

Tales of the Mighty Dead

*Historical Essays in the
Metaphysics of Intentionality*

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Dasein, the Being That Thematises

I. Background

Does the structure of Heidegger's account commit him to understanding Dasein as involving language in principle? I argue here that he is committed to the claim that the sort of linguistic assertional practice he calls "thematizing" is an essential feature of Dasein, and so that nothing could be Dasein unless it treats some things as occurrent (present-at-hand). To see why this would be an interesting and important result, it is necessary to rehearse some of the basic features that make Heidegger's approach distinctive and original. *Being and Time* can be understood as propounding a normative pragmatism. The explanatory strategy invoked by this expression comprises two distinct commitments. The first regards the relation between the normative and the factual realms; the second regards the relation between norms taking the explicit form of rules and norms taking the implicit form of proprieties of practice.

In each case the question is one of conceptual and explanatory priority. The philosophical tradition treats the factual as the basic form of the real and seeks to explain the normative by *adding* something, which might generically be called values. What is objectively real has a cloak of subjective values or significances thrown over it by its relation to human interests or desires.¹ By contrast, Heidegger treats as primitive a certain kind of social normative articulation and seeks to define the factual as a special case picked out by *subtracting* something, namely, certain kinds of relations to human projects. Again, the philosophical tradition treats norms as canonically codified in the form of explicit *rules* which determine what is correct by *saying* or describing what is correct. Each pro-

priety of *practice*, the grasp of which consists in knowing *how* to do something correctly, is conceived as underwritten by a *principle*, the grasp of which consists in knowing *that* a particular sort of performance is correct. By contrast, Heidegger treats as primitive a certain kind of norm that is *implicit* in practice and seeks to define *explicit* rules, principles, and claims in terms of the practical proprieties of using them.

Heidegger sets out these commitments in the form of an account of the relations among three fundamental ontological categories, or more officially, regions of Being within which different sorts of entities are disclosed: Dasein, *Zuhandensein*, and *Vorhandensein*. Dasein is the kind of Being we ourselves have.² Although the task of the whole book is to lay out the basic makeup (*Grundverfassung*) of Dasein, two features may be singled out by way of introduction. First, Dasein is an essentially *social* sort of being. Heidegger's term for our sociality is *Mitsein*, or being-with.³ Second, an essential structure of Dasein is that it always already finds itself in a *world*.⁴ To say this is to say that the ontological categories of Dasein and *Zuhandensein* (availability) are internally related.⁵ For apart from others whose way of being is also that of Dasein, the world consists of what is *zuhanden*, that is, ready-to-hand, or available. The available comprises what Heidegger calls equipment (*Zeug*)—things that are used or dealt with in social practices and so are thick with practical proprieties or significances that determine how it is appropriate to treat them. To call something available is to treat it as something that can be used correctly or incorrectly, according to proprieties implicit in practices instituted and pursued by Dasein. Hammers are a paradigm of a kind of entity that exhibits this sort of being: they are properly used in the practice of driving nails, although it is possible to use them as ballast or weapons.⁶ The practical norms determining the correct way of using bits of equipment typically relate them to other bits of equipment—hammers to nails, nails to boards, tires to cars, cars to roads, and so on. The world is a holistic totality of such practical normative equipmental involvements.⁷

Vorhandensein (occurrence, presence-at-hand) is the realm of objective facts. It consists of objects that are merely present and of their matter-of-factual, nonnormative properties. Treating things as *vorhanden* is taking them to be what they are, independently of any proprieties of practice instituted by Dasein's activities. Thus occurrence is Heidegger's way of talking about what the philosophical tradition talked about un-

der the heading of Reality. What is occurrent differs from what is available in that it is not made to be what it is by being caught up in normative social practices, which situate it with respect to Dasein's projects.⁸

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's primary complaint against the tradition is that it gives ontological and explanatory pride of place to this category—attempting to understand and explain Dasein, the proprieties Dasein institutes by its social practices, and the equipmental roles defined by those practices in terms of what is merely occurrent.⁹ This approach, he thinks, is wrongheaded and doomed to failure. The thought underlying this claim is that if norm-laden practices are taken for granted, it is possible to explain what it is to treat things as matters of fact, while if one starts with matters of fact, norms of all sorts will be unintelligible—construable only in terms of essentially subjective responses to facts.¹⁰ What matters for the present story is how Heidegger pursues the direction of explanation that he endorses, rather than how he thinks the reverse direction can be seen to be defective.

As was already remarked, Heidegger is clear that there is no equipment without Dasein, and no Dasein without equipment. Dasein and *Zuhandensein* mutually presuppose each other as substructures of being-in-the-world. *Vorhandensein*, by contrast, is a derivative category, to be understood and explained in terms of the other two.¹¹ How is the occurrent derived from the other two sorts of being? This is a long story, for which only the barest sketch can be provided here. In outline, it goes like this: Some of the equipment that is available in the enviroing totality of equipmental involvements practically disclosed in the world is specifically *linguistic* equipment. In particular, one sort of equipment is *sentences*, used in practice to make *assertions* or claims. Heidegger calls using sentences as one does in the paradigm case of assertion *thematizing*.¹² The basic understanding of such sentences consists in being able to distinguish in practice between correct and incorrect uses, as with any sort of equipment. The proprieties of practice characteristic of sentence use in thematizing are of three fundamental sorts on Heidegger's account: noninferential uses in making perceptual reports, inferential uses (as premises and conclusions), and interpersonal communicative uses. Grasping the significance of the claims made by sentences consists in practical mastery of these kinds of proprieties of use. This is the practical knowing *how* in terms of which the capacity to thematize explicitly, knowing *that* something is the case, is to be explained.¹³

