

Heidegger on Being and the World

Wednesdays at 1pm in 1008 B, Cathedral of Learning

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The course website, with a week-by-week schedule and all the readings, is available at:

<https://spaceofreasons.netlify.app/courses/heidegger-2026/>

Or by drilling down under the “Courses” tab from my Pitt website:

<https://sites.pitt.edu/~rbrandom/>

Week 3: September 9, 2026

Properties, Proprieties, and Projects

Plan

1. Recap. What is occurrent or present, *vorhanden*, is whatever can be said (represented conceptually). Explicit ontology has the task of *telling* us also about *other* kinds of Being, the kinds that *cannot* be said or represented conceptually. How is this possible?

Suggestion: One can *say* what Dasein needs to *do* thereby to discover such beings and (so) disclose their Being. That requires a *pragmatic* vocabulary that is VP-sufficient for characterizing such disclosive practical dealings (Umgang).

Adopting this pragmatic ontological strategy to avoid having to **say what cannot be said** just is approaching **fundamental ontology as the existential analysis of Dasein**.

2. Point of comparison: **Frege’s tripartite ontology**, with its “third world” of senses.

3. *Zuhandenheit* passages.

Umgang—practical dealings, *Zeug*—equipment, *Verweisung*—assignment, *Bewandtnis*—role, *Bewandtnisganzheit*—constellation of roles, *Zeugganzheit*—equipmental totality.

4. *Zuhanden* equipment is *functionally* defined.

Point of comparison: modern **functionalism**, in David Lewis’s formulation of Ramsification plus best realizers (R+BR).

5. Explore this analogy:

Sortal kind terms : singular terms falling under them :: Being : beings.

Compare: Cross-sortal identities to identities involving beings individuated by different kinds of Being (not just what is conceptually specifiable).

6. Different kinds of Being are distinguished by identifying and individuating beings according to different kinds of **modality** (= possibilities, in a broad sense).

Some Passages on Dasein and Zuhandensein

Dasein is an entity which, in its very Being, comports itself understandingly towards that Being. In saying this, we are calling attention to the formal concept of existence. Dasein exists. Furthermore, Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent Dasein, and belongs to it as a condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible. In each case, Dasein exists in one or the other of these two modes, or else it is modally undifferentiated. [§12, 78]

Should we then first attach ourselves to those entities with which Dasein proximally and for the most part dwells—Things 'invested with value'? Do not these 'really' show us the world in which we live? Perhaps, in fact, they show us something like the 'world' more penetratingly. But these Things too are entities 'within' the world. [§14 92]

But suppose one characterizes these 'Things' as Things 'invested with value'? What does "value" mean ontologically? How are we to categorize this 'investing' and Being-invested? [§15 96]

The Greeks had an appropriate term for 'Things': *pragmata*—that is to say, that which one has to do with in one's concernful dealings. [§15 96]

We shall call those entities which we encounter in concern "equipment" [das Zeug]. In our dealings we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement. [§15 97]

Taken strictly, 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. Equipment is essentially 'something in-order-to ...' ["etwas um-zu ..."]. A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the 'in-order-to', such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability. In the 'in-order-to' as a structure there lies an assignment or reference (Verweisung) of something to something. [§15 97]

Equipment—in accordance with its equipmentality—always is in terms of [aus] its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. [§15 97]

Passages on Relations between Zuhandensein and Vorhandensein

Dasein does not have the kind of Being which belongs to something merely present-at-hand within the world, nor does it ever have it. [§9 68]

Being-in...is a state of Dasein's Being; it is an existentiale. So one cannot think of it as the Being-present-at-hand of some corporeal Thing (such as a human body) 'in' an entity which is present-at-hand. [§12 79]

The kind of Being which belongs to these entities is readiness-to-hand. But this characteristic is not to be understood as merely a way of taking them, as if we were talking such 'aspects' into the 'entities' which we proximally encounter, or as if some world-stuff which is proximally present-at-hand in itself were 'given subjective colouring' in this way. [§15 101]

To lay bare what is just present-at-hand and no more, cognition must first penetrate beyond what is ready-to-hand in our concern. Readiness-to-hand is the way in which entities as they are 'in themselves' are defined ontologico-categorially. Yet only by reason of something present-at-hand, 'is there' anything ready-to-hand. Does it follow, however, granting this thesis for the nonce, that readiness-to-hand is ontologically founded upon presence-at-hand? [§15 101]

The modes of conspicuousness, obtrusiveness, and obstinacy all have the function of bringing to the fore the characteristic of presence-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. But the ready-to-hand is not thereby just observed and stared at as something present-at-hand; the presence-at-hand which makes itself known is still bound up in the readiness-to-hand of equipment. [§16 104]

Sortals

- Predicate adjectives, like 'red', have circumstances of appropriate application and appropriate consequences of application.
- Sortal kind terms, like 'dog' have those (...is a K), and also criteria of identity and individuation, which determine when this is the *same* K (e.g. dog) as that.
- Geach: Identity is sortal-relative. People and passengers are counted differently.
Gupta: No. Identity is identity.
- Leibniz's Laws: Indiscernibility of Identicals and Identity of Indiscernibles.
- Statue and clay differ in their modal properties.
- Strongly cross-sortal identities are almost never true.

Individuating Kinds of Being by Kinds of Modality: Properties, Proprieties, and Projects

Beings, no matter what their kind of Being, are distinguished by their possibilities.

Different kinds of possibility (modality) define different kinds of Being.

- *Vorhanden* properties, particulars, facts, and laws are individuated by *alethic* modal possibilities.
- *Zuhanden* equipment is individuated by normative *proprieties* (deontic modality) of practical dealings (Umgang).
- *Dasein* is individuated by its possibilities, in MH's distinctive *agentive* sense of projects.

Dasein not only *is* its possibilities, its possibilities are an issue for it.

(Compare Kant: acting according to rules vs. acting according to conceptions of rules.)

That entity for which, in its being, that being is at issue comports itself toward its being as its ownmost possibility. Dasein is, in each case, its possibility, and it 'has' this possibility, but not just as a property [eigenschaftlich], as something present-at-hand would. [§9]

But thrownness, as a kind of Being, belongs to an entity which in each case *is* its possibilities, and is them in such a way that it understands itself in these possibilities...[§39]