mark a. wrathall and max murphey

1   An Overview of *Being and Time*

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger aims to "work out concretely the question concerning the sense of 'being'" (1; translation modified). The published version of the book contains roughly one-third of the book Heidegger envisioned, and we have only rather sparse and sketchy indications of how the book would have looked when complete. It was to consist of two parts, with each part divided into three divisions. Part One was to offer an "explication of time as the transcendental horizon for the question of being" (38). The published portions of *Being and Time* consist of the first two divisions of Part One – the "preparatory" sections of this project. Rather than offering an account of the sense of being in general, these divisions focus on a "determinate entity": *Dasein*, the kind of entity that in each case we human beings are.[1]

Thus *Being and Time* as it exists provides a very rich preparatory analysis of human being-in-the-world (in Division I), and then argues that our way of being has its sense in temporality (in Division II). Division III, as envisaged, would have moved from the focus on Dasein toward an account of temporality as the horizon for understanding and interpreting the sense of being in general. Part Two would have used the provisional account of temporality to "destroy" the history of ontology – focusing on Kant (Division I), Descartes (Division II), and Aristotle (Division III). Part Two, Heidegger claimed, would have shown concretely how traditional ontology was consistently grounded in an experience of the temporal and historical structures of human existence. But the intention was to destroy or break down the categories of the ontological tradition that, Heidegger claimed, conceal an original experience of time (see 21–2). Neither Division III of Part One nor Part Two were ever completed (see §6 of *Being and Time* for Heidegger's overview of what he intended to accomplish in Part Two).[2]

We offer here a chapter-by-chapter overview of *Being and Time*, starting, of course, with Heidegger's Introduction.

1

INTRODUCTION

Inquiries into being are often dismissed as superfluous or empty because being is thought to be both so fundamental as to defy definition and yet also well understood by everybody. Heidegger agrees, in fact, that being cannot be defined in the way that concepts about entities are – that is, by deriving a definition from more basic concepts, or refining it by comparing and contrasting it to other related, well-defined concepts. And yet it is the philosopher's task, after all, to illuminate the meaning of supposedly self-evident concepts. The mere appeal to what is well understood, without any further illumination, often conceals a superficial and mistaken grasp of the matter.

But if we're not asking for a definition of "being," what is the question of being after? We make progress in understanding being, Heidegger argues, by getting clearer about the "meaning" or "sense" (*Sinn*) of being.[3] The way Heidegger uses the term "sense" is akin to the way we say in English that something "makes sense." Things make sense when they fit together, when there is an organized, stable, and coherent way in which they interact and bear on us and each other. We grasp the sense of something when we know our way around it, we can anticipate what kind of things can happen with respect to it, we recognize when things belong or are out of place, and so on. This is what Heidegger means when he says that "sense is that within which the intelligibility of something maintains itself... Sense is that onto which projection projects, in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something" (151, translation modified). Sense is the background way of organizing and fitting things together, which guides and shapes all our anticipations of and interactions with anything we encounter.

We explain the sense of being when we illuminate what we understand when we know our way around entities as entities, meaning that we are able to distinguish between what is and what is not, or between how something is and how it is not. The conceptual apparatus that must be brought to bear in explaining this sense, however, is anything but clear. Heidegger largely dispenses with traditional ontological categories and tries to develop his own ontological concepts by "interrogating" entities with regard to their being, viewing them in the context of their being rather than, for instance, in the context of their causal interactions with each other. Toward this end, Heidegger proposes that the inquiry should focus from the outset on a particular entity, one that is well suited for interrogation with respect to its being. Dasein has priority for the inquiry because we are defined as the kind of entity we are by our possession of an understanding of being. Moreover, we "relate

to being" (see 12), meaning that we understand that there are different ways to be, and that we are capable of "deciding our existence" (12) by taking over a different way to be. Thus Dasein gets its "essential character from what is inquired about – namely, being" (7).

Dasein has priority in another way as well. It not only understands its own existence, but it "also possesses ... an understanding of the being of all entities of a character other than its own" (13). If we examine another entity with regard to its being – for instance, a physical object like a stone – we can hope only for insight into its particular mode of being. But Dasein's dealings with entities show a sensitivity to different ways of being. Thus, by analyzing Dasein's different modes of comportment, we can hope to gain insight into a number of modes of being.