Ordinarily, Heidegger thinks, a thing is first disclosed to Dasein as

available in terms of the practical proprieties governing what it would be correct to do with it. Even unfamiliar things first come into our world as equipment we do not know what to do with.¹⁴ Responding to something as merely occurrent requires a certain sort of holding back from practical involvement.¹⁵ Instead of treating the thing as available for various sorts of practical uses, one treats it as appropriately responded to *only* by making assertions about it.¹⁶ This is a theoretical rather than a practical response, the difference being marked out by the fact that the assertional or judgmental responses are themselves available or serviceable¹⁷ for formulating the upshot of perception, using as fodder for inferences, or for communicating to others. The assertions with which it is appropriate to respond to something perceptible do not depend on the particular practical projects that animate the activities of the assertor (though the practical inferences in which one goes on to use those assertions as premises may well so depend). The holding-back that underlies treating something as merely occurrent, the "just looking" at it, consists in mediating one's practical responses by a level of assertion, the practical proprieties of which swing free of particular practical projects. This is why "occurrence . . . is the specialty of assertion" (*BT* 201; *SZ* 158).¹⁸ It is in this way that know-how, practical mastery of which constitutes specifically linguistic competence, distances objects and states of affairs from the projects of Dasein by responding to them (for instance, perceptually). Knowing-that is founded on knowing-how.

A special case of the thematizing use of sentences is to state *rules*. With respect to this pragmatic commitment to the explanatory priority of norms implicit in practice over those explicit in rules, Heidegger belongs in a box with the later Wittgenstein. For in the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein argues that explicit rules cannot be the only form taken by norms, on the basis of the regress that is revealed when it is noticed that following a rule is itself something that can be done correctly or incorrectly. Calling a rule that governs the application of another rule an "interpretation," Wittgenstein argues that "there must be some way of following a rule that does not consist in an interpretation, but in following or going against it in practice."¹⁹ The possibility of making norms explicit in the form of rules, which determine what is correct and incorrect by *saying* what does and does not qualify, depends on an underlying possibility of discriminating norms implicit in the practice of *doing* things correctly and incorrectly and responding to such performances non-linguistically as correct and incorrect. Without such practical abilities,

rules could not be applied. It cannot be interpretation (in this sense) all the way down.²⁰

These, then, are the two components of Heidegger's normative pragmatism: first, understanding the factual in terms of the normative (via the norms governing the use of assertions, which are the only appropriate response to the occurrent as such); and second, understanding government by norms explicit in the form of propositionally statable rules in terms of government by norms implicit in the form of skillful practical discriminations of appropriate and inappropriate performances (in particular, applications to individual unrepeatable cases of the repeatable sentences that express general rules). The first is understanding *Vorhandensein* in terms of *Zuhandensein*, and the second is understanding *Zuhandensein* as in the first instance a matter of social practice rather than individual propositionally contentful cognition or intellectual achievement ("thematizing"). It is natural to understand these priority claims in terms of a "layer cake" model, according to which there could be *Dasein* and *Zuhandensein* without *Vorhandensein*, which arises from them only if *Dasein* adopts certain optional practices and practical attitudes, involving the use of certain sorts of sophisticated equipment, namely, sentences used to make claims and state rules. This is an understanding according to which the claim that "assertion is derived from interpretation and understanding" (BT 203; SZ 160) invokes derivation in a sense implying the *autonomy* of the underlying layer of "circumspective" (that is, practical) acknowledgments of proprieties in dealing with equipment. The level of assertions, and so of adopting the practical attitude of treating things as occurrent, looks like an optional superstructure, which might be erected on top of human existence (*Dasein*) and the being of equipment (*Zuhandensein*), but which equally well might not be found along with them.²¹ In answering the fundamental question "By what existential-ontological modifications does assertion arise from circumspective interpretation?" (BT 200; SZ 157), Heidegger apparently says nothing that would indicate that, given the sort of being from which they are derived, assertion and presentness *must* arise. It would seem possible, and in the spirit of the enterprise, to suppose that one could coherently take some community to consist of entities with *Dasein*'s kind of being, instituting by their practices a world of *zuhanden* equipment, while not supposing that they can talk, and do so while denying that they treat anything as *vorhanden*. On this reading, Heidegger portrays an autonomous, preconceptual, prepropositional, prelinguistic

level of intentionality—namely, practical, skill-laden, norm-governed directedness toward equipment treated as available. As being-in-the-world, *Dasein* can already be discerned at this level. It may or may not be the case for any particular community of existing entities, entities whose way of being is that of *Dasein*, that on this practical base a theoretical superstructure of conceptual, propositional, linguistic, or in Heidegger's terminology thematic intentionality is erected.

Those interpreters of *Being and Time* who take it to be a pragmatist work in something like the dual sense delineated above, most prominently Dreyfus, Haugeland, and Okrent, typically understand the priority Heidegger accords to practical over propositional intentionality according to this "layer cake" model.²² It is the thesis of this essay that application of this model of the priority doctrine is a mistake. Heidegger is committed to the claim that there is no *Dasein* (and hence no *Zuhandensein*) without language, without thematizing, without treating things as *vorhanden*. As the passage quoted in the title indicates, *Dasein* is the being (entity) that thematizes. Another way of putting this claim is to say that the capacity to treat things as extant or occurrent is an *Existenziale*, a permanent and constitutive possibility of *Dasein*. This is not to say that there cannot be norms implicit in social practices without norms explicit in the form of rules, which determine what is correct by saying or describing what is correct and, hence, without linguistic practices including assertion. It is to say that such a prelinguistic community would not count as *Dasein*. An instructive case in point is Haugeland's rich and original rendering of the norms implicit in the practices that institute equipment. He explains these norms in terms of social constellations of dispositions that qualify as "conformist." He asks us to imagine under this heading creatures who not only conform their behavior to that of other community members in the sense of imitating one another, and so tend to act alike (normally in the sense of typically) in similar circumstances, but also sanction one another's performances, positively and negatively reinforcing responses to stimuli so as to make it more likely that future behavior will conform to the emergent standards.

