

Charles University
And
Catholic University of Louvain

Faculty of Arts
and
Faculty of Philosophy, Arts and Letters

ÚFAR

and

SSH

Mgr. Daniil Koloskov

Dissertation

Bytování bez základu: praxe bytí-ve-světě

Living Without a Ground: A Praxis of Being-in-the-World

Dissertation Supervisor: Mgr. Ondřej Švec, Ph.D.

Dissertation Supervisor: Prof. Sylvain Camilleri, Ph.D.

Year of submission: 2023

I hereby declare that I have written this dissertation independently, using only the mentioned and duly cited sources and literature, and that the work has not been used in another university study programme or to obtain the same or another academic title.

In Prague 22.04.2023

Mgr. Daniil Koloskov, v.r.

Abstrakt

Základním cílem disertační práce je formulovat pragmatickou fenomenologii, která by se opírala o pojem praxe při řešení tradičního cíle existenciální fenomenologie, který se spočívá ve snaze dospět k „porozumění člověka a světa z žádného jiného výchozího bodu, než jejich ‘fakticity.’“ (Merleau-Ponty 2002). Disertační práce interpretuje odhalování světa jako formu praxe na základě Heideggerovského slovníku; získání přístupu ke světu je aktem, který nám zjevuje jaké možnosti bytí může svět nabídnout pobytu, který je interpretován jako nic jiného než extatický pokus se zakořenit ve světě. Praxe odhalování je motivovaná potřebou maximalizovat schopnost-být pobytu a se neustále snaží zvyšovat „odhalovací potenciál“ konkrétních praktik. Tento přístup zdůrazňuje, že vzájemnost vztahů mezi pobyttem a světem hraje zásadní metodologickou roli: pobyt nevysvětluje, jaké možnosti bytí mu svět může nabídnout, a svět nevysvětluje, jaké možnosti bytí pobyt je schopny odhalit. V průběhu práce ukážeme, jak systematický důraz na vzájemnost vztahu mezi pobyttem a světem nahrazuje nutnost odkazovat na „základy“ tradiční filosofie, tj. fundamentálních vysvětlujících prvků, které nejsou už dal vysvětlitelné; ukážeme také, jak tento důraz umožňuje líp uchopit agilní a fluidní povahu lidské fakticity.

Abstract

The basic goal of the dissertation is to formulate a *pragmatic phenomenology*, which would rely on the notion of praxis while dealing with the traditional for existential phenomenology goal of arriving at “an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their ‘facticity.’” (Merleau-Ponty 2002). The dissertation interprets *disclosure* of the world as a form of praxis based on Heideggerian vocabulary; gaining access to the world is an *act* that reveals what possibilities of being can the world offer to *Dasein*, which is understood as nothing but an ecstatic attempt to anchor in the world. The praxis of disclosure is guided by the need to maximize *Dasein*’s ability-to-be and a constant attempt to increase the ‘disclosing potential’ of particular practices. This starting point ascribes a crucial methodological role to the mutuality between *Dasein* and the world: *Dasein* does not explain what possibilities of being the world can offer to it and the world cannot explain what possibilities of being *Dasein* would be *able* to reveal. We will demonstrate how a systematic emphasis on mutuality leads us towards dispensing with ‘grounds’ of traditional philosophy, i.e., fundamental explainers that are not explained by anything further; we will also show how this emphasis makes it possible to grasp better the agile and fluid nature of human facticity.

Résumé

L'objectif fondamental de cette thèse est de formuler une phénoménologie pragmatique, qui s'appuierait sur la notion de praxis tout en traitant de l'objectif traditionnel de la phénoménologie existentielle visant à "comprendre l'homme et le monde autrement qu'à partir de leur 'facticité'" (Merleau-Ponty 1945). La dissertation interprète la révélation du monde comme une forme de praxis basée sur le vocabulaire heideggérien. Accéder au monde est un acte qui révèle les possibilités d'être que le monde peut offrir au Dasein, qui n'est rien d'autre qu'une tentative extatique de s'enraciner dans le monde. La praxis de la révélation est guidée par la nécessité de maximiser la capacité d'être du Dasein et par une tentative constante d'accroître le "potentiel de révélation" de pratiques particulières. Ce point de départ accorde un rôle méthodologique crucial à la mutualité entre le Dasein et le monde: le Dasein n'explique pas les possibilités d'être que le monde peut lui offrir et le monde ne peut pas expliquer les possibilités d'être que le Dasein serait capable de révéler. Nous montrerons comment l'accent mis systématiquement sur la mutualité nous conduit à nous passer des "motifs" de la philosophie traditionnelle, c'est-à-dire des explicateurs fondamentaux qui ne sont expliqués par rien d'autre ; nous montrerons également comment cet accent permet de mieux saisir la nature agile et fluide de la facticité humaine.

