Heidegger

Heidegger and the Phenomenological Tradition

Heidegger's first introduction to philosophy was Thomism, in connection with his preparation for a theological career. But, as he says, "I [soon] gave up my

1 Martin Heidegger was born in 1889 and grew up in Baden in southwest Germany. He was educated at the University of Freiburg and taught there and at the University of Marburg, where he knew Jaspers, Max Scheler, and Tillich. He was recalled to Freiburg in 1928 on Husserl's retirement, and in the spring of 1933, just after the Nazis came into power in Germany, he became rector of the university. At this time he was an ardent supporter of the Nazis, but his enthusiasm for the regime declined, and in 1933 he resigned as rector. Despite his earlier Nazi connections he did not lose his professorship at the end of the war; he continued to lecture until the normal time for retirement, but withdrew more and more into a secluded life on a mountaintop in the Black Forest. He died in 1976.
...al studies and dedicated myself entirely to philosophy.” The philosophy which he initially dedicated himself was phenomenology in the Husserlian manner. Though he was never a pupil of Husserl’s in the formal sense, when he was a young teacher at Freiburg he worked with Husserl, “primarily in his workshop,” and was led by him through “a step-by-step training in phenomenological ‘seeing.’” Heidegger became so proficient in phenomenological seeing that Husserl thought he had found the heir he had been seeking, and he secured for Heidegger succession to his professorship.

Alas for Husserl! Once established in Husserl’s chair, Heidegger dissociated himself both from the phenomenological movement and from Husserl personally. Husserl had failed to recognize that Heidegger’s outlook was fundamentally different from his own. Heidegger’s interests were from the start metaphysical. He had been concerned even at the time he was still a theology student with the question, “If being is predicated on manifold meanings, then what is its leading fundamental meaning? What does Being mean?” That is pretty much the question Aristotle had first formulated and the question that preoccupied the medieval Scholastics. The novelty of Heidegger’s approach was his proposal to apply the method of phenomenology to it.

This was a natural move for him to make. After all, Husserl’s main thesis had been that transcendentally reduced experience “consists in the self-appearance, the self-exhibiting, the self-giving” of objects themselves. It is true that Husserl had focused the phenomenological method on the essences of such entities as dice and apple trees and that what interested Heidegger the metaphysician was Being as such. It was his conviction that Being, too, as well as “mere beings,” exhibits itself, “gives” itself, to us in the phenomenological “seeing” that Husserl had taught. Husserl claimed that such experience is “pure” because it is wholly free from presuppositions; what we experience in it is the very thing itself. Heidegger accepted this claim but applied it to the reform of metaphysics rather than to the establishment of “rigorous science.” In transcendentally reduced experience we not only free ourselves from the false preconceptions of empirical scientists but also from those of earlier metaphysicians. Therefore, in transcendentally reduced experience we encounter Being itself—not merely Being as it appeared to those metaphysicians, but the very Being which they had been seeking but which, because of their erroneous preconceptions, they had failed to find.

Thus one important difference between Husserl’s and Heidegger’s versions of phenomenology lies in the object that is to be studied in this science: for Husserl it was (in Heidegger’s terminology) beings; for Heidegger himself it was...

2 Despite Husserl’s eminence and age, he, like other Jews, was subject to the antisemitic measures taken by the Nazis to purge the University of Freiburg. Granted that it would probably have taken courage to intervene on Husserl’s behalf, still it is a fact that Heidegger did not do so, despite his leading position at the university.
Being. This is why in the following passage Heidegger emphasizes that “phenomenology” is the name of a method, not of a subject matter.

“Phenomenology” neither designates the object of its researches, nor characterizes the subject-matter thus comprised. The word merely informs us of the “how” with which what is to be treated in this science gets exhibited and handled. To have a science “of” phenomena means to grasp its objects in such a way that everything about them which is up for discussion must be treated by exhibiting it directly and demonstrating it directly. The expression “descriptive phenomenology,” which is at bottom tautological, has the same meaning. . . . That which remains hidden in an egregious sense, or which shows itself only “in disguise,” is not just this entity or that, but rather the Being of entities. . . . This Being can be covered up so extensively that it becomes forgotten and no question arises about it or about its meaning. . . .