The clusters that coalesce can be called "norms" (and not just groups or types) precisely because they are generated and maintained by censoriousness; the censure attendant on deviation automatically gives the standards (the extant clusters) a *de facto* normative force (Haugeland, "Heidegger," 16).

It is in terms of norms implicit in social practice in this sense that

he explains the proprieties constitutive of equipment and the constitution of the norm-governed community as the anyone (*das Man*), the conforming individual creatures. Dasein is then identified with this community and any normative structures instituted by it (Haugeland, "Heidegger," 19). My thesis is that although such an account is no doubt of crucial importance in understanding how Heidegger approaches intentionality,²³ it cannot be correct as an account of what Dasein and *Zuhandensein* consist in. For this account can be told about pre- or nonlinguistic creatures, as exemplifying an autonomous level of functioning on which the capacity for linguistic practice is causally and conceptually parasitic. And, it will be argued, Heidegger is committed to the claim that anything that does not have language and does not make assertions (and therefore does not treat things as *vorhanden*) cannot qualify as Dasein, and so cannot institute proprieties that qualify as a world of *Zuhandensein*.²⁴

Why not say that one can give a separable account of an autonomous level of practice that, for instance, Dasein's being-in-a-world of equipment consists in, hoping later to add those features required to explain other characteristics of Dasein, for instance, its Being being an issue for it, or care, which need not be exhibited at the base level? Such an approach is precluded on basic methodological grounds. Heidegger claims that in his discussion of Dasein he is doing not just anthropology but fundamental ontology. Part of the cash value of this claim must be that he is not merely offering us a set of descriptions, in however rich a vocabulary, which all just happen to be true of us. Rather, his characterizations form a tightly interlocked set of features, no one of which could be exhibited without all the others. When he tells us that Dasein is being-in-the-world, Dasein is its disclosedness, and that Dasein is the entity whose Being is an issue for it,²⁵ for instance, part of the specifically *ontological* force of these claims, what raises them above the merely ontic force of anthropological observations or generalizations, is their internal relation. In effect the commitment being undertaken is that anything that is correctly specified as worlded must therefore also be identified with its disclosedness, and must count as having its Being as an issue for it, that nothing whose Being is an issue for it could fail to be worlded or to be its disclosedness, and so on. The *Existential* of Dasein come as a package. Thus to claim that entities could exhibit some of these ways of being without others is to claim that there is no such thing as Dasein,

that Heidegger has gotten it wrong. It is by that same token to cast doubt on one's interpretation of what is required to count as, for example, worlded, or structured by care, relative to an alternate reading that does not permit these characteristics of Dasein's basic constitution to fall apart from one another. If, I argue here, it can be shown that assertional language is an essential structure of the basic constitution of Dasein, then it will follow that, for Heidegger, nothing can be worlded, and so treat things as equipment available unless it can also treat things as objectively occurrent.

II. Direct Arguments for Dasein's Having *Sprache*

The basic argument to be presented can be put schematically in four steps:

1. There can be no Dasein without *Rede* (discourse).
2. There can be no *Rede* without *Gerede* (idle talk).
3. There can be no *Gerede* without *Sprache* (language).
4. There can be no *Sprache* without *Aussage* (assertion).

This argument will then be situated within a larger frame, which argues more generally that

5. There can be no Dasein without *Verfallen* (falling).

Verfallen exhibits three characteristic substructures, *Gerede*, *Neugier* (curiosity), and *Zweideutigkeit* (ambiguity). *Gerede* is dealt with in the first argument.

To complete the framing argument, it is argued that

6. There can be no *Neugier* without *Aussage*.
7. There can be no *Zweideutigkeit* without *Aussage*.

The conclusion is that

8. There can be no Dasein without *Aussage*.

And so:

9. There can be no Dasein that cannot treat things as *vorhanden*.

Each of these steps requires explanation and justification.

Assuming for the moment that such justifications can be given, the ar-

chitectonic commitments attributed by these premises will require rejection of the "layer cake" model of the conceptual priority of the way of being of the available over that of the occurrent, in view of the untenability of the picture of an autonomous stratum of practice in which entities already count as having Dasein's characteristic being and as operating amidst a world of equipment but are not yet taken to be able to talk. The priority thesis must then be understood to address the order of explanation—one cannot understand *Vorhandensein* unless one first understands *Zuhandensein*. The reason for this explanatory priority is that indicated above: to treat something as merely occurrent is to treat it as only appropriately responded to by making the sorts of judgments about it that are expressed by assertions (including the judgments that are the output of perception).²⁶ But such assertions are a kind of equipment, something available, whose use must be understood as governed by proprieties implicit in practice—paradigmatically intrapersonal inference and interpersonal communication. By contrast, the proprieties of practice that institute prelinguistic equipment can be understood in advance of any understanding of specifically linguistic equipment. This can be true even though, as will be argued, unless such prelinguistic proprieties of practice are accompanied by linguistic ones, they will not count as instituting a world, and the instituting entities will not count as having the sort of being characteristic of Dasein.

III. No Dasein without *Rede*

Dasein, we are told, is its disclosedness (BT 171; SZ 133).²⁷ "Disclosedness" is Heidegger's term for, roughly, Dasein's ontological access to any entity's sort of Being. (His term for merely ontic access to entities, as opposed to their Being, is "discovery.") The first thing we are told about the structure of disclosedness is that "the fundamental *existentialia* which constitute the being of the 'there' [Dasein], the disclosedness of being-in-the-world, are situatedness [*Befindlichkeit*] and understanding [*Verstehen*]" (BT 203; SZ 160). '*Existentialia*' is a term Heidegger uses for structures of Dasein's being without which it would not qualify as Dasein. The list of *existentialia* associated with Dasein's disclosedness is given in different forms in different places (more will be said about the other forms later). Almost immediately, though, we are told, with emphasis, that "discourse [*Rede*] is equiprimordial [*existenzial gleich-*

ursprünglich] with situatedness and understanding" (BT 203; SZ 161). To say this is to say that one cannot have *Befindlichkeit* or *Verstehen* without *Rede*. Since the former are *existentialia*, so is the latter.²⁸ Thus there is no Dasein without *Rede*.