Heidegger offers two rather concise arguments meant to motivate the question of being, as well as to clarify further its function and aim. The question of being, Heidegger argues, has priority over all other scientific inquiries because every science presupposes a certain ontological understanding of its subject matter. The natural sciences, for instance, operate within a pre-theoretical understanding of what it is to be a natural entity (as opposed to a cultural or historical entity). Behind the basic concepts of any positive science, Heidegger argues, lies a tacit ontology, a "productive logic" that "discloses" an area of being and guides scientific inquiry within that domain (see 10). Without an explicitly and thematically developed ontology, Heidegger argues, there is a danger that the sciences will be led astray by unfounded metaphysical assumptions (see 11).

The other motivation for asking the question of being is rooted in our essence as Dasein. The "question of existence is one of Dasein's ontical 'affairs'" (12). We care about our being, that is, about the ways in which we have decided, and will decide, our existence. We thus care about the question of being, given the reasonable assumption that having a clear-sighted understanding of being gives us guidance on how we ought to take a stand on our being.

But how is the question to be pursued? What method is to be employed? We already have a certain understanding of being. We have a sense for the difference between being and nonbeing, and we grasp pre-reflectively,[4] though imperfectly, what it is to be a human being, as opposed to a rock, as opposed to a number, and so on. Since these portions of *Being and Time* are centered on our kind of being, the initial task is to illuminate Dasein as it shows up in our pre-reflective understanding – Dasein in its everydayness. This will be done by offering a description in which "essential structures will be exhibited, which persist as determinative of being in every kind of being of factual Dasein"

(16–17, translation modified). Heidegger calls this method – description that exhibits essential structures – "phenomenology." Since it involves interpreting or laying out what we already tacitly understand, it is a "hermeneutic" phenomenology. The task of Division I is to find the right concepts to describe the structures of *everyday* Dasein, concepts that will let Dasein show itself in its being. But this will yield at best a provisional account of Dasein, since it won't show why it makes sense that those structures are determinative of the being of Dasein. Thus "this preparatory analytic of Dasein will have to be repeated on a higher and authentically ontological basis" (17) in which we uncover and articulate the sense of being. This is the task of Division II. The answer to the question of the sense of the being of Dasein is "temporality": temporality is the background against which the essential structures of Dasein are intelligible as determining the being of Dasein.[5]

DIVISION I

Heidegger begins Division I by giving a brief sketch of what Dasein is and how it differs from all other types of entities. The central claim, once again, is that Dasein is the one kind of entity that has an *understanding of being*. This does not mean that all human beings explicitly know the meaning of being, for in such a case, everyone would already be in possession of a fundamental ontology, and Heidegger's project would be superfluous. Rather, Dasein's understanding of being is for the most part implicit and vague – "pre-ontological" in the sense of lacking an explicit ontology (5–6). The philosophical development of this pre-ontological understanding will often require correcting what we think we understand about being.

Traditional ontology, Heidegger claims, has misconstrued our being as human beings by assuming that we share the same *mode of being* as other entities we encounter within the world, such as tables, rocks, dogs, atoms, or numbers. From Aristotle to Descartes and beyond, for instance, both human beings and nonhuman things were understood to be alike in that they were *substances*: discretely individuated, self-sufficient entities that possess determinate properties and stand in contingent, external relations to one another. Although different substances possess different determinative or essential properties, traditional ontology applies the same ontological categories to all of them. Heidegger argues, however, that our pre-reflective ways of distinguishing between different types of entities are grounded in an ontological difference. Much of Division I is concerned with articulating these ontological distinctions.

CHAPTER I

As an initial specification of Dasein, Heidegger observes: "we are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The being of any such entity is *in each case mine*. These entities, in their being, comport themselves towards their being … *Being* is that which is an issue for every such entity" (41–2).

What does it mean to say that being is an *issue* for Dasein? When I say that something is an issue for me, I mean that it matters to me, that it has importance or significance for me, or that I care about it. It also implies that there is something I can do about it – that its condition can be altered or affected by me. Many of Heidegger's main points are foreshadowed by this claim: that the world is to be understood as a contingent structure of significance, that entities in the world and our activities are understood on the basis of their sense, and that the being of Dasein is care.