Phenomenology is our way of access to what is to be the theme of ontology, and it is our way of giving it demonstrative precision. Only as phenomenology, is ontology possible. In the phenomenological conception of “phenomenon” what one has in mind as that which shows itself is the Being of entities, its meaning, its modifications and derivatives. And this showing-itself is not just any showing-itself, nor is it some such thing as appearing. Least of all can the Being of entities ever be anything such that “behind it” stands something else “which does not appear.”

“Behind” the phenomena of phenomenology there is essentially nothing else, on the other hand, what is to become a phenomenon can be hidden. And just because the phenomena are proximally and for the most part not given, there is need for phenomenology. Covered-up-ness is the counter-concept to “phenomenon.”

There are various ways in which phenomena can be covered up. In the first place, a phenomenon can be covered up in the sense that it is still quite undiscovered. It is neither known nor unknown. Moreover, a phenomenon can be buried over. This means that it has at some time been discovered but has deteriorated to the point of getting covered up again. This covering-up can be complete; or rather—and as a rule—what has been discovered earlier may still be visible, though only as a semblance. Yet so much semblance, so much “Being.” This covering-up as a “disguising” is both the most frequent and the most dangerous, for here the possibilities of deceiving and misleading are especially stubborn. . . .

Because phenomena, as understood phenomenologically, are never anything but what goes to make up Being, while Being is in every case the Being of some entity, we must first bring forward the entities themselves if it is our aim that Being should be laid bare; and we must do this in the right way. . . .

3 [Because of his differences from the classical metaphysicians, Heidegger preferred to use the term “ontology” to describe the type of inquiry he undertook—Author.]
Ontology and phenomenology are not two distinct philosophical disciplines among others. These terms characterize philosophy itself with regard to its object and its way of treating that object. Philosophy is universal phenomenological ontology, and takes its departure from the hermeneutic of Dasein, which, as an analytic of existence, has made fast the guiding-line for all philosophical inquiry at the point where it arises and to which it returns.  

The term “Dasein” in the last sentence points to another major difference between Heidegger and Husserl. Although Husserl too concentrated on human nature, he focused on what he called the noetic pole—on acts of attending, perceiving, recalling, and thinking about the world. For him man is chiefly a knower. For Heidegger, in contrast, man is not so much a knower as a concerned creature—concerned above all for his fate in an alien world. The human being, or Dasein, that Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis discloses is thus very different from the human being that Husserl’s phenomenological analysis discloses.

Further, since the being making the analysis is in its very nature a concerned being, his inquiry about his own nature and about the nature of Being generally is a concerned inquiry. Hence, though Heidegger often talks, as we have just been talking, about phenomenological “analysis,” the term is misleading. Better perhaps are words like “insight” and “sympathy”; better still, since these terms have psychological connotations, is an expression like “empathetic understanding” if this suggests a kind of cognition in which the being who understands is not a mere knower but stands in a concerned relation to the object of his or her knowledge. A term that Heidegger himself sometimes used is “attunement,” which shows how far he had moved from Husserl’s notion of consciousness and mere directionality.

In view of these differences from Husserl, was Heidegger a phenomenologist? Although it is easy to see why he claimed that he was not, it is Heidegger the phenomenologist, not Heidegger the metaphysician and ontologist, who will probably have the greater impact on twentieth-century philosophy. Though the discussion of Dasein in Being and Time (1927) was intended to be only preliminary, and so subordinate, to ontology, this description of what it is to be human is more acute, more sensitive, altogether “deeper” than Husserl’s. And what is more, it resonates in a powerful and evocative way with the mood of our times. Accordingly, in the following account of Heidegger’s view we shall devote most of our attention to his phenomenology of human existence. But we shall begin with the question with which Heidegger himself began: “What is the meaning of Being?”

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4 “Dasein,” which the translators like to retain because it had special connotations for Heidegger, means roughly “human being” or “the mode of being human.”