This much is not in any way a controversial claim. But if it is not controversial that *Rede* is part of the basic constitution of Dasein, then can it not immediately be concluded that language is? After all, '*Rede*' is the ordinary German word for discourse, for telling, for articulating in language. This conclusion is not immediate, however, for Heidegger uses '*Rede*' as a technical term, which at least includes, and is often taken to be limited to, various kinds of prelinguistic articulation. Haugeland, for instance, offers the following definition:

Telling (*Rede*) is the articulation of significance or intelligibility, both in the sense of separating or carving up, and in the sense of expressing in words. The carving up is . . . an essential public or shared way of distinguishing determinate entities in determinate regards. ("Dasein's Disclosedness," 64)

Thus *Rede* is the articulation by which a shared world of equipment is instituted by social practice. The gloss, Haugeland suggests, on this is that the basic notion is that of telling, in the sense of distinguishing in practice those performances that are appropriate or in accord with implicit norms from those that are not: "The ur-phenomenon of telling is telling whether behavior does or does not accord with the common norms—in effect telling right from wrong" ("Dasein's Disclosedness," 65). One important consequence of this pragmatic reading of '*Rede*', as he goes on to point out, is that "such telling would indeed be the ordinary articulation of significance, and would, at the same time, be fundamental to the possibility of correctness—for example of assertions." This is an important benefit of the pragmatic interpretation, because Heidegger emphasizes (invoking his sense of "interpretation" as "circumspective," practical, prelinguistic know-how), "Discourse is the articulation of intelligibility. Therefore it underlies both interpretation and assertion" (BT 204; SZ 161), and "we have seen that assertion is derived from interpretation, and is an extreme case of it . . . *The existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk [Rede]*" (BT 203; SZ 160–161). Here again, then, we see expressions of the priority thesis concerning the grounding of linguistic practice in prelinguistic know-

how, which it is tempting to interpret as commitments to the possibility of an autonomous level of practical circumspective interpretation by Dasein of equipment making up a world of *Zuhandensein*.

Again, the claim to be defended here by contrast is that although such an autonomous level of practice is no doubt possible—talking does not develop ex nihilo—it would not be proper to describe it in Heidegger's terminology as characterized by Dasein, being-in-the-world, *Zuhandensein*, or, the presently relevant point, as articulated by *Rede*. Heidegger says that "the way in which discourse [*Rede*] gets expressed is language [*Sprache*]" (BT 204; SZ 161). This is compatible with the view that *Rede* comes in two forms, an implicit form in which it consists in practically discriminating the proprieties that institute a world and an optional, derivative form in which those proprieties can be explicitly expressed and discussed. The question is whether it is optional that the articulation that is *Rede* be expressed. The claim that it *must* be explicitly expressed can be understood in either a local or a global sense. In the local sense, the claim would be that no particular practical articulation or discrimination of proprieties could count as discursive (*redend*) unless it was expressed explicitly, that is, in language. In the global sense, the claim would be that no practical articulation or discrimination of proprieties could count as discursive unless *some* such articulations or discriminations are expressed explicitly in language. The stronger local claim would seem to be incompatible with any version of the priority thesis. It is clear that not all "articulation of intelligibility according to significations" (the definition of *Rede*) takes the form of explicit assertions.²⁹ In any case, it is the weaker, global claim that is to be defended here. Heidegger does seem to say that it is not optional that *Rede* be expressed in this global sense:

Because discourse [*Rede*] is constitutive for the being of the there (that is, for situatedness and understanding), while "Dasein" means Being-in-the-world, Dasein as discursive Being-in has already expressed itself. Dasein has language. Man shows himself as the entity which talks. This does not signify that the possibility of vocal utterance is peculiar to him, but that he is the entity which is such as to discover the world and Dasein itself. (BT 208; SZ 165)

Recall the previous argument to the effect that Heidegger should be telling us not about characteristics that Dasein just happens to have, ontic

features of some interesting entities, but only about definitive, internally related ontological characteristics. Since it is not optional that Dasein be discursive being-in, it is not optional that it express itself, and so it is not optional that it have language.

Another direct argument is available for the conclusion that there is no *Rede* without *Sprache*. This has to do with the role of explicit expressions of the articulations comprising *Rede* in *communication*,³⁰ the role of such communication in being-with, and the role of being-with in being-in-the-world. The claim is that all of these are necessary features of Dasein. Here is the central passage:

Discoursing or talking is the way in which we articulate "significantly" the intelligibility of Being-in-the-world. Being-with belongs to Being-in-the-world, which in every case maintains itself in some definite way of concerned Being-with-one-another. Such Being-with-one-another is discursive [*redend*] as assenting or refusing [*zu- und absagen*], as demanding, or warning, as pronouncing [*Aussprache*], consulting [*Rücksprache*], or interceding [*Fürsprache*], as "making assertions," and as talking in the way of "giving a talk" [*Redenhalten*]. (BT 204; SZ 161)

Every member of this list of paradigmatic ways in which being-with is articulated discursively is explicitly and essentially linguistic. Since being-with is not an optional feature of Dasein, but rather a fundamental characteristic of its *Grundverfassung*, and since *Rede* likewise has this status, the exclusively linguistic character of this botanization of modes of discursive being-with certainly suggests, though it falls short of demonstrating, that there can be no *Rede*, and therefore no Dasein, without *Sprache*.