Because Dasein can comport itself toward being, it differs fundamentally from all other entities. Heidegger uses the term "existence" (*Existenz*) to refer to Dasein's mode of being; he calls the modes of being for entities other than Dasein "presence-at-hand" or "occurrentness" (*Vorhandenheit*), and "readiness-to-hand" or "availableness" (*Zuhandenheit*).[6] As the name suggests, available entities are entities that offer us ready, intelligible modes of use. Most of the things we encounter in everyday life are available. We are familiar with them, and they afford or solicit actions from us in response. Heidegger addresses availableness in detail in chapter 3. Occurrent entities are the entities we discover when we abstract from our practical engagement with the world and take up a reflective or theoretical or scientific attitude toward it. Then we find entities that are defined not by the roles they play in our world but by their inherent physical properties. Heidegger argues that traditional ontology has focused on occurrentness and erroneously attempted to interpret all entities as occurrent.

Because being is an issue for Dasein, it resists being explained as just one type of occurrent entity among others. In the history of philosophy, a number of different accounts have been offered regarding our essence as human beings. According to Aristotle, the essence of a human being is to be a rational animal. For Christian philosophers, the essence of a human being is to be created in the image of God. In the Cartesian paradigm, the essence of a human being is to be a conscious subject with the capacity to reflect on its mental representations. The implicit assumption behind each of these definitions of the essence of humanity is that human beings are ontologically homogenous with all other entities, differing only in virtue of possessing different essential properties. We are

different from lower animals, for instance, either because we are essen-
tially rational or because they were created by God for us or because they
are incapable of reflecting on their representations. On this traditional
view, the history of different interpretations of humanity's essence can
be understood as an argument over which of the properties we possess
is *really* the essential one. Heidegger, however, takes this history as a
sign that Dasein has an ontology fundamentally different from other
entities. Namely, Dasein is *an entity that interprets its own essence.*
Its essence is not found in the possession of this or that property. Its
essence is found in its lack of an essential property in the traditional
sense. If "existence" names our mode of being, and we are entities for
whom being is an issue, then it follows, as Heidegger famously pro-
claims, that "the 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence" (42).

Another way of putting this would be to say that Dasein's essence is
"open." It is never fixed once and for all, and we are capable of reinter-
preting ourselves. Because each of us can, at least in principle, interpret
ourselves, "the being of any such entity is *in each case mine.*" But,
as chapter 2 argues, we are also thoroughly shaped by the people and
things around us, and we inherit our possibilities from the particular
shared social world we live in.

CHAPTER 2

As existing, self-interpreting entities, we stand in an essential rela-
tionship to the world. Heidegger calls our basic state "being-in-
the-world," and hyphenates the term to emphasize that it is a "*unitary*
phenomenon" that can only be understood when "seen as a whole" (53).
Dasein and the world are fundamentally misunderstood if taken as two
self-sufficient entities that can subsequently enter into an external rela-
tionship. Rather, we are entities that necessarily find ourselves in an
embodied state, dealing with a world that, for its part, is prior to any
particular individual. Although it is prior to any particular individual,
however, the world is essentially a meaningful structure and thus only
exists for entities like us who are capable of grasping meanings.

Despite focusing on each element of being-in-the-world separately –
the "world" component in chapter 3, the "who" of Dasein in chapter 4,
and the "being-in" relation in chapter 5 – Heidegger insists that we keep
in mind that these components are abstractions from the overall uni-
tary phenomenon.

This chapter offers a preliminary sketch of being-in-the-world, one
that aims in particular to fend off our tendency to import occurrent-
ist assumptions into ontology. For instance, if one takes Dasein as just
another occurrent entity, its being-in tends to be understood on the

model of spatial containment (53–4). When we say that someone is *in* the world, however, we primarily mean that he or she is at home or familiar with a certain way of *living* or *residing* in a particular organized whole of entities, activities, aims, ideals, and so on (54). This relation-ship of being at home in a world is poorly modeled in terms of spatial containment. Of course, we do bear a physical relationship to the objects around us – we are constrained by the particular features of the environ-ment we find ourselves in as it bears on the particular features of us as embodied beings (our traits, dispositions, skills, and so on). Heidegger calls such features our "facticity."

