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 9: October 21, 2026

Conclusion of Division One

Plan:

Recap: Three Neighboring Landmarks

- A Hegelian-Nietzschean account of why beings whose normative statuses depend on their own normative attitudes are necessarily *historical* beings, in a distinctive sense.
- A Kantian account of why understanding the commitment undertaken in judging—to integrate the judgment into one's prior constellation of such commitments (cf. Befindlichkeit) according to rational critical, justificatory, and ampliative task responsibilities—creates and maintains a synthetic apperceptive unity that is also a *transcendental* unity, in that it is the basis for the *representational* dimension of judgeable contents.
  To illuminate: How the if-then structure of Rede includes the Worüber-structure of Aussage.
- A Gibbardian account of discursive commitments as having the structure of *plans*, whose basic atoms are commitments to do A in circumstances C.
  To illuminate: The role of deontic commitments as *projections* or *projects* (Entwürfe).

Three large themes for this week:

1. The relations between Dasein and Being.

Being depends upon Dasein (its disclosive activities) in a way that beings do *not* depend on Dasein (its discovering or disclosive activities).

2. What is the relation between beings ready-to-hand (the hammer *as* hammer) and the 'corresponding' beings present-at-hand—the hammer as the Worüber of an Aussage ('The hammer's handle *is* broken.'), and their hermeneutic vs. apophantic discovery?

3. Can we understand the Chiaroscuro Principle—that any *revealing* of beings or Being necessarily involves a correlative *concealing* of beings or Being—in terms of more fundamental features of Heidegger's ontology?

Theme 1: Dasein, Being, and Truth

Being (not entities) is dependent upon the understanding of Being; that is to say, Reality (not the Real) is dependent upon care. [§43 255]

The Being of truth is connected primordially with Dasein. And only because Dasein *is* as constituted by disclosedness (that is, by understanding), can anything like Being be understood; only so is it possible to understand Being.
Being (not entities) is something which 'there is' only in so far as truth is. And truth is only in so far as and as long as Dasein is. Being and truth 'are' equiprimordially. [§44 272-3]

[T]he fact that Reality is ontologically grounded in the Being of Dasein, does not signify that only when Dasein exists and as long as Dasein exists, can the Real be as that which in itself it is. Of course only as long as Dasein is (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), 'is there' Being. When Dasein does not exist, 'independence' 'is' not either, nor 'is' the 'in-itself '. In such a case this sort of thing can be neither understood nor not understood. In such a case even entities within-the-world can neither be discovered nor lie hidden. In such a case it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are not. But now, as long as there is an understanding of Being and therefore an understanding of presence-at-hand, it can indeed be said that in this case entities will still continue to be. [§43 255]

<u>Three comparisons</u>:

1. For Kant, nature (the objective world) is empirically real but transcendentally ideal.
2. The basic substructures of Zuhandensein and Vorhandensein, corresponding to the *existentiale* of Dasein, Heidegger calls ‘categories’.
3. Sense-dependence vs. reference-dependence of concepts.

<u>A Recollective Summary</u>:

- From understanding the appearance/reality distinction in terms of *resemblance* (Plato and Aristotle) to understanding it in terms of *representation* (Descartes).
- The difference between categories of resemblance and representation essentially depends on a *structural* difference between *atomistic* and *holistic* conceptions of appearances (Spinoza).
- Understanding appearances (representings) as essentially *conceptual*, and conceptual structure as the product of our activity (synthesis, Verbindung as combination-by-commitment) leads Kant to conceptual *phenomenalism*: restricting conceptual structure to representings.
- Heidegger:

i) Generalizes to a genus of which *conceptual* appearances are just one species,
ii) Is a *realist* rather than a phenomenalist about Being (like Aristotle and Hegel), and
iii) Endorses *holism* about appearances and Being.

Theme 2: Relations between zuhanden and vorhanden beings

Asserting is a way of Being towards the Thing itself that is. And what does one's perceiving of it demonstrate? Nothing else than that this Thing is the very entity which one has in mind in one's assertion. What comes up for confirmation is that this entity is pointed out by the Being in which the assertion is made—which is Being towards what is put forward in the assertion; thus what is to be confirmed is that such Being uncovers the entity towards which it is. What gets demonstrated is the Being-uncovering of the assertion. [§44 261]

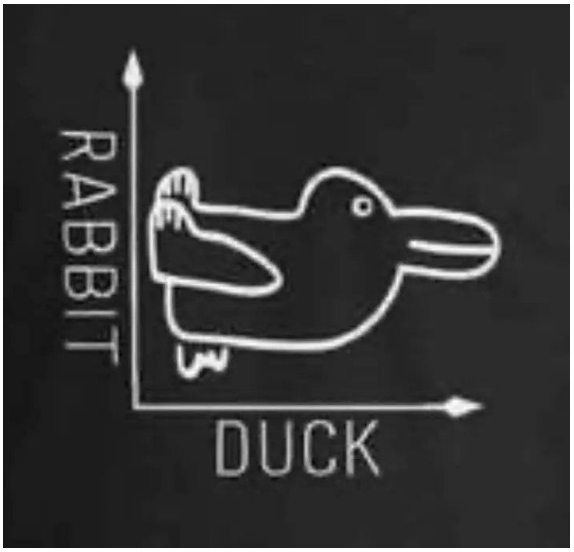
When we say, and mean, that such-and-such is the case, we—and our meaning—do not stop anywhere short of the fact; but we mean: this—is—so. [Wittgenstein, *PI* §95]