IV. *Rede* and *Gerede*

The strongest argument, however, for the conclusion that there is no *Rede* (and therefore no Dasein) without *Sprache* is not a direct argument relying on passages such as these, but an indirect one. This proceeds in two steps: There is no *Rede* without *Gerede* (idle talk), and no *Gerede* without *Sprache*. These points will be addressed sequentially. *Gerede* is a special form of *Rede*: "Discourse, which belongs to the essential state of Dasein's Being and has a share in constituting Dasein's disclosedness, has

the possibility of becoming idle talk" (BT 213; SZ 169). The first question is whether it is optional that this possibility be realized. Could entities qualify as articulating practical significances in the form of *Rede* if they never articulate them in the form of *Gerede*? Again it is important to distinguish two ways in which this question can be understood. It is clear that not every articulation according to significations takes the form of *Gerede*. Thus the stronger, local form of the claim that there is no *Rede* without *Gerede* does not hold—not every bit of *Rede* is a bit of *Gerede*. Nonetheless, it will be claimed that the weaker, global form of the dependence claim does hold—unless some articulations take the form of *Gerede*, none count as *Rede*—and so the creatures in question, although they might by their social practices institute norms that they implicitly acknowledge as governing their performances, would not count as *Dasein*.

What sort of modification of *Rede* is *Gerede*? The first point is that *Gerede* is just the *everyday* (*alltäglich*) form of *Rede*. "The expression 'idle talk' [*Gerede*] is not to be used here in a 'disparaging' signification . . . it signifies a positive phenomenon which constitutes the kind of Being of everyday *Dasein*'s understanding and interpreting" (BT 211; SZ 167).³¹ The initial question thus becomes whether it is optional that *Rede* sometimes appears in its everyday form. Heidegger says of *Gerede*:

This everyday way in which things have been interpreted is one into which *Dasein* has grown in the first instance, with never a possibility of extrication. In it, out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all rediscovering and appropriating anew, are performed. (BT 213; SZ 169)

Thus *Gerede*, the everyday form of *Rede*, forms the background for the other forms. It is not an optional species but a fundamental one. The reason for this privileged status is that "idle talk is the kind of Being that belongs to Being-with-one-another itself" (BT 221; SZ 177). Being-with, of course, is itself not optional. It is a fundamental characteristic of *Dasein*'s *Grundverfassung*.

These passages make it clear that there is no *Rede* (and therefore no *Dasein*) without its everyday form, *Gerede*. In order to see, however, that *Gerede* is an essentially *linguistic* phenomenon, it is necessary to look more closely at what idle talk is, as the everyday form in which significances are articulated. Its essence is, as the word suggests, *gossip*. Here is the central passage to be unpacked:

What is said-in-the-talk [*das Geredete*] as such, spreads in wider circles and takes on an authoritative character. Things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted by just such gossiping and passing the word along—a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on [*Bodenständigkeit*] becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness [*Bodenlosigkeit*]. (BT 212; SZ 168)

Gerede is fundamentally a structure of authority, a way in which justificatory grounds can be treated in practice. (This is one of many places where it can seem that Heidegger is sinning against his own precept that *Gerede* is not to be taken in a disparaging sense. This impression ought to be alleviated by the realization that, although Heidegger is far from recommending this structure of authority, he thinks that it provides the pervasive background against which alone it is possible to understand the possibility of more authentic justificatory structures.) *Gerede* consists in the thoughtless passing on of what is said-in-the-talk, *das Geredete*. Understanding what this means requires reverting to the fundamental structure of *Rede*:

The items constitutive for discourse are: what the discourse is about (what is talked about) [*das Worüber der Rede (das Beredete)*]; what is said-in-the-talk, as such [*das Geredete als solches*]; the communication [*die Mitteilung*]; and the making-known [*die Bekundung*]. (BT 206; SZ 162)

Only the first two of these, what is talked about and what is said-in-the-talk, *das Beredete* and *das Geredete*, matter here. The other two can be understood in terms of them, since communication is the passing along of *das Geredete*, and the making-known is the establishment of a relation to *das Beredete* by such passing along. What is said-in-the-talk and what is talked about are the two essential elements in the existence of specifically *linguistic* contents, two aspects of a distinctive kind of equipment, equipment employed in order to communicate and make-known.

Thus these elements have all been introduced before we ever hear about idle talk. What-is-said-in-the-talk is introduced, without use of that particular term, when we first hear about assertion, as the essence of the role assertion plays in communication:

As something communicated, that which has been put forward in the assertion is something that Others can "share" with the person making the assertion, even though the entity which he has pointed out and to which he has given a definite character is not close enough for

them to grasp and see it. That which is put forward in the assertion is something which can be passed along in "further retelling." There is a widening of the range of that mutual sharing which sees.³² (BT 197; SZ 155)

Again before we are introduced to *Gerede*, we hear about the other structural element and its relation to the first:

Talking is talk about something [*Reden ist Rede über*]. What the discourse is about is a structural item that it necessarily possesses; for discourse helps to constitute the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, and in its own structure it is modeled upon this basic state of Dasein. In any talk or discourse, there is something said-in-the-talk as such [*ein Geredetes als solches*] whenever one wishes, asks, or expresses oneself about something. In this "something said," discourse communicates. (BT 205; SZ 162)

It is possible to understand *Gerede* in terms of these two structural elements, *das Geredete* and *das Beredete*. *Gerede* is discourse that pays attention only to *das Geredete*, to what is said-in-the-talk, but not to what the talk is about:

What is said-in-the-talk [*Geredeten*] gets understood; but what the talk is about is understood only approximately and superficially. We have the same thing in view, because it is in the same averageness that we have a common understanding of what is said. (BT 212; SZ 168)

It will emerge that for linguistic equipment genuinely to be in play, both structural elements of saying must in fact be present. Without them no genuine contents are instituted by the practice of using them to communicate, and so no knowledge or information is actually shared by passing them around. What is distinctive of *Gerede* is not that *das Beredete*, what is talked about, is absent, but rather that its crucial contribution to the authority structure distinctive of talking is not acknowledged by those who are nonetheless dependent on that structure.