5 Since, as we have just seen, Heidegger identified ontology with phenomenology, he would not allow us this distinction. We can rephrase our comment in his terminology by saying that it is the ontical-existential level of this inquiry, not the ontological-existential, that will survive. See pp. 317-20.
The Question of Being

Heidegger's chief work, Being and Time, opens with a quotation from Plato. "For manifestly you have long been aware of what you mean when you use the expression 'being.' We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed." Heidegger then asks,

... Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word "being"? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew the question of the meaning of Being. But are we nowadays even perplexed at our inability to understand the expression "Being"? Not at all. So first of all we must reawaken an understanding for the meaning of this question. Our aim in the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of Being and to do so concretely.

The quotation from Plato sounds one of the leitmotifs of the whole work: reminding. To quote the passage is to remind us of Plato and his dialogs, which we may have forgotten. But what is said at just this point in this dialog is itself an instance of reminding: the speaker is reminding his interlocutor of a still earlier occasion on which something that had been forgotten has been recalled. And of what are we being reminded on this occasion by reference to those earlier remembrances? It is our amazement—our wonder—about Being. The history of mankind, Heidegger is saying (or rather, not saying, but suggesting—and so, in a sense, reminding us), is the history of being amazed by Being, of forgetting and then recalling our wonder. In a sense, our amazement—our wonder—is always with us; we have only to look in order to rediscover it. But sometimes we become so involved in the affairs of the world that we are not only not amazed by Being, we do not even wonder at our lack of wonder.

But what is the question of Being? What is it about Being that would constantly amaze us, if only we were to direct our attention to it? It is just the fact that there is anything at all, that anything at all is: "Why is there any Being at all—why not far rather Nothing?" Put thus starkly, we may wonder what the 'other' is all about. What may amaze us is the fact that Heidegger expects us to wonder about Being. But that is just the point, Heidegger would reply. It only proves what he has been contending, that twentieth-century man does not understand the question of Being.

Let us begin by pointing out what the question of Being does not mean. It does not mean "Why should this or that particular thing be?" If, for instance, someone asks, "Why are there earthquakes?" we turn to seismologists for an answer and are satisfied if they can give us an account in terms of differential movements of the earth's crust. We understand the occurrence of an earthquake in San Francisco in 1906 in terms of antecedent movements of the San Andreas fault, and we understand these movements in terms of certain earlier events,
and so on. But none of this has anything at all to do with Heidegger’s question. Granting that this thing is because that thing is, he wants to know why anything at all is.

It is precisely because this kind of question cannot be dealt with by the sciences that the positivists ruled it out as meaningless. But if we think back over the history of culture, we see that positivists, and sceptics generally, have been greatly outnumbered by those who have been concerned by, haunted by, the question of Being, and who have sought, each in his own way, to answer it. Long ago the question was answered by myths—most peoples have had a creation myth of some sort, in which we can see reflected their amazement at Being. In Christianity the question was answered by reference to the goodness of God. When religious belief declined metaphysics took over, and from Aristotle to Hegel metaphysicians sought to explain why something rather than nothing should exist.

Consequently, we can understand Heidegger’s question in one sense—in the sense that it is a part of the history of culture. But to grasp the question of Being, it is not enough to understand it in this objective, neutral way. Consider the difference between a question about earthquakes and a question about love. If John, who does not love Mary, asks, “Why should I love Mary?” we cannot tell him. Suppose we point out that she is beautiful. He will reply, “Yes, I suppose she is, but why all the bother about beauty?” And so for anything else about Mary that we might mention in an attempt to persuade him that Mary is lovable. But if he falls in love with Mary, the situation is wholly different. Then the answer to the question, “Why should I love Mary?” is transparently clear: Mary’s lovability shines before him. So with the question of Being. It is not a question that we first understand and then later seek to answer. We cannot even begin to understand this question without already being able to answer it. That is, we cannot understand why we should wonder at Being without already wondering at it. And when we do wonder at Being, the question does not arise; the wonderability of Being shines before us.

