991.
- Dreyfus, L. Hubert. “Heidegger’s Critique of Husserl’s (and Searle’s) Account of Intentionality.” *Social Research* 60 (1993): 17-38.
- Dreyfus, L. Hubert. “The Primacy of Phenomenology over Logical Analysis.” *Philosophical Topics: The Intersection of Analytic and Continental Philosophy* 27 (1999): 3-24.
- Dreyfus, L. Hubert and Wakefield, Jerome. “Intentionality and Phenomenology of Action.” In *John Searle and His Critics*, edited by E. Lepore and V. Gulick, 259-270. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Gorner, Paul. *Heidegger’s Being and Time: An Introduction*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Guignon, Charles B. *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983.
- Hall, Harrison. “Intentionality and World: Division I of Being and Time.” In *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Charles Guignon, 122-140. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, Translated by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1962.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*, Translated by P. Guyer and A. W. Wood, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Searle, John. *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Searle, John. *The Construction of Social Reality*, London.: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Searle, John. *Philosophy in a New Century*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Searle, John. *The Rediscovery of the Mind*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994.

- Searle, John. "Response: The Background of Intentionality and Action." In *John Searle and His Critics*, edited by E. Lepore and V. Gulick, 289-299. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Stroud, Barry. "The Background of Thought." In *John Searle and His Critics*, edited by E. Lepore and V. Gulick, 245-258. Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1991.
- Taylor, Charles. "Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger." In *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Charles Guignon, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Taylor, Charles. "What is Wrong with Foundationalism?: Knowledge, Agency, and World." In *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, edited by Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).
- Williamson, Timothy. *Knowledge and Its Limits*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Wrathall, Mark. "Background Practices, Capacities, and Heideggerian Disclosure." In *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus*, edited by Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000.