To understand exactly what implicit presuppositions of linguistic practice *Gerede* fails to acknowledge, it is helpful to apply a model of the structure of authority that is distinctive of specifically linguistic equipment.³³ Declarative sentences, which are equipment for asserting, are governed by two different dimensions of authority, one corresponding to their use in *communication*, the other to their use in *inference*. These cor-

respond to two different ways in which one can become entitled to the sort of propositionally articulated commitment that is expressed by an assertion. By the first mechanism, commitments can become shared, spreading from one individual to another, as the speaker who expresses an assertion communicates to and possibly infects an audience. In this way, entitlement to make a claim can be inherited by the consumer of an assertion from its producer. In such inheritance of entitlement by communication, the content of the commitment is preserved intact and merely transferred. This, however, is not the only way in which an individual can become entitled to a claim. It is also possible to justify a commitment inferentially by exhibiting it as a consequence of further premises to which one is committed and entitled. The particular content determines what follows from commitment to that content, and what that content follows from, what it justifies and what justifies it. That it is caught up in such inferences both as premise and as conclusion is what makes it a specifically *propositional* (or assertible) content at all. That it exhibits the particular inferential grounds and consequences that it does makes it the particular determinate content that it is—settling, for instance, what information it conveys, the significance that undertaking a commitment with that content would have for what else one is committed and entitled to. The first, or communicational, mechanism is interpersonal, intraccontent inheritance of entitlement to a propositional commitment. The second, or inferential, mechanism is intrapersonal, intercontent inheritance of entitlement to a propositional commitment (since the contents of premises and conclusions will differ in any inference that is nontrivial in the sense of being available to do justificatory work). The functions performed by both mechanisms are essential to the use of sentences as equipment for expressing propositional commitments in the form of assertions. Without the articulation provided by proprieties governing the practice of inferring, including inferences from the commitments that agents find themselves with perceptually, sentences would not express determinate propositional contents at all. Without acknowledgment in practice of the propriety of inheriting entitlement to claims from the assertions of others, there would be no communication of information, and assertion would be socially idle, instituting no sort of equipment at all.

With this conceptual apparatus, it is possible to characterize straightforwardly the practical attitude Heidegger calls *Gerede*. *Gerede* consists

in acknowledging only the communicative structure of authority and not the inferential. "What-is-said-in-the-talk" is passed along, but never grounded in "what-is-talked-about"—it does not have to answer to any justificatory demands beyond a communicational provenance. Those repeating a claim they overhear do not take personal responsibility for it, merely deferring to what "they" (*das Man*) say:

The fact that something has been said groundlessly, and then gets passed along in further retelling, amounts to perverting the act of disclosing [*Erschliessen*] into an act of closing off [*Verschliessen*]. For what is said is always understood proximally as "saying" something—that is, an uncovering something. Thus, by its very nature, idle talk is a closing-off, since to go back to the ground of what is talked about is something which it leaves undone. (BT 213; SZ 169)

Thus the function of what is talked about, *das Beredete*, is to ground the authority of the contents that are communicated. Taking a claim back to its ground is justifying it in some way *other* than by appeal to what others say. It is taking responsibility for it oneself, justifying it by appeal to other claims, including but not limited to perceptually acquired ones, that the individual also takes responsibility for. *Gerede* is a practical stance that ignores such grounding in *das Beredete*, and cleaves only to *das Geredete*, ignoring grounding in favor of just passing things along. The trouble is that entitlement can be inherited from, and responsibility deferred to, another only if the other individual is entitled or can fulfill the justificatory responsibility implicit in making a claim. If everyone adopts the attitude of *Gerede*, and defers responsibility without accepting it, then all of the titles supposedly passed around by communicating are defective and empty. That is, in the words quoted above:

What is said-in-the-talk [*das Geredete*] as such, spreads in wider circles and takes on an authoritative character. Things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted by just such gossiping and passing the word along—a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on [*Bodenständigkeit*] becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness [*Bodenlosigkeit*]. (BT 212; SZ 168)

Gerede is the everyday, inauthentic version of *Rede* precisely because of the failure to take personal responsibility that is its essence. To come into an authentic practical relation to one's commitments is to take on responsibility for justifying them, rather than deferring it or evading it

by appeal to what everyone (*das Man*) says. One always already finds oneself "falling," that is, equipped with and constituted by a set of commitments one just finds oneself with, without in general being able to justify them by grounding them in what they are about. This is why the practice of *Gerede* is the background out of which every authentic claiming and justifying must arise and from which it must distinguish itself.³⁴ To undertake responsibility oneself is to acknowledge in practice a basic ontological feature of Dasein—that it comes in what Haugeland calls "units of accountability," or "primitive loci of accountability (*je meines*)": "Heidegger places this structure, which he calls 'in-each-case-mineness' (*Jemeinigkeit*), among Dasein's most fundamental characteristics" (Haugeland, "Heidegger," 21, 24).³⁵ *Gerede* precisely refuses to assign accountability for the propriety of a claim to any particular individual, deferring demands for justification instead to the general practice, appealing to "what one says" or "what is said." In fact, however, the public social practice of communicating and the undertaking of individual responsibility presuppose and complement each other. Unless both were always already in play, no genuinely contentful claims (or equipment for asserting and informing) would be instituted at all. *Gerede* exclusively acknowledges the contribution of the public communicative dimension while ignoring that of *Jemeinigkeit* (here the individual undertaking of justificatory responsibility). One thing lost when the dual structure of authority characteristic of claiming is collapsed by *Gerede* into a single dimension is *experience* (in something like Hegel's sense), in which claims and concepts are winnowed and groomed as the commitments one undertakes responsibility for oneself (including those one finds oneself with perceptually, and their inferential consequences) are confronted by those one would be entitled to pick up from the assertions of others. It is the interplay of these two dimensions of authority that makes it possible for what it is correct to say to exhibit a kind of independence both from what I happen to be committed to and from what others happen to be saying. This is answering to the way the objects are, and, in this sense, being about objects. This *objectivity* is what Heidegger talks about as assertions representing things as occurrent, as factual and constraining in a different way from the social proprieties of practice that institute equipment, by settling a common way in which one uses (that is, ought to use) a hammer.³⁶

