

Heidegger II

PHIL310

Transparency

- Heidegger's ultimate goal is an account of Being.
- To this end, Heidegger considers the method by which we might approach an account of Being, namely, our own activity in doing so. He worries, as have many philosophers, about the transparency of our "access" to Being. To what extent, if any, is Being, as thought by us, truly Being?
- Consequently, as we have seen, Heidegger develops an account of the "approach vehicle," in order to determine whether it has anything like transparent access to Being. This is his account of Dasein, and as we have seen, Heidegger asserts that Dasein is, in fact, transparent with respect to its own being. (This assertion is made in a preliminary manner in the Introduction to *Being and Time*; the rest of the text delineates his full argument.)
- To be (somewhat) more specific, consider the following terms:
 - o Existentiality: the "context" of "structure[s] of existence" (33) – i.e., the fact that Dasein is capable of different activities.
 - o Existentiell: the "understanding of oneself which leads *along this way*" (33) – i.e., Dasein considered in its various modes of activity.
 - o Existential: the "analytic understanding" of the existentiell (33) – i.e., the account of Dasein as a being capable of various modes of activity.
 - o *Existenz*: "[t]hat kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow" (32) – i.e., "the world", especially as an object of our understanding and a context of our activity (i.e., of our existentiality).
- And we have already seen that Dasein is a *phenomenological* being – i.e., one capable of discursive experience, insofar as it is capable of understanding phenomena in conceptual ("logical" – *logikos*) terms.
- Among the various practical activities of which Dasein is capable (i.e., one of its existentiell modes) is science, or theoretical study, generally.
- And, so, to the extent that Dasein understands what it means to pursue or consider the nature of its own being, it is evidently capable of judging that it is, indeed, on a given occasion, engaged in this very pursuit. To this extent, in this particular case, it is apparent, that is, that Dasein is transparent with respect to its own being. (What I am doing right now is considering what it is for me to be doing this, right now. And I see clearly that what I am doing, right now, is precisely considering what it is to be doing this (self-studying).)

A Common Error

- Now, this may not seem like much, especially as we compare what Heidegger asserts with Descartes's *cogito*.
- But Heidegger believes that he has, for the first time, made plain what Dasein consists in, and, in particular, done so in such a way as to avoid a mistake that

leads to the grave epistemological difficulties of philosophy. (See Mulhall, Ch. 2.)

- In order to appreciate this claim, we must consider Heidegger's emphasis upon Dasein's ontological pursuits as an existentiell among other possible ones. The theoretical mode of being, that is, is but one mode of being, and its particular results must be considered in the context of that existentiality.
- Note, in particular, that while Dasein is the being that "comports" itself towards *Existenz*, *Existenz* itself is only partly, at some times, the object of theoretical pursuit. Indeed, most of the time, Dasein is not engaged with *Existenz* theoretically, but practically, as it pursues its various other interests.
- Nevertheless, Heidegger believes, the distinctive nature of ontology (theorizing about being; along with theorizing in general) can, if we are uncareful, obscure the prior nature of Dasein.
- Consider Descartes's manner of proceeding when he considers the ball of wax. His attention is focused on the ball of wax and upon the ball alone. When his attention does return to himself, it is as though he himself exists as a further being alongside the ball of wax. So, now, we have two beings, and the question of their relationship. But because this approach has been object-focused, so to speak, it is possible for Descartes to conceive the ball of wax as a being quite independent of himself, just as he is able to conceive himself as a being quite independent of it. In other words, Descartes's approach involves presuming an independence of himself from the world, and the world from himself. But, says Heidegger, this is an independence that is not prior to his study, but secondary to it.
- Properly conceived, according to Heidegger, Descartes's study, like any, must be considered in the context of existentiality, i.e., in the context of Dasein's possible other activities. And if we do so consider the study, we see that the self-world relationship is anything but a relationship of independence. We see, rather, that the self, or Dasein, to be precise, is *always* "in a world". That is, Dasein simply is "being-in-the-world". All of Descartes's experiences, actual or imagined, are phenomenological ones.
- For Heidegger, this means that the representation/reality distinction is already born of a false dichotomy – the self/world dichotomy. It is true, of course, that some of our experiences turn out to have been illusory, some of our beliefs to be false. But this is not to invoke the kind of deep metaphysical or epistemological difficulty that the moderns wrestle with. All there is, properly speaking, is our being-in-the-world. Philosophies that fail to appreciate this fact fall into the great empirical/metaphysical divide, never to emerge.

End/Beginning of the Road

- Heidegger's original goal was ontology per se – an account of Being, not the ontic account of Dasein.
- *Being and Time* turns out to be a work preliminary to such an ultimate ontology.
- It emerges that the nature of Dasein is temporal: for us, to be is to be in time. Heidegger raises the question at the end of *Being and Time* whether the meaning of Being is, in general, time. But (in this work) he leaves the question as one for us to settle.