Assertion and its structure (namely, the apophantical "as") are founded upon interpretation and its structure (viz, the hermeneutical "as") and also upon understanding—upon Dasein's disclosedness. [§44 266]

Our Being alongside entities within-the-world is concern, and this is Being which uncovers. To Dasein's disclosedness, however, discourse belongs essentially. Dasein expresses itself [spricht sich aus]: it expresses itself as a Being-towards entities—a Being-towards which uncovers. And in assertion it expresses itself as such about entities which have been uncovered. Assertion communicates entities in the "how" of their uncoveredness. When Dasein is aware of the communication, it brings itself in its awareness into an uncovering Being-towards the entities discussed. **The assertion which is expressed is about something, and in what it is about [in ihrem Worüber] it contains the uncoveredness of these entities**. This uncoveredness is preserved in what is expressed. What is expressed becomes, as it were, something ready-to-hand within-the-world which can be taken up and spoken again. Because the uncoveredness has been preserved, **that which is expressed [das Geredetes] (which thus is ready-to-hand) has in itself a relation to any entities about which it is an assertion**. Any uncoveredness is an uncoveredness of something. Even when Dasein speaks over again what someone else has said, it comes into a Being-towards the very entities which have been discussed. But it has been exempted from having to uncover them again, primordially, and it holds that it has been thus exempted….In a large measure uncoveredness gets appropriated not by one's own uncovering, but rather by hearsay of something that has been said. [§44 266]

When the assertion has been expressed, the uncoveredness of the entity moves into the kind of Being of that which is ready-to-hand within-the-world*. But now to the extent that in this uncoveredness, as an uncoveredness* ***of*** *something, a relationship to something present-at-hand persists, the uncoveredness (truth) becomes, for its part, a relationship between things which are present-at-hand, intellectus and res—a relationship that is present-at-hand itself.* [§44 266]

Duck/Rabbit Model of Zuhandensein/Vorhandensein ?



Theme 3: The Chiaroscuro Principle (CP)—All revealing also conceals.

Some candidates for grounding CP in features of Heidegger's fundamental ontology:
1. Does CP reflect the ontic/ontological distinction between beings and Being? Does *discovering* beings obscure *disclosure* of their Being, and *vice versa*?
2. Is CP a matter of explicit vs. implicit, that any discovery/disclosure must take place against the background of practical know-how that is out of the primary focus? Is it a Rede/Verstehen issue?
3. Is CP specific to the relation between Zuhandenheit and Vorhandenheit, where discovery of what is zuhand obscures what is vorhand, and *vice versa*?
4. Is CP a consequence of *falling*?

To be closed off and covered up belongs to Dasein's facticity. In its full existential-ontological meaning, the proposition that 'Dasein is in the truth' states equiprimordially that 'Dasein is in untruth'. But only in so far as Dasein has been disclosed has it also been closed off; and **only in so far as entities within-the-world have been uncovered along with Dasein, have such entities, as possibly encounterable within-the-world, been covered up (hidden) or disguised**. [§44 265]

…a primordial understanding of its own Being thus make itself known—the understanding (even if it is only pre-ontological) that **Being-in-untruth makes up an essential characteristic of Being-in-the world**. [§44 265]

The upshot of our existential-ontological Interpretation of the phenomenon of truth is
(1) that truth, in the most primordial sense, is Dasein's disclosedness, to which the uncoveredness of entities within-the-world belongs; and
(2) that Dasein is equiprimordially both in the truth and in untruth. [§44 265]

But because the phenomenon of the world itself gets passed over in this absorption in the world, its place gets taken [tritt an seine Stelle] by what is present-at-hand within-the-world, namely, Things. The Being of those entities which are there with us, gets conceived as presence-at-hand. Thus by exhibiting the positive phenomenon of the closest everyday Being-in-the-world, we have made it possible to get an insight into the reason why an ontological Interpretation of this state of Being has been missing. **This very state of Being, in its everyday kind of Being, is what proximally misses itself and covers itself up**. [§27 168]

The ready-to-hand is not grasped theoretically at all, nor is it itself the sort of thing that circumspection takes proximally as a circumspective theme. **The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw** [zurückzuziehen] in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically. [§15 99]

To Dasein's state of Being belongs **falling**. Proximally and for the most part Dasein is lost in its 'world'. Its understanding, as a projection upon possibilities of Being, has diverted itself thither. Its absorption in the "they" signifies that it is dominated by the way things are publicly interpreted. That which has been uncovered and disclosed stands in a mode in which it has been disguised and closed off by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. Being towards entities has not been extinguished, but it has been uprooted. **Entities have not been completely hidden; they are precisely the sort of thing that has been uncovered, but at the same time they have been disguised**. They show themselves, but in the mode of semblance. Likewise what has formerly been uncovered sinks back again, hidden and disguised. **Because Dasein is essentially falling, its state of Being is such that it is in 'untruth'**. [§44 264]