It should be clear at this point that *Gerede* is a thoroughly linguistic phenomenon, indeed a specifically *assertional* one. The concept of gos-

sip cannot be made sense of in prelinguistic terms. The distinction between communication and inference as two structures of authority—passing along what is said-in-the-talk (*das Geredete*), and taking individual responsibility for grounding what is said in what the talk is about (*das Beredete*)—defines equipment for making and communicating propositionally contentful *claims*. Indeed, the specific practical failure to comprehend this dual structure of authority that Heidegger identifies with *Gerede* (focusing on *das Geredete* to the exclusion of *das Beredete*) amounts to misunderstanding the distinctly linguistic assertional equipment employed in expressing and communicating a discursive articulation of implicit significances by assimilating it to ordinary equipment such as hammers. The proprieties concerning the latter are exhausted by how one uses a hammer—there is only “what one does with hammers,” in the sense of how it is appropriate for anyone to use a hammer. The public proprieties one picks up from others are all there is to such nonlinguistic equipment; if one uses hammers as others do, then one uses them correctly. *Gerede* fails to appreciate how the dual structure of authority governing the use of equipment for making assertions differs from the unidimensional structure governing the use of prelinguistic equipment. Thus *Gerede* is a linguistic phenomenon involving the use of assertions. Since it has already been argued that there is no *Rede* without *Gerede* (in the global rather than the local sense), and no Dasein without *Rede*, it follows that to take something as exhibiting the kind of being Heidegger calls Dasein is to take it to be a linguistic entity, one that can make assertions, and so one that can treat things as occurrent.

V. Falling: *Gerede*, *Neugier*, *Zweideutigkeit*

This argument concerning the linguistic and assertional nature of *Gerede*, the matrix of everydayness out of which the expression of other forms of the articulation of intelligibility must arise, can be confirmed and extended by considering it in the larger framework in which the discussion of *Gerede* occurs. Recorded at the close of the sections of Division One that are being discussed, Heidegger offers the following summary:

Our theme has been the ontological constitution of the disclosedness which essentially belongs to Dasein. The Being of that disclosedness is

constituted by situatedness [*Befindlichkeit*], understanding [*Verstehen*], and discourse [*Rede*]. Its everyday kind of being is characterized by idle talk [*Gerede*], curiosity [*Neugier*], and ambiguity [*Zweideutigkeit*]. These show us the movement of falling [*Verfallen*].³⁷ (BT 224, translation revised; SZ 180)

Falling is the everyday form of disclosedness, and the relation between *Gerede* and *Rede* is simply a special case of the relation between falling and disclosedness. As we saw that, in the particular case, there is no *Rede* without *Gerede* (in the global rather than the local sense), so, in the general case, there is no disclosedness without falling. “Being-in-the-world is always fallen” (BT 225; SZ 181). As we saw that in the particular case, *Gerede* is a thoroughly linguistic phenomenon—depending on the use of sentences as equipment for communication by assertion—so is it in the general case for the other forms of everyday disclosedness: curiosity and ambiguity.

Consider first curiosity, which translates *Neugier*, literally “greed for what is new.” It is associated with a “tendency just to perceive” (BT 216; SZ 172) and is introduced as the everyday form of understanding (just as *Gerede* is the everyday form of *Rede*):

In our analysis of understanding [*Verstehen*] and of the disclosedness of the “there” in general, we have . . . designated the disclosedness of being-in as Dasein’s clearing, in which it first becomes possible to have something like sight. Our conception of “sight” has been gained by looking at the basic kind of disclosure which is characteristic of Dasein—namely, understanding. The basic state of sight shows itself in a peculiar tendency-of-Being which belongs to everydayness—the tendency towards “seeing.” We designate this tendency by the term “curiosity” [*Neugier*], which characteristically is not confined to seeing, but expresses the tendency towards a peculiar way of letting the world be encountered by us in perception. (BT 214; SZ 170)

Three features of perception are of interest here. First, merely perceiving involves bracketing one’s practical interests and concerns with proprieties of action. Second, this bracketing is accomplished by making claims—the output of perception for Heidegger is an assertion. As has been pointed out, assertions are available as equipment for inference, both practical and theoretical. That is, one responds appropriately to assertions as such by drawing conclusions from them, using them to jus-

tify either nonsentential performances or further assertions. But their appropriateness as responses to an observable situation are not hostage to any particular practical project. Third, responding to things perceptually, by making noninferential reports (which are themselves then available for further inferences), is treating them as occurrent. We find all three themes combined in an earlier passage dealing with perception:

In this kind of "dwelling" as a holding-oneself-back from any manipulation or utilization, the perception of the occurrent is consummated. Perception is consummated when one addresses oneself to something as something and discusses it as such. What is thus perceived and made determinate can be expressed in propositions, and can be retained and preserved as what has thus been asserted. (BT 89; SZ 62)

Adopting the attitude of perceiving can be done authentically, when the ultimate concern is with understanding, or it can be inauthentic, a form of falling, as curiosity, when the assertions it results in are employed only in a kind of inferential play. (In the discussion of ambiguity below, this sort of inferential play will be called "surmising" [*ahnen*]).

