

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/>

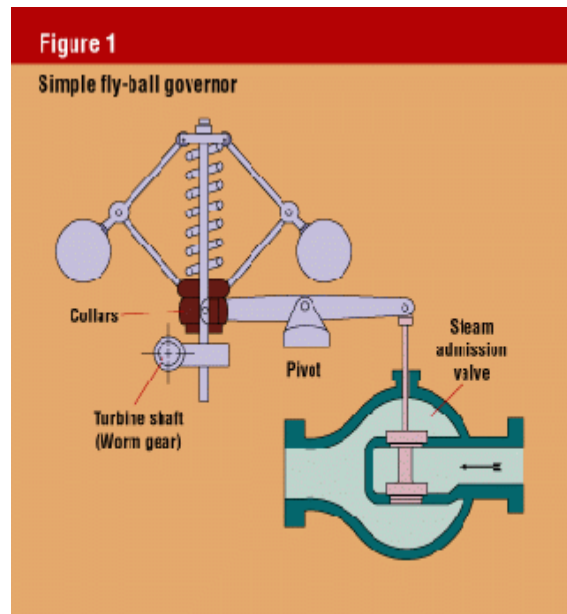
Week 4: September 16, 2026

The Structure of *Zuhandensein*

Philosopher’s Equipment: Plato’s potter’s wheel (*trochos*), Enlightenment mirror and clockwork, Romantic lamp, and pragmatist flywheel governor.

Peirce on a world of habits, likened to flywheel governors.

He sees the selectional structure common to individual learning and evolution of species as environments that grow governor-like habits.



204SFD02 Figure 1

To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play a game of chess, are *customs* (uses, institutions) [*Gepflogenheiten* (*Gebräuche*, *Institutionen*)]. To understand a sentence means to understand a language. To understand a language means to be master of a technique.

[*Philosophical Investigations* §199]

Wittgenstein uses model of tools to argue that language is a motley [*ein buntes Gemisch* or *bunt*], justifying his principled pessimism about the possibility of offering a *theory* of its use.

Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. — The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects. [*PI* §11]

It is like looking into the cabin of a locomotive. We see handles all looking more or less alike. (Naturally, since they are all supposed to be handled.) But one is the handle of a crank which can be moved continuously (it regulates the opening of a valve); another is the handle of a switch, which has only two effective positions, it is either off or on; a third is the handle of a brake-lever, the harder one pulls on it, the harder it brakes; a fourth, the handle of a pump: it has an effect only so long as it is moved to and fro. [*PI* §12]

"Imagine someone's saying: 'All tools serve to modify something. Thus the hammer modifies the position of the nail, the saw the shape of the board, and so on.' — And what is modified by the rule, the glue-pot, the nails? — 'Our knowledge of a thing's length, the temperature of the glue, and the solidity of the box.' — Would anything be gained by this assimilation of expressions?" [*PI* §14]

Heidegger offers just the sort of theoretical vocabulary Wittgenstein is skeptical-pessimistic about, aimed at being expressively powerful enough to specify the *use* of *anything*. It is to be extended to include the use (custom, institution) of *sentences* to make *assertions*.

Some translations:

Umgang—practical dealings, *Umsicht*—circumspection,
Zeug—equipment, *Zeugganzheit*—equipmental totality, *Verweisung*—assignment relation.,
Bewandtnis—role (M&R: involvement), *Bewandtnisganzheit*—totality of roles,
Bewandtniszusammenhang—context or constellation of roles.
Wozu—towards-which, *Um-zu*—in-order-to, *Um-willen* (*Worum-willen*)—for-the-sake-of-which,
Womit—with-which, *Worin*—in-which, *Woraus*—from-which,
Wobei—whereby, *Wofür*—what-for.
Dienlichkeit—serviceability, *Verwendbarkeit*—usability.