Now for Heidegger, to be a human is simply to be open to the presence of Being, and the mark of one’s openness to Being is one’s amazement. It seemed to him urgent to help us make ourselves into human beings by opening us to Being. No one will understand Heidegger—understand, that is, in the sense of entering into the meaning and grasping it—unless he or she feels the missionary zeal that suffuses all his writings. His aim was not merely to call attention to Being—that would be useless—but to evoke in us the amazement that he felt in the presence of Being. He wanted, as he said, to “stir us by the question of Being.” Thus the last word in the passage quoted above is the operative word: “concretely.” It was the phenomenological method, Heidegger thought, that gave him the opportunity to “work out the question of the meaning of being concretely.”

Philosophers of the Aristotelian-Scholastic tradition, in which he himself had been introduced to philosophy, had talked a lot about Being, but they had
regarded it only as the highest genus, the most universal (and therefore the most empty) of concepts; they had no sense of the living presence of Beings in beings. In contrast to this abstract approach, the concrete approach recognizes that Being is not an entity at all; it is rather the light that illumines beings. Just as light is there, waiting to be looked at, instead of being merely looked with, so Being is always present to us, waiting for us to feel its presence in our lives. Or, to use another metaphor, Being is the soil that nourishes the tree of knowledge. If we look only at what is obvious we may think only of the branches, roots, and leaves, forgetting that it is the soil hidden away beneath the surface that nevertheless gives them strength. Given this view of the relation between Being and beings, it is easy to see why Heidegger believed that metaphysics must be “overcome” and replaced by a wholly different kind of thinking.

Because metaphysics inquires about beings as beings, it remains concerned with beings and does not devote itself to Being as Being . . .

Insofar as a thinker sets out to experience the ground of metaphysics, insofar as he attempts to recall the truth of Being itself instead of merely representing beings as beings, his thinking has in a sense left metaphysics. From the point of view of metaphysics, such thinking goes back into the ground of metaphysics . . . If our thinking should succeed in its efforts to go back into the ground of metaphysics, it might well help to bring about a change in human nature, accompanied by a transformation of metaphysics.

If, as we unfold the question concerning the truth of Being, we speak of overcoming metaphysics, this means: recalling Being itself . . .

Why, however, should such an overcoming of metaphysics be necessary? . . . Are we trying to go back into the ground of metaphysics in order to uncover a heretofore overlooked presupposition of philosophy, and thereby to show that philosophy does not yet stand on an unshakable foundation and therefore cannot yet be the absolute science? No.

It is something else that is at stake with the arrival of the truth of Being or its failure to arrive . . . What is to be decided is nothing less than this: can Being itself, out of its own unique truth, bring about its involvement in human nature? . . .

Due to the manner in which it thinks of beings, metaphysics almost seems to be, without knowing it, the barrier which keeps man from the original involvement of Being in human nature.

What if the absence of this involvement and the oblivion of this absence determined the entire modern age? What if the absence of Being abandoned man more and more exclusively to beings, leaving him forsaken and far from any involvement of Being in his nature, while this forsakenness itself remained veiled? What if this were the case—and had been the case for a long time now? What if there were signs that this oblivion will become still more decisive in the future? . . .

Thus everything depends on this: . . . The thinking which is posited by beings as such, and therefore representational and illuminating in that way, must be supplanted by a different kind of thinking which is brought to pass by Being itself and, therefore, responsive to Being . . .
The question is: Why is there any being at all and not rather Nothing? Suppose that we do not remain within metaphysics to ask metaphysically in the customary manner; suppose we recall the truth of Being out of the nature and the truth of metaphysics; then this might be asked as well: How did it come about that beings take precedence everywhere and lay claim to every "is" while that which is not a being is understood as Nothing, though it is Being itself, and remains forgotten? How did it come about that with Being it really is nothing and that the Nothing really is not? Is it perhaps from this that the as yet unshaken presumption has entered into all metaphysics that "Being" may simply be taken for granted and that Nothing is therefore made more easily than beings? That is indeed the situation regarding Being and Nothing.¹

The last paragraph is pure Heideggerese, and some readers may feel that, far from evoking Being, it evokes nothing—not Nothing, just nothing at all. In fairness to Heidegger, however, we must remember that we have not yet approached Being via his chosen route, the route of Dasein. We must now embark on this route ourselves, but before we do so we will call attention to a similarity between Heidegger and the Romantic poets that may throw a little light on the path ahead.