When curiosity has become free, however, it concerns itself with seeing, not in order to understand what is seen . . . but just in order to see it. It seeks novelty only in order to leap from it anew to another novelty. It concerns itself with a kind of knowing, but just in order to have known. (BT 216–217; SZ 172)

It should be clear that curiosity, no less than *Gerede*, is, for Heidegger, a phenomenon that presupposes language, specifically assertional language, and so the capacity to treat things as occurrent. As a form of falling, it amounts to an inauthentic way of treating things as occurrent. It contrasts with science, which is an authentic way of understanding things as merely present.³⁸ Each of these depends on the possibility of responding to things by making claims about them.

The third form of fallen disclosedness, ambiguity, is equally a linguistic affair. By this term Heidegger refers to a way of talking about things that both evades any genuine search for understanding and separates itself in principle from the possibility of action. Ambiguity is a kind of *speaking*, which substitutes for actual understanding:

When, in our everyday being-with-one-another, we encounter the sort of thing which is accessible to everyone, and about which anyone

can say anything, it soon becomes impossible to decide what is disclosed in a genuine understanding, and what is not. This ambiguity [*Zweideutigkeit*] extends not only to the world, but just as much to Being-with-one-another as such, and even to Dasein's Being towards itself. Everything looks as if it were genuinely understood, genuinely taken hold of, genuinely spoken, though at bottom it is not. (BT 217; SZ 173)

Falling into social practices embodying ambiguity involves holding back from action in a stronger sense than merely making assertions does. Indeed, the practices instituting ambiguity demand that one refuse to commit oneself to assertions. For these can be used as premises for inferences, including the practical inferences whose conclusions are actions and commitments to act. Instead, one merely *entertains* claim contents, employing them only in *surmises*:

Even supposing that what "they" have surmised and scented out should someday be actually translated into deeds, ambiguity has already taken care that interest in what has been realized will promptly die away. Indeed, this interest persists, in a kind of curiosity and idle talk, only so long as there is a possibility of a non-committal just-surmising-with-someone-else. When confronted with the carrying-through of what "they" have surmised together, idle talk readily establishes that "they" "could have done that too." In the end, idle talk is even indignant that what it has surmised and constantly demanded now actually happens. In that case, indeed, the opportunity to keep on surmising has been snatched away. In the ambiguity of the way things have been publicly interpreted, talking about things ahead of the game and making surmises about them curiously, gets passed off as what is really happening, while taking action and carrying something through get stamped as something merely subsequent and unimportant. (BT 218; SZ 174)

The cash value of this is that the claim contents are employed only in *hypothetical* reasoning—reasoning of the "what if" sort. Formally this means that they appear not as propositions with assertional force, to which the speaker is undertaking a commitment, but only as embedded as the unasserted antecedents of asserted conditionals. The claim contents that appear thus embedded, however, acquire their contents from their assertional use. In particular, one must be able to make actual inferences using an assertion as a premise in order to be able to use a con-

ditional in which that same content appears unasserted. For the conditional merely makes explicit, in the form of a claim, what is implicit in the actual performing of an inference. The possibility of merely surmising is thus a sophisticated, latecoming possibility, one that is built on and depends on the capacity to take responsibility for ordinary assertions, which are available, as mere surmises are not, for employment in practical inferences leading to action. The practical mistake underlying falling as ambiguity consists in treating this parasitic form of discourse as if it were autonomous, a game one could play though one played no other.

Thus all of *Gerede*, *Neugier*, and *Zweideutigkeit* are for Heidegger essentially linguistic phenomena—further, ones that depend on the capacity to make assertions, and so to treat things as occurrent. These are the essential substructures of *Verfallen*, which is an *existentiale* of Dasein. Specifically, they are the fallen forms of Dasein's disclosedness, and Dasein is its disclosedness. Thus there is no Dasein which does not fall into these practices, and hence no Dasein that cannot and does not make assertions and treat things as occurrent.

The widespread interpretive impression to the contrary among readers of *Being and Time* is the result of misunderstanding three sorts of passages. The first sort asserts the ontological priority of *Zuhandensein* over *Vorhandensein*. These passages are to be understood in terms of explanatory priority—that assertion is to be understood as a kind of equipment (assertions are something available³⁹ (BT 267; SZ 224)), while equipment is not to be understood in terms of matter-of-factual presence plus something. This does not entail that it is coherent to describe a situation in which Dasein has the capacity to treat things as *zuhanden* and not to treat things as *vorhanden*. The second sort of passage insists that there can be cases of circumspective understanding, and even interpretation, which do not take the form of assertion, or it makes the same sort of claim of priority for interpretation over assertion.⁴⁰ Here it is necessary to keep in mind the distinction between local independence—it must be admitted that not all cases of interpretation are cases of assertion—and the global claim that the *capacity* to interpret could exist without being accompanied by the *capacity* to assert. These passages do not support the stronger, global claim, which is the one being denied here. Also, it is not denied that creatures that do not qualify as Dasein, because they do not have *Rede*, *Gerede*, and so on, might nonetheless have

practices that institute something a lot like equipment and do something a lot like interpreting according to it. It is claimed that such creatures would not qualify as Dasein, and so, given the package deal that Heidegger's ontological claims involve, that what they institute cannot qualify as *Zuhandensein*, and what they are doing is not strictly interpreting. Finally, there are passages that point out that there is more to talking than asserting—that not all *Sprache* is *Aussage*, because there is also wishing, commanding, and so on.⁴¹ Again, however, these passages do not speak against the global claim that one could not have the capacity to do these things unless one also had the capacity to assert, though of course not all instances of exercising the one capacity are instances of exercising the other.

The conclusion, then, is that when Heidegger talks about Dasein, he is talking about a kind of being that essentially involves the capacity to use language. More particularly, it essentially involves the capacity to use assertional language, that is, to make claims whose correctness as claims does not depend on the particular projects of those who make them. Thus it essentially involves the capacity to treat things as occurrent. Heidegger is indeed a normative pragmatist in the sense of the two theses stated at the opening of this chapter. But the sort of entity about which he is such a pragmatist is, as the passage quoted in the title puts it, "Dasein, the being (entity) that thematizes."