Being factically "dispersed ... into definite ways of being-in" (56) is different than being in determinate spatial and causal relationships to occurrent entities in our proximity. The entities within-the-world that Dasein encounters are, for the most part, the things it deals with in conducting its life: hammers, nails, pencils, paper, tables, chairs, doors, stairs, cars, clothes, food, air, the ground, the sky, and so on. We make use of these entities in various ways in our pursuit of our purposes and projects. They show up not as occurrent objects with properties but rather as the functional roles they play in these projects (87). In Heidegger's terms, the being of these entities is to be *available*: to afford or solicit particular ways of engaging with them. We can encounter them when we have *concern* (*Besorgen*) for them – we possess embodied competence for handling them, and it matters to us how they interact with each other and with us. Concern for available entities is one of our fundamental ways of being in the world (57, 66–9).

We are in the world, then, primarily by way of understanding it, by knowing our way about in it. In the preliminary sketch of being-in-the-world, Heidegger is also concerned to fend off the tendency to think of our *understanding* on the model of cognition of the occurrent world. Among the ways in which we understand entities are those specialized projects of the modern, developed world known as the *sciences*. Science, in the broadest sense, consists in the construction of theoretical rep-resentations of nature that allow us to predict and explain empirical phenomena, to manipulate natural forces, and to produce technological artifacts. All such projects share a common feature: they are ways of understanding entities in the world, as well as the world itself, in purely *occurrent* terms.

Theoretical understanding abstracts from our everyday dealings with available entities and the significance things usually have for us in order to arrive at a representation of the universe as an occurrent totality that is causally determined throughout and amenable to exhaustive mathe-matical representation. And yet, for all the power and utility of *knowing* the world through these theoretical representations, it is just one form

of understanding among many. Moreover, it is a form of understanding that, from the standpoint of fundamental ontology, is derivative from our everyday concern (59 ff.).

CHAPTER 3

This chapter offers an account of the world and entities within-the-world as we encounter them in everyday life. We must not think of the world as simply the extended, physical universe. Instead, Heidegger uses "world" to point to the whole – the unified totality – of entities, tied together as a complex network of significant relationships. To think of the world as a mere universe, a collection of all that is, is to assume an occurrentist ontology.[7]

Heidegger's name for the available entities that we encounter "proximally and for the most part" is "equipment" (68).[8] The clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the doors we open, the ground on which we walk, the pens with which we write, the signs we read, understand, and follow – these all primarily show themselves as available. To see this, imagine what it would involve to understand these entities as occurrent substances with occurrent properties. One could attempt to give an exhaustive description of a pen, for instance, in the language of theoretical physics. This description would involve measurable quantities such as the mass and volume of the pen, an algebraic equation that describes the approximate shape of the pen, and dispositional properties such as the mechanical forces that would be exerted when the cap is removed or the button is pressed.

But in normal circumstances, when we are using the pen and it is functioning well, none of these properties show up in our experience. And we find ourselves *absorbed* (*aufgegangen*) in what we are writing. The pen itself is for the most part "transparent" or inconspicuous. However, in abnormal circumstances, some of the physical properties (shape, size, mass, forces) of the pen become *conspicuous*, or *obtrude*, in certain ways: the mass of the pen shows up when it is too heavy or too light; the shape of the pen shows up when it makes holding the pen uncomfortable; the internal forces of the pen show up when the cap is difficult to remove. But even in these cases, the pen is still not a merely occurrent substance; instead, it has a deficient mode of being that Heidegger calls "un-availableness" (73–4). The way in which one deals with a pen that is functioning poorly is not to take note of its occurrent properties but simply to toss it aside and find the closest replacement.