A POET MANQUÉ

In connection with our account of the underlying outlook of the phenomenological tradition, as contrasted with that of the analytical tradition, we have already quoted Wordsworth on the "sentiment of being" that he found "spread o'er all that moves and all that seemeth still."² When he was walking in the Wye Valley near Tintern, and on many other occasions as well, Wordsworth experienced

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.³

It seems likely that Heidegger had experiences of this kind, experiences that were of immense significance to him and that made him discontent with the Scholasticism in which he had been brought up and made him, too, when he came to do philosophy on his own, reject both the intellectualism of Husserl's phenomenology and the "abstract" approach of the traditional metaphysics. Though we know remarkably little about Heidegger's early life, we are told⁴

⁶ See p. 253.
that his father was the sexton of the Catholic church in a village in Baden and that Heidegger entered a Jesuit seminary with the intention of entering the order and becoming a priest. May we not conjecture that his abandonment of this career was connected with his sense of presence?

There have certainly been mystics and “romantics” in the Church, but they have always had a hard time staying there. From the point of view of the Church, with its commitment to a transcendent God, mysticism is tainted with pantheism;? from the point of view of the mystics, the official doctrine of God as *ens realissimum et perfectissimum* removes God’s haunting presence from the setting sun, the living air, and the blue sky.

But if Heidegger shared this sentiment of being experienced by the mystics and the romantic poets, he was not a mystic like St. John of the Cross or Meister Eckhart, and though on occasion he wrote verse, he was hardly a great poet. He was by inclination and by training a metaphysician, and however much he might repudiate the traditional philosophy, he was interested in questions that were of no concern whatever to mysticism and poets. He had, in fact, two aims that, as we may think, proved to be incompatible. On the one hand, he wanted to evoke in others the sentiment of Being that he himself had felt; on the other hand, he wanted to found a new science of ontology. Therefore, whenever what Heidegger the ontologist says about Being seems impenetrable, the puzzled reader may find it helpful to try translating it into the language of religious mysticism. To do so may prove “illuminating,” in much the same way that Heidegger himself held that Being illuminates beings.

**Human Being in a Human “World”**

Human beings have usually supposed that there is something that distinguishes them from other creatures. The only trouble is that they have never been able to agree on what this something is. Some say that what is unique about man is that he was made in the image of God; others, that he has an immortal soul; still others, that he is the only rational animal. Men have variously characterized their species as *sapiens, habilis, faber, symbolicus*. Heidegger’s writings constitute a major contribution to this long list of descriptions of what it is to be a man. To be a man is to have a world.

Heidegger’s notion of world was derived from Husserl’s “environing life world.”8 Naturally, in view of his differences from Husserl, his human world turns out to be by no means identical with Husserl’s life world, but there are two respects in which they agreed. First, they were both convinced that the world that most scientists and many laymen take to be the world is simply one.

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7 See Vol. II, pp. 182–84 and 188.
8 See p. 260.
DASEIN AS THE CLUE TO BEING

If Heidegger’s description of the nature of man may be called, broadly speaking, phenomenological anthropology, then it is important to see that Heidegger did not do anthropology for its own sake. Description of human nature was to lead to an understanding of human being, and an understanding of human being was to lead to an understanding of Being. In a word, phenomenological anthropology was merely a preliminary for fundamental ontology.

The analytic of Dasein . . . is to prepare the way for the problematic of fundamental ontology—the question of the meaning of Being in general. . . .

Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein’s Being, and this implies that Dasein, in its Being, has a relationship towards that Being—a relationship which itself is one of Being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its Being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its Being, this Being is disclosed to it. Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein’s Being. Dasein is ontically distinctive in that it is ontological. . . .

That kind of Being towards which Dasein can comport itself in one way or another, and always does comport itself somehow, we call “existence.” And because we cannot define Dasein’s essence by citing a “what” of the kind that pertains to a subject-matter, and because its essence lies rather in the fact that in each case it has its Being to be, and has it as its own, we have chosen to designate this entity as “Dasein,” a term which is purely an expression of its Being.

Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence—in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, or got itself into them, or grown up in them already. Only the particular Dasein decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting. The question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. . . .

Dasein takes priority over all other entities in several ways. The first priority is an ontical one: Dasein is an entity whose Being has the determinate character of existence. The second priority is an ontological one: Dasein is in itself “ontological,” because existence is thus determinative for it. But with equal primordiality Dasein also possesses—as constitutive for its under-
standing of existence—an understanding of the Being of all entities of a character other than its own. Dasein has therefore a third priority as providing the ontico-ontological condition for the possibility of any ontologies. Thus Dasein has turned out to be, more than any other entity, the one which must first be interrogated ontologically.9

Though a great deal of the terminology is probably opaque, at least at this stage, and though some of the distinctions drawn—for instance, the fundamental distinction between ontological and ontical—will have to be postponed until later,9 the main thrust of the passage is relatively clear. Heidegger is listing these features of Dasein’s mode of being that distinguish it from the mode of being of any other entity and so make Dasein a clue to the meaning of Being.

First and foremost, then, it is a feature of Dasein’s being that, unlike other kinds of being—say, plants or animals or the solar system—it “comports” itself toward the things in its world. Other beings react toward the stimuli they receive, and react automatically according to their nature and the nature of the stimuli. Dasein does not react, but responds in accordance with its perception of itself and of the stimuli. Dasein has attitudes toward its world, and these attitudes affect its response. That Dasein comports itself not only to beings but to Being—that it, and it alone responds to Being—is of course one of the chief reasons why Dasein is a clue to the meaning of Being.

But is not Dasein, too, reacting according to its nature? Is it not simply the case that human beings react in a more flexible, less rigid way than other entities? No, it is not that Dasein has a nature that happens to be more complicated than that of other entities; that would imply only a difference in degree between Dasein and other entities. To be in the mode of Dasein is precisely not to have a nature that endures through time, but to be, at any particular time, the possibility of choosing to be something different at some future time. This is the second feature of Dasein that is a clue to an understanding of Being: Dasein is in the mode of choosing, of facing possibilities, and it cannot escape having its being in this mode of being. To neglect to choose, to refuse to choose, to fear to choose, are all ways of choosing.

Thirdly, one of the ways in which Dasein comports itself toward its world is to “do” science—that is, to try to understand its world. And of course it is not merely the entities that are in its world alongside it that Dasein seeks to understand; it also seeks to understand Being. We cannot “interrogate” a plant about its attitude toward the soil in which it grows; it merely reacts to the soil in accordance with its nature and the soil’s nature. But we can interrogate Dasein about Being. Because Dasein is interrogating itself about Being, Being will have something to say to us; it will respond to our interrogation, not merely react to it. It will enter into “dialog” with us.

From this summary sketch, let us now turn to a more detailed examination.

9 See pp. 317-20.
Dasein, bearing in mind always that in Heidegger's view this study of the mode of being which is characteristically human has been undertaken, not for its own sake, but to remind us of Being.

EXISTENCE

Though for the purposes of analysis it is necessary to take up the characteristics of Dasein separately, they are features, or aspects, of a single unitary mode of being, and the correct way, according to Heidegger, to characterize this mode of being is to say that Dasein, and only Dasein, exists. Other beings "are," but do not exist.

Dasein exists. Furthermore, Dasein is an entity which in each case I myself am. Mineness belongs to any existent Dasein, and belongs to it as the condition which makes authenticity and inauthenticity possible. . . .

But these are both ways in which Dasein's Being takes on a definite character, and they must be seen and understood a priori as grounded upon that state of Being which we have called "Being-in-the-world." . . .

The compound expression "Being-in-the-world" indicates in the very way we have coined it, that it stands for a unitary phenomenon. This primary datum must be seen as a whole. But while Being-in-the-world cannot be broken up into contents which may be pieced together, this does not prevent it from having several constitutive items in its structure. m

BEING-IN

What is meant by "Being in"? Our proximal reaction is to round out this expression to "Being-in 'in the world,'" and we are inclined to understand this Being-in as "Being in something." This latter term designates the kind of Being which an entity has when it is "in" another one, as the water is "in" the glass, or the garment is "in" the cupboard. By this "in" we mean the relationship of Being which two entities extended "in" space have to each other with regard to their location in that space. Both water and glass, garment and cupboard, are "in" space and "at" a location, and both in the same way. . . .

