Heidegger on Being and the World

Wednesdays at 1pm in 1008 B, Cathedral of Learning Bob Brandom (rbrandom@pitt.edu)

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 8: October 14, 2026

Care as the Structure of Commitment

Plan:

- Recap:

The two aspects of Rede, Gerede and Aussage, are interdependent, with each ultimately intelligible only in a framework containing the other.
Falling comprises Gerede, Neugier, and Zweideutigkeit.
Ambiguity characterizes the relation between Gerede and Aussage.
It requires the ceaseless production of unproductive, occupying novelty within Gerede.
Falling is an exclusively *discursive* phenomenon.

- Dasein is its possibilities, in a distinctive sense of 'possibility' articulated by the **thrown-projecting** (Geworfen-entwerfen) structure of **care**.

- Nearby landmarks:

1. Hegelian-Nietzschean conception of the normative fine structure distinctive of creatures that have ***histories*** **rather than** ***natures***—and so count as 'who's.
2. Kantian explanation, appealing to the distinction between general and transcendental logic, of why the rational synthetic unity constitutive of apperception (sapient awareness) can and must be a *transcendental* unity, in the sense of one that explains the specifically *representational* dimension of discursive content.
3. **Plan**-structured accounts of practical normativity.

By contrast to:

   i. **Axiological** orientation toward values or the Good.
   ii. Humean **instrumental** means/ends model, based on attitudes (desire, preference). Its sophisticated contemporary version is rational choice theory.
   iii. Kantian **reasons-first** accounts of practical reasoning (e.g. Scanlon, Parfit).

Gibbard's more flexible version of plan-based normativity is the better model to compare with Heidegger, rather than Bratman's instrumentalist intentions-as-plans account.

The abandonment of Dasein to itself is shown with primordial concreteness in anxiety. "Being-ahead-of-itself" means, if we grasp it more fully, "**ahead-of-itself-in-already-being-in-a-world**". As soon as **this essentially unitary structure** is seen as a phenomenon, what we have set forth earlier in our analysis of worldhood also becomes plain. The upshot of that analysis was that **the referential totality of significance (which as such is constitutive for worldhood) has been 'tied up' with a "for-the-sake-of-which.** [§41 236]

BB: The for-the-sake-of-whiches (Worumwillen) that generate the Um-zus (relating Umgänge) and Wozus (relating Zeug), are Dasein's *commitments*. These are special attitude-instituted deontic statuses. They are the source of the *axiological proprieties* that are the in-order-tos and towards-whiches that articulate the Zuhandensein of the world.
This relation is the principle axis of the dependence of sentences-as-equipment, the Bewandtnisse (roles) of which are the Geredetes common to Aussage and Gerede on what Dasein *does* in using sentences as equipment for asserting.
But Dasein's for-the-sake-of-whiches are the source of the proprieties governing *all* equipment ready-to-hand, not just sentences. The account of the structure of *care* accordingly redeems a promissory note concerning the role of for-the-sake-of-whiches gestured at in the discussion of the equipmental totality.

Because Dasein essentially has a state-of-mind belonging to it, Dasein has a kind of Being in which it is brought before itself and becomes disclosed to itself in its thrownness. 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 and in terms of them, projecting itself upon them**. Being alongside the ready-to-hand, belongs just as primordially to Being-in-the-world as does Being-with-Others; and Being-in-the-world is in each case for the sake of itself. The Self, however, is proximally and for the most part inauthentic, the they-self. Being-in-the-world is always fallen. Accordingly Dasein' s "average everydayness" can be defined as "Being-in-the-world which is falling and disclosed, **thrown and projecting**, and for which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is an issue, both in its Being alongside the 'world' and in its Being-with Others". [§39 225]

Being-in-the-world is a basic state of Dasein. **That in the face of which one has anxiety** [das Wovor der Angst] **is Being-in-the-world as such**. [§40 230]

As something factical, Dasein's projection of itself understandingly is in each case already alongside a world that has been discovered. **From this world it takes its possibilities, and it does so first in accordance with the way things have been interpreted by the "they"**. This interpretation has already restricted the possible options of choice to what lies within the range of the familiar, the attainable, the respectable-that which is fitting and proper. **This levelling off of**

Dasein's possibilities to what is proximally at its everyday disposal also results in a dimming down of the possible as such. **The average everydayness of concern becomes blind to its possibilities, and tranquillizes itself with that which is merely 'actual'**. [§41 239]

With the expression 'care' we have in mind a basic existential-ontological phenomenon, which all the same is not simple in its structure. The ontologically elemental totality of the care-structure cannot be traced back to some ontical 'primal element', just as Being certainly cannot be 'explained' in terms of entities. In the end it will be shown that the idea of Being in general is just as far from being 'simple' as is the Being of Dasein. In **defining "care" as "Being-ahead-of-oneself-in-Being-already-in…—as Being-alongside ... "**, we have made it plain that even this phenomenon is, in itself, still structurally articulated [§41 241]

We must bear in mind, however, that in this document Dasein is expressing itself 'primordially', unaffected by any theoretical Interpretation and without aiming to propose any. We must also note that **Dasein's Being is characterized by historicality**, though this must first be demonstrated ontologically. **If Dasein is 'historical' in the very depths of its Being**, then a deposition [Aussage] which comes from its history and goes back to it, and which, moreover, is prior to any scientific knowledge, will have especial weight, even though its importance is never purely ontological. That understanding of Being which lies in Dasein itself, expresses itself preontologically. [§42 241-2]

Yet combination (Verbindung) does not lie in the objects, and cannot be borrowed from them through perception... on the contrary, it is an action of the understanding... [**All] combination—whether we are conscious of it or not, whether it be a combination of the manifold of intuition or of several concepts... is an act of the understanding...**
For where the understanding has not previously combined anything, neither can it dissolve (auflösen) anything, for only through it as having been combined by the understanding can anything be given to the representational power as resolved (zerlegt).
[(Kant, CPR, B130, §15 ("On the Possibility of a Combination in General")]

'Verbindung', along with 'Gültigkeit', is a term Kant uses for distinctively normative bindingness.

Judgment is nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception. (Kant, *CPR,* B143)

"**Being a normative concept consists…in being plan-laden**."
[Gibbard, "Précis of *Thinking How to Live* (2006), p. 695].