

Plan for Week 4

- 1) Philosophies as Equipment: from potter's wheel to flywheel governor.
- 2) **Peirce's** world of habits
- 3) **Wittgenstein** on social practices as unsurveyable
- 4) Heidegger's response: analysis of *Zuhandenheit*
- 5) **Dewey** on Language as the Tool of Tools
- 6) Heidegger does not use means/end language
- 7) How his analysis is *phenomenological*: ordinary-language questions
- 8) **Bifurcation** of ontological vocabulary

1. **Philosophies as Equipment**

Begin with a rehearsal of technological images of philosophical world-views, epitomizing them in bits of *equipment*. This might seem fanciful, but I think we can learn something from it:

- a) Plato and the **potter's wheel (trochos)**, which turns lumpy, irregular bits of matter into better and better approximations of the ideal, intelligible circle of the geometers. **Techné**.
- b) Enlightenment **mirror**, standing for their spectatorial representational scientific ideal of cognition, and **clockwork**, on the side of agency.
- c) Romantic **lamp**, invoking the creation and illumination of individual artistic genius.
- d) Pragmatists' **flywheel governor**. (How it made steam engines possible.)

This is all to provide background for:

2. Peirce's world of habits, with the discovery of the *selectional* genus common to *evolution* and *learning*, both of which function like the potter's wheel and the flywheel governor, to shape something (habits) into an ideal form (adaptation, fitness, in an environment of other habits). **Selectional processes grow flywheel governors**. Compare his world of habits with Heidegger's world of equipment, articulated by *Umgänge*, which are intimately related to habits.

And all this to introduce:

3. **Wittgenstein on social practices and tools**

Umgänge are also closely related to Wittgenstein's treating **social practices** (customs, uses, institutions) as the medium of cognition-and-action. He claims that *as such* they cannot be studied in the way natural science studies things. They make it possible, but are not amenable to its methods. They are an essentially different kind of thing: an unsystematic, contingently grown (cf. image of a city), unsurveyable, plastic, and protean.

"Our language can be seen as **an ancient city**: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses." [*PI* §18].

In this connection tell the "**gold in my teeth**/pain in my teeth" LW story. Maybe also starting to name **rivers** after only naming **people**. Revert to this in (j) below for the big punchline: it is because natural language is flexible enough to deal with 'things' as varied as gold and pains and holes and noises and life stages and stock-market crashes, *by* adapting the questions it asks, that Heidegger's phenomenological recruitment of that flexible, adaptable apparatus of natural language gives his analysis a hope of being generally illuminating.

LW's denial of the possibility of systematic theorizing about discursive practices parallels MH's denial of the possibility of *describing* or *conceptually representing* available equipment.

Looking forward to Anscombe's use of Why? questions to define her subject, responding to LW.

Then:

4. **Main Event. Heidegger's account of equipment.**

Heidegger: "**Hold my beer!**"

Heidegger's explicit ontological vocabulary for *uses* (not just routine *habits*), and not just *discursive* ones (but them, too). This discussion of the terminology is the **main event of Week 4**.

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]

Walk through **the diagrams** from the handout.

Explain how they embed, and the complexity of the resulting roles of roles.

This is in 5 stages:

- Last week: just Umgang, Verweisung, Bewandtnis, Bewandtnisganze (/zusammenhang).
- The first, fuller diagram on handout, which breaks down Verweisungen.
- The second, still more detailed diagram.

Usability : serviceability :: constitutive : evaluative rationality in Kant (for us, not it) per Robin Dillon.

My innovation is placement of the Um-zu as relating Umgänge rather than Zeug, as the Wozu does.

- The implicit even more detailed diagram that includes multiple Umgänge for each Zeug.
- The implicit embedding of that diagram in the first diagram.

This is a much richer, labeled-graph theoretic representation of a structure than the first-order theory that proper Lewisian Ramsification works with.

But we can define a cognate notion of *functional abstraction*: assimilating all the diagrams that have the same structure.

One can substitute for any of the *nodes* in the diagrams.

What must remain *fixed* is the *relations*, of Um-zu, Umgang, Wozu, Womit, Um-willen, und so weiter.