All the relevant parameters of the available are purpose-relative and thus not reducible to occurrent properties because they are not determinable independently of the ever-shifting contexts of use. It would

be vain to seek general criteria, in Dasein-independent terms, for what counts as too heavy, uncomfortable, or difficult. Moreover, because equipment things are constituted relationally – "equipment is essentially 'something in-order-to…'" – Heidegger emphasizes that, strictly speaking, "there 'is' no such thing as *an* equipment. To the being of any equipment there always belongs a totality of equipment, in which it can be this equipment that it is" (68). Each particular item of equipment is defined *structurally* as a node in a network of relations to projects and activities, and thereby to other available entities and ultimately to Dasein. The pen, for instance, fills a place defined by its relationships to activities such as taking notes, drawing, or signing checks. It is thus brought into relationship to entities such as paper, ink, and desks, and to the roles and purposes of the human beings engaged in these activities, such as being a student, being an artist, or paying bills to support one's family (84). Unlike occurrent entities, which are essentially independent of each other, available entities are essentially *interdependent*. An individual piece of equipment only shows up as such against the background of its *involvements* (*Bewandtnis*).

A world, then, presents us with an organized totality of activities on the basis of which particular entities are able to be encountered in their involvements (ordinarily as equipment) (see 86). Dasein inhabits a world by assigning itself to a way of taking a stand on its being, in terms of which it makes sense of its particular projects and activities. So the world is that wherein Dasein can take up the tasks of interpreting and taking responsibility for its existence.

Heidegger calls the general structure of worlds "worldhood." The structure that allows for a particular world to exist is the structure of the meaningful relationships of activities and entities, the way they refer to and relate to each other, thereby affording us different possibilities for being. Heidegger calls this structure "significance" (*Bedeutung*) (87). The world and its worldhood form the background against which we understand any particular entity with its specific involvements. This background tends to withdraw from us – as long as things are working together smoothly, we don't notice it or attend to it. We typically notice how things are supposed to refer to[9] and relate to one another only in cases of breakdown, of a disruption to our ability to cope fluidly with our environment.

It is within this framework that Heidegger presents his critique of Descartes' conception of the physical world and space as *res extensa*. Just as the available entities of our everyday environment are not characterized in terms of measurable physical quantities, this environment (*Umwelt*) itself, considered as a spatial realm wherein Dasein resides, is not primarily understood as a mathematical manifold or metric space,

but rather as a network of meaningful spatial relationships that are defined in terms of Dasein's activities. As we make our way around the world, we encounter available entities laid out in significant places and regions to which they *belong* (102–4). When things are placed where they belong, they are appropriately accessible to us, and our involvement with them goes smoothly; otherwise, they just "lie around" and obstruct our activities (102).

It is in terms of the varying availability of available entities that the phenomena of *distance* and *remoteness* (*Entfernung*) first show up for Dasein (104–6). In everyday life, when I say that something is "close by" or "far away," I primarily refer to the ease or difficulty involved in my accessing it (106). So, if my daily commute involves an hour-long flight between cities a few hundred miles apart, there is a distinct sense in which these cities are closer together for me than either of them is to the rural countryside in between – accessing the latter might involve making reservations at a bed-and-breakfast, renting a car, looking up directions, and bringing appropriate attire. Our everyday understanding of distances consists in comparisons of this sort, and it is only through a process of theoretical abstraction that we come to think of space as defined in terms of geometrical relations that can be measured with any degree of precision (112).[10]

The Cartesian framework, which considers these latter relations to constitute the essence of the extended world, consequently regards our everyday experience of space as insignificant and takes an abstract, albeit useful, model of space as a characterization of what space "really" is. But it is only on the basis of a familiarity with our everyday environment that the spaces of geometry or physics can have any significance for us.

CHAPTER 4

Dasein is a being-in-the-world. Chapter 3 focused on the world. In this chapter, Heidegger provides an account of everyday Dasein.

Who is Dasein? As noted at the outset of Division I, "Dasein is an entity which is in each case I myself" (114). Heidegger initially uses terms like "self," "I," and "subject" as formal indicators – that is, as ways of directing our attention in an ontologically noncommittal way to the phenomenon in question. Such terms point to the fact that Dasein has *mineness*, in other words, that I have some sort of exclusive and unique relationship to my existence. It is my affair, and I am responsible for it. They also point to the idea that there is something essential about me, something that endures across changes. But we must suspend our tendency to think about such phenomena as the *I*, the *self*, and the