All entities whose Being "in" one another can thus be described have the same kind of Being—that of Being-present-at-hand—as Things occurring "within" the world. Being-present-at-hand "in" something which is likewise present-at-hand, and Being-present-at-hand-along-with in the sense of a definite location-relationship with something else which has the same kind of Being, are ontological characteristics which we call "categorial": they are of such a sort as to belong to entities whose kind of Being is not of the character of Dasein.

Being-in, on the other hand, is a state of Dasein's Being; it is an existentiale. So one cannot think of it as the Being-present-at-hand of some corporeal Thing (such as a human body) "in" an entity which is present-at-hand. . . . "Being alongside" the world in the sense of being absorbed in the world
(a sense which calls for still closer interpretation) is an existentiale founded upon Being-in. . . . This "Being-alongside" must be examined still more closely. We shall again choose the method of contrasting it with a relationship of Being which is essentially different ontologically—viz. categorical—but which we express by the same linguistic means. . . .

As an existentiale, "Being alongside" the world never means anything like the Being-present-at-hand-together of Things that occur. There is no such thing as the "side-by-sideness" of an entity called "Dasein" with another entity called "world." Of course when two things are present-at-hand together alongside one another, we are accustomed to express this occasionally by something like "The table stands 'by' the door" or "The chair 'touches' the wall." Taken strictly, "touching" is never what we are talking about in such cases. . . . If the chair could touch the wall, this would presuppose that the wall is the sort of thing "for" which a chair would be encounterable. An entity present-at-hand within the world can be touched by another entity only if by its very nature the latter entity has Being-in as its own kind of Being—only if, with its Being-there, something like the world is already revealed to it, so that from out of that world another entity can manifest itself in touching, and thus become accessible to its Being-present-at-hand.\(^a\)

Heidegger's point is that people are usually too preoccupied with other matters to look at their experience carefully, but when they do look they can see that there is a radical difference between the way human beings are in our world and the way in which water is in a glass or a shoe is in a shoe box. A man is alongside his desk in a different way from the way in which the desk is alongside him; one touches a sore tooth, or a lover's hand, in ways that, though they certainly differ among themselves, have something in common that distinguishes them from the way in which a shoe touches the box in which it lies or the desk touches the floor.

Surely we can agree that there is a difference, but what exactly is it? Heidegger proceeded to spell it out by introducing the concepts of readiness-to-hand, concern, living-ahead, and understanding. Human beings are in the world in the mode of finding the things in it ready-to-hand, in being concerned about them and for them, in facing a future that consists of alternatives and possibilities, and in seeking to understand the world in which they find themselves. We will deal in turn with these characteristics of existence.

**READINESS-TO-HAND**

"Readiness-to-hand" is the mode of being that objects have within a human world, and it is to be contrasted with "present-at-hand," which is the mode of being that Cartesian dualism and its various modern descendants attribute to the objects of our experience. On the latter view, the physical world consists in a vast number of "things." My body, to which my mind is somehow mysteriously attached, and your body, to which your mind is similarly attached, are items in this universe of things. These things all interact with each other and
our bodies in complex ways which it is the business of science to study, by means of dissection, spectrometry, Skinner boxes, and the like.

This is what the theory tells us the things we encounter in our world are, and the theory is so powerful, so pervasive, and so seductive that we usually fail to recognize that what we really experience are not things that are present-at-hand but things that are ready-to-hand—things that are, as it were, for us or against us—things of which we do, or might, make some use. When we look at a hammer we see a possible driver-of-nails, or a possible hitter-on-the-head of some enemy or rival. When we look at a chair, we see something that is “inviting” (that opens its arms to us, cosily and protectingly) or something that repulses us by its hardness, rigidity, and stiffness. That things are experienced in this way as ready-to-hand, not as present-to-hand, is, then, a prime feature of existence, that is, of Dasein’s human mode of being.