These relations cannot be satisfied by arbitrary substituends—substituends drawn from arbitrary vocabularies. They must be drawn from within the **sortals** defined by the roles w/res to relations of Wozu etc.. The sortals are defined *relationally*, that is, *functionally*, by the *roles* they play w/res to *other* sortals. Thus, for instance, numbers won't work as substituends or "best realizers"; they are not *for* anything. **They are not responsive answers to the questions defining the roles.**

I'm going to claim this for **analytic pragmatism**: pursuing pragmatism by analytic means. (True, I want to say the same thing about Kant. But this is an altogether purer case.). So, not only claiming it for **pragmatism after the linguistic turn**.

Possibly: **Vehiclelessness**, functionalism without vehicles. Davidson and McDowell

5. Dewey on Language as the Tool of Tools:

Contrast it with treating *language* as a tool,

as Dewey does: "**Language is the tool of tools**, the tool for producing tools."

Explain the constraints on using the instrumental model of intelligibility—exhibiting something as a *means* to some *end*:

- **goal** must be intelligible independently, and in advance, and
- alternative **means** must be intelligible.

Neither of these conditions holds for language or discursive practice as a whole.

Sentences are tools, but the instrumental model of explaining something, as a means, does not apply to language, because there is no specification of the *end* or goal—it is for producing *new* ends or goals—that is both correct and allows for the possibility of *alternative* means to that end.

6. **MH does not use means/end, instrumental vocabulary**, but he has another reason: Because its home language-game is in specifying *practical reasoning*.

His concern is rather with what it is about the things we deal with that makes plan- and hyperplan-structured practical reasoning *feasible*. What do we learn about things, their Being, because we can deal or engage with them practically?

7. **Punchline: How his vocabulary counts as phenomenological**, by classifying according to the responsive answers to ordinary language questions (so, contingent, but flexible): what?, how?, what for?, with what?....

In this connection revert to the Wittgenstein “**gold in my teeth**/pain in my teeth” story. Maybe also starting to name **rivers** after only naming **people**.

Revert to this for the big punchline: it is because natural language is flexible enough to deal with ‘things’ as varied as gold and pains and holes and noises and life stages and stock-marked crashes, *by* adapting the questions it asks, that Heidegger’s phenomenological recruitment of that flexible, adaptable apparatus of natural language gives his analysis a hope of being generally illuminating.

Anscombe, in her masterwork *Intention* defined her topic by answers to a certain kind of Why? question. This is **Anscombe’s analogue of Heidegger’s response**, in his case, in effect, to LW’s principled pessimism. This closes a bracket opened by the LW on tools bit.

This is the *phenomenological* aspect of **starting where we are, with the expressive tools we find ourselves with**, rather than the sense impressions we get. His is an *expressive phenomenology*. (Later on, he will make this use of **Hölderlin’s poetry as a found vocabulary whose expressive power can be recruited, adapted, and deployed as an ontological vocabulary**.) If we “know how to go on,” in Wittgenstein’s phrase, if we can often enough agree on answers to questions such as “what is that?” (asking for something falling under a functional sortal), then the vocabulary is workable—which does not mean that the metavocabulary he is putting in place ‘cuts at the joints’, in the sense that the distinctions it makes and their inferential significance (implications and incompatibilities) are good ones.

8. **Final move: MH’s own ontological vocabulary here is functionalist in its key sortals**, rather than descriptive: specifying **roles articulated by proprieties (serviceability)**, not **facts articulated by properties**. Possibly: present-at-hand as playing roles, but not identical with the roles they play. (Vehiclelessness issue raised here?) (Is that the lesson of the transition from Z to V happening by varieties of *breakdown*?) There seems to be a *bifurcation of vocabularies* being invoked here. *Some* linguistic ways things can show up reveal only what is present-at-hand. *Other* linguistic ways things can show up (in a proper ontological vocabulary) can reveal other kinds of Being, paradigmatically *Zuhandensein*. Is this a descriptive/normative division? Is it the

distinction between *functionally* defined sortals, with things identified and individuated by *proprieties* governing their use, on the one hand, and descriptive-representational, nonnormative vocabulary, on the other?