Some representative passages:

The "**for-the-sake-of-which**" signifies an "**in-order-to**"; this in turn, a "**towards-this**"; the latter, an "**in-which**" of letting something be involved; and that in turn, the "**with-which**" of an involvement [*Bewandtnis*]. These relationships are bound up with one another as a primordial

totality; they are what they are *as* this signifying [Be-deuten) in which Dasein gives itself beforehand its Being-in-the-world as something to be understood. The relational totality of this signifying we call "significance" [Bedeutung]. [§18 120]

Serviceability too, however, as a constitutive state of equipment (and serviceability is a reference), is not an appropriateness of some entity; it is rather the condition (so far as Being is in question) which makes it possible for the character of such an entity to be defined by its appropriatenesses. But what, then, is "reference" or "assignment" to mean? To say that the Being of the ready-to-hand has the structure of assignment or reference means that it has in itself the character of having been assigned or referred [Verweisenheit]. An entity is discovered when it has been assigned or referred to something, and, referred as that entity which it is. With any such entity there is an involvement which it has in something. The character of Being which belongs to the ready-to-hand is just such an involvement [Bewandtnis]. [§18 115]

When an entity within-the-world has already been proximally freed for its Being, that Being is its "involvement" [Bewandtnis]. With any such entity as entity, there is some involvement. The fact that it has such an involvement is ontologically definitive for the Being of such an entity, and is not an ontical assertion about it. That in which it is involved is the "**towards-which**" [Wozu] of serviceability, and the "**for-which**" [Wofür] of usability. With the "towards-which" of serviceability there can again be an involvement with this thing, for instance, which is ready-to-hand, and which we accordingly call a "hammer", there is an involvement in hammering; with hammering, there is an involvement in making something fast; with making something fast, there is an involvement in protection against bad weather; and this protection 'is' **for the sake of** [um-willen] providing shelter for Dasein—that is to say, for the sake of a possibility of Dasein's Being. [§18 116]

But the **totality of involvements** [Bewandtnisganzheit] itself goes back ultimately to a "**towards-which**" in which there is no further involvement: this "**towards-which**" is not an entity with the kind of Being that belongs to what is ready-to-hand within a world; it is rather an entity whose Being is defined as Being-in-the-world, and to whose state of Being, worldhood itself belongs. This primary "towards-which" is not just another "towards-this" as something in which an involvement is possible. The primary '**towards-which**' is a "**for-the-sake-of-which**". But the 'for-the-sake-of' always pertains to the Being of Dasein, for which, in its Being, that very Being is essentially an issue. We have thus indicated the interconnection by which the structure of an involvement leads to Dasein's very Being as the sole authentic "**for-the-sake-of-which**." [§18 116-17]

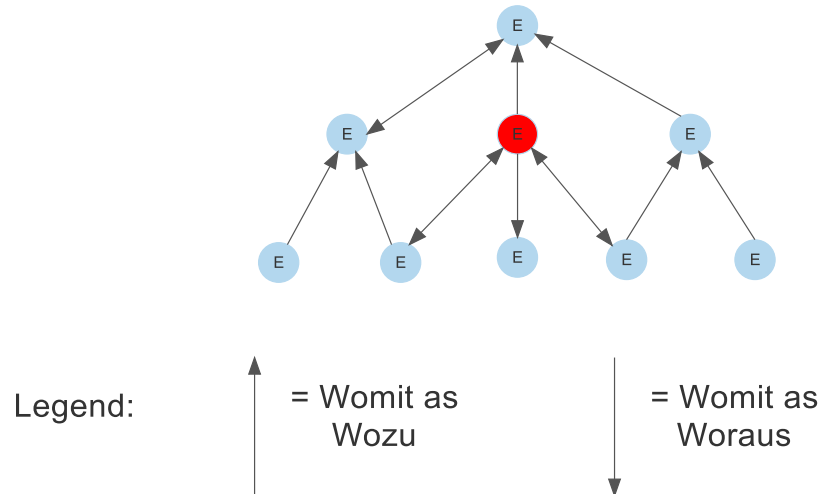
Whenever we let there be an involvement with something in something beforehand, our doing so is grounded in our understanding such things as letting something be involved, and such things as **the "with-which"** and **the "in-which"** of involvements. Anything of this sort, and anything