The Being of those entities which we encounter as closest to us can be exhibited phenomenologically if we take as our clue our everyday Being-in-the-world, which we also call our “dealings” in the world and with entities within-the-world. Such dealings have already dispersed themselves into manifold ways of concern. The kind of dealing which is closest to us is as we have shown, not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use; and this has its own kind of “knowledge.”

We shall call those entities which we encounter in concern “equipment.” In our dealings we come across equipment for writing, sewing, working, transportation, measurement. The kind of Being which equipment possesses must be exhibited. The clue for doing this lies in our first defining what makes an item of equipment—namely, its equipmentality.

Equipment is essentially “something in-order-to.” A totality of equipment is constituted by various ways of the “in-order-to,” such as serviceability, conduciveness, usability, manipulability.

In the “in-order-to” as a structure there lies an assignment or reference of something to something. Equipment—in accordance with its equipmentality—always is in terms of its belonging to other equipment: ink-stand, pen, ink, paper, blotting pad, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. These “Things” never show themselves proximally as they are for themselves, so as to add up to a sum of realia and fill up a room. What we encounter as closest to us (though not as something taken as a theme) is the room; and we encounter it not as something “between four walls” in a geometrical spatial sense, but as equipment for residing. Out of this the “arrangement” emerges, and it is in this that any “individual” item of equipment shows itself. Before it does so, a totality of equipment has already been discovered.

The peculiarity of what is proximally ready-to-hand is that, in its readiness-to-hand, it must, as it were, withdraw in order to be ready-to-hand quite authentically. That with which our everyday dealings proximally dwell is not the tools themselves. On the contrary, that with which we concern ourselves primarily is the work—that which is to be produced at the time; and this is accordingly ready-to-hand too. The work bears with it that referential totality within which the equipment is encountered.
The work to be produced, as the “towards-which” of such things as the hammer, the plane, and the needle, likewise has the kind of Being that belongs to equipment. The shoe which is to be produced is for wearing (footgear); the clock is manufactured for telling the time. . . .

But the work to be produced is not merely usable for something. The production itself is a using of something for something. In the work there is also a reference or assignment to “materials”: the work is dependent on leather, thread, needles, and the like. Leather, moreover, is produced from hides. These are taken from animals, which someone else has raised. . . . Hammer, tongs, and needle, refer in themselves to steel, iron, metal, mineral, wood, in that they consist of these. In equipment that is used, “Nature” is discovered along with it by that use—the “Nature” we find in natural products.

Here, however, “Nature” is not to be understood as that which is just present-at-hand, nor as the power of Nature. The wood is a forest of timber, the mountain a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind “in the sails.” As the “environment” is discovered, the “Nature” thus discovered is encountered too. If its kind of Being as ready-to-hand is disregarded, this “Nature” itself can be discovered and defined simply in its pure presence-at-hand. But when this happens, the Nature which “stirs and strives,” which assails us and enthralls us as landscape, remains hidden. The botanist’s plants are not the flowers of the hedgerow; the “source” which the geographer establishes for a river is not the “springhead in the dale.”

Thus it is not merely tools and other man-made things that we experience in the mode of readiness-to-hand; we also experience so-called “inanimate” nature in the same way. We perceive deserts as sandy wastes that can be made to bloom, mountains as challenges, rivers as fordable, and so on. One of the characteristic aspects of the human mode of being, then, is to be within a world of things to which we respond because we perceive them as ready-to-hand, that is, as potentialities for us in various ways.

CONCERN

One fundamental feature, or aspect, of existence, then, is to experience things as ready-to-hand, instead of merely present-at-hand. The reason that this is a fundamental characteristic of existence is that Dasein does not passively react to its world but does something to, with, or about that world. The multiplicity of Dasein’s ways of doing—which amount to a multiplicity of ways of Being-in—are all characterized by concern: they are modes, or ways, of being concerned. But what is concern?

This term has been chosen not because Dasein happens to be proximally and to a large extent “practical” and economic, but because the Being of Dasein itself is to be made visible as care. This expression . . . has nothing to do with “tribulation,” “melancholy,” or the “cares of life,” though ontically one can come across these in every Dasein. These—like their opposites,