else that is basic for it, such as **the "towards-this"** as that in which there is an involvement, or such as **the "for-the-sake-of-which"** to which every **"towards-which"** ultimately goes back—all these must be disclosed beforehand with a certain intelligibility [Verständlichkeit]. And what is that wherein Dasein as Being-in-the-world understands itself pre-ontologically? In understanding a context of relations such as we have mentioned, Dasein has assigned itself to an **"in-order-to"** [Um-zu], and it has done so in terms of a potentiality-for-Being for the sake of which it itself is—one which it may have seized upon either explicitly or tacitly, and which may be either authentic or inauthentic. This **"in-order-to"** prescribes a **"towards-this"** as a possible **"in-which"** for letting something be involved; and the structure of letting it be involved implies that this is an involvement which something has—an involvement which is with something. Dasein always assigns itself from a **"for-the-sake-of-which"** to the **"with-which"** of an involvement [Bewandtnis]; that is to say, to the extent that it is, it always lets entities be encountered as ready-to-hand. That wherein [Worin] Dasein understands itself beforehand in the mode of assigning itself is that for which [das Woraufhin] it has let entities be encountered beforehand. *The "wherein" of an act of understanding which assigns or refers itself, is that for which one lets entities be encountered in the kind of Being that belongs to involvements; and this "wherein" is the phenomenon of the world.* And the structure of that to which [woraufhin] Dasein assigns itself is what makes up the *worldhood* of the world. [§18 118-19]

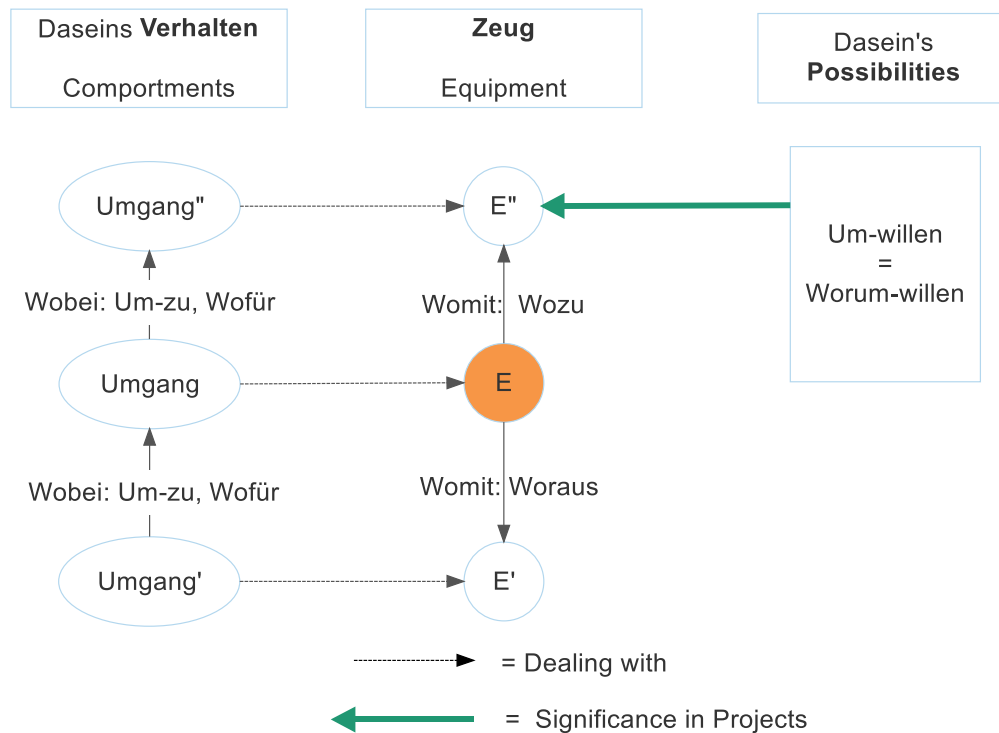
Das Wobei es die Bewandtnis hat, ist das Wozu der Dienlichkeit, das Wofür der Verwendbarkeit.' [§18].

But the 'indicating' of the sign and the 'hammering' of the hammer are not **properties** of entities. Indeed, they are not properties at all, if the ontological structure designated by the term 'property' is that of some definite character which it is possible for Things to possess [einer möglichen Bestimmtheit von Dingen]. Anything ready-to-hand is, at the worst, **appropriate** for some purposes and inappropriate for others; and **its 'properties' [Eigenschaften] are, as it were, still bound up in these ways in which it is appropriate [geeignet] or inappropriate**, just as presence-at-hand, as a possible kind of Being for something ready-to-hand, is bound up in readiness-to-hand. [§18 114-15]

A **Bewandtnis**, the Proximal Worin of Equipment =
 Equipmental Role w/res to Verweisungen
 (Assignments, Womit Relations)



Closer Look at the Ontological Articulation of Equipment



‘Um-zu’ articulates *serviceability* [Dienlichkeit], and ‘Wofür’ articulates *usability* [Verwendbarkeit]. The same Zeug can be engaged by multiple Umgänge.