Klíčová slova

Fenomenologie; pragmatismus; primát praxe; smysl; radikální reflexe; Heidegger; Merleau-Ponty; odhalení, ústřední srozumitelnost, formy života

Key words

Phenomenology; pragmatism; primacy of practice; meaning; radical reflection; Heidegger; Merleau-Ponty; disclosure; average intelligibility; forms of life

Content:

Introduction: The Primacy of Practice as a “Radical Reflection.”	6
1. Ontological Gap in the Neo-Pragmatism.....	13
I. Brandom’s Inferentialism and Naturalistic Complementation	19
II. Rorty: Instruments and Innovations	34
III. Habermas’s Transcendental Pragmatism	42
2. Pragmatism of Existential Ontology.....	54
I. Ontological Perspective of Phenomenology vs. the Myth of the Given; Emulation vs. Reconstruction ..	57
II. Pragmatic Elements in Heidegger.....	68
III. Phenomenology and the Primacy of Practice Thesis (I): Dreyfus’s Pragmatism.....	73
3. Phenomenology and the Primacy of Practice Thesis (II): Existential-Phenomenological Pragmatism.....	80
I. Disclosing a <i>Form of Life</i>	81
II. Cover-up-ness and Disclosure.....	91
a. Heidegger’s Early Analysis of Disclosure/Foreclosure	92
b. Heidegger’s Later Analysis of Disclosure/Foreclosure	101
c. Pragmatic Conception of Foreclosure	109
4. Cognitive Disclosure and the Meaning of Truth.....	116
I. Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Practices.....	118
II. Cognition as Being-in-the-World: A Genealogy of the ‘Formal Pragmatic Presupposition.’	133
III. Productivity of Cognition	144
5. <i>Cultural Lichtung</i>	156
I. Instruments and Grounds.....	159
II. Integrative Practices	175
Conclusion.....	195
Bibliography.....	198

Introduction: The Primacy of Practice as a “Radical Reflection.”

When someone utters the words of practice and its putative primacy claiming that *intelligibility* and *meaningfulness* of human life is, first and foremost, a practical matter, a more seasoned listener typically takes a tactical break and withholds any endorsement until a further explanation is provided. For the primacy of practice could mean all sorts of things. It could mean a broad explanatory emphasis on the *use* of concepts as opposed to their representation content.¹ It could amount to an investigation of practices in a sense of “temporally evolving, open-ended set of doings and sayings linked by practical understandings, rules, teleoaffective structures, and general understandings”² or to an interpretation of theory as just a “continuation of practice by other means” that is still based on various human interests and goals;³ it could mean an investigation of *habitus* in a sense of incorporation of objective structures for the sake of maximization of agent’s gains;⁴ or, it could as well mean an investigation of our evolutionary embeddedness into the environment.⁵ To add some complexity to this situation, there are nearly as many attempts to make sense of this multiplicity and identify a common pattern, attempts that usually have the unlucky side-effect of including into the list of ‘pragmatic’ authors those who have never described themselves as pragmatists of any sort and excluding those who, on the contrary, are explicit about their pragmatic commitments.

The starting point of this work – and, in many ways, one of its major goals – is such an attempt, which, as we fully acknowledge, takes its place alongside many other equally possible interpretations and which suffers from the very same side effect. We will interpret the primacy of practice thesis as an attempt at what Merleau-Ponty calls a “radical reflection,” that is, an attempt on reflection that ‘attempts to understand itself⁶ by accounting for its own situated, factual origin. What radicalizes the reflection upon the human condition, claims Merleau-Ponty, is that it takes into that it itself is a part of this very condition. In this sense, we could preliminary describe the primacy of practice as an attempt to investigate how explanation of the world, i.e., something like ‘a theoretical account,’ turns out to be a modality of *praxis*, a particular activity or knowing-how that we, concrete individuals who live in the world, perform in order to know-that something is the case.

To understand this point and the nature of its alleged grip on the general idea of the primacy of practice, we could turn to the favourite critical target of authors who ascribe themselves to such a thesis

¹ See, for example, Brandom’s introduction to his *Articulating Reasons. An Introduction to Inferentialism* or, more generally, Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*

² Schatzki, *The Site of the Social*, p. 87

³ Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and others*, p. 31

⁴ See, for example, Bourdieu’s *Logic of Practice*

⁵ See, for example, Dewey, *Logic of enquiry* or, more specifically, his “The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy.”

⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 251

– the idea of ‘the view from nowhere’ or ‘god’s like point of view,’ as Putnam puts it. This idea can be roughly defined as a conviction according to which something like ‘objective’ or ‘mind independent’ reality, ‘reality in itself’ is both a desirable and reachable goal of human comportments. “On this perspective,” describes Putnam, “the world consists of some fixed totality of mind-independent objects. There is exactly one true and complete description of ‘the way the world is.’”⁷ According to the pragmatist’s guidelines, this position is obviously inconsistent. There can be no God’s point of view and no all-encompassing perspective that would include all the others; “we can’t get outside our skins,”⁸ claims Davidson in order to check how well the ‘real’ reality corresponds to our descriptions of this reality. So, Putnam continues: “there are only the various points of view of *actual persons* reflecting various interests and purposes that their descriptions and theories subservise.”⁹

The reason why the idea of a view from nowhere draws such a unanimous interest from pragmatic authors is not just its alleged inconsistency. Rather, pragmatism from the very beginning defines itself as an attempt to deduce all the consequences from the impossibility of breaching into ‘real reality;’ it is an attempt to understand the significance of the impossibility of God’s point of view, which eventually always reveals itself as ‘just another standpoint.’ If naïve realism systematically overlooks the constitutive significance of the fact that any kind of speculation about ‘what really is’ must be done by these ‘actual persons’ and, thus, leaves a gap between the *explanation of reality* and *what does the explanation*, pragmatism starts as an attempt to make sense of the latter – the praxis of explanation – and a collateral attempt to explain how this activity can reach something like reality, thus, accounting for what Bernstein broadly describes as “realistic intuitions.”¹⁰ For pragmatism, the investigation of practical life – whatever we mean by this term – *is a means of getting to terms with the unavoidable nature of our facticity*. Hence, the ‘primacy’ part of the primacy of practice claim: it is not just an investigation of what practice is. It is an investigation of how praxis (as something we *do*) is always there before we think about what we do: as pragmatists we investigate practice in its effective status of a condition of any kind of theory.

What is promised here is, ultimately, a twofold prospect of appreciating this constitutive status of the human situation that is conceived in practical terms of ‘living a life’ and reconceptualizing our activities and goals as organic parts of such a life. The situatedness and embeddedness of our existence is, thus, no longer seen as an object of explanation and is elevated instead to the status of its subject, i.e., to what *performs* the explanation; we investigate what, we, actual individuals of flesh and blood, must

⁷ Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, p. 49

⁸ Davidson, “Coherence Theory,” p. 312.

⁹ Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*, p. 50, emphasis mine

¹⁰ Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn*, p. 123

do so any kind of objectivity would be present for us. The condition of our familiarity with the world is no longer located on the level of analysing the structures of our mind, brains, receptive organs but on the level of the *actual praxis* done by *actual persons*. A radical reflection on human situation finds nothing like a *objective ground* or any *solid foundation* that one-sidedly props it up (which is something that distinguishes it from the philosophical tradition); it only finds the shaky and dispersed efforts the performance of which is entirely entrusted to those concrete, factual individuals. Conceived this way, we could say – borrowing an expression from Richir, which would be crucial for the formulation of goals of this particular work – that the primacy of practice thesis is from the very beginning inspired by the task of demonstrating how any kind of investigation is “intrinsicly carried by facticity”¹¹ and explicating the consequences of such a fact. Of course what exactly is to be considered as constitutive about our facticity has always been a matter of a debate – it could be economic interests, biological adaptation, skilful coping or something else; the important thing, however, is this basic intention of going back to what is fundamental about the engaged, active character of our existence.

The attempt to grasp the ideological and motivational unity of pragmatic movement based on this typically phenomenological formulation is, of course, questionable in itself. It is the existential wing of the phenomenological tradition represented by such authors as Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Patočka, Todes and others¹² – not pragmatists – that defines the goal of arriving “at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their ‘facticity.’”¹³ Extending this goal to the pragmatic tradition, in this sense, seems far-stretched (although the systematic nature of the criticism of this ‘view from nowhere’ does give some credibility to this story.) An obvious objection would be to say that making such a move imposes rather than reveals the unity of pragmatism and inevitably overlooks what distinction among particular pragmatic approaches; here, we enforce phenomenological problematics into the primacy of practice and mistreat the latter as the problem of the former. Worse yet, even if these moves succeed in revealing some similarity in motivations between two traditions, it would do so only at the cost of serious diluting of the basic concepts that it relies on – take, for example, our abstract-to-the-limit usage of the term *praxis* – so these concepts would no longer do any substantial explanatory work.

It might well be so. More than this, we should be aware that this train goes both ways. Namely, by demonstrating that the ‘primacy of practice’ is a claim with genuinely phenomenological motivation, we, at the same time, put this claim at the very centre of phenomenological interests; enforcing the

¹¹ Richir, *Méditations phénoménologiques*, p. 388., emphasis mine

¹² We are, of course, aware that grouping those authors under such an aegis might appear problematic; we will explicate the meaning of the term existential phenomenology in chapter 2

¹³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. vii

phenomenological motivation to pragmatism, we also enforce the problem of praxis to phenomenology. The traditional phenomenological task of accounting for one's own facticity by turning to the investigation of the pre-reflective being of a concrete individual now includes the methodological conviction that the being of this individual *must* somehow be practical. The investigation of being of the factual individual must mean an investigation of a kind of doing that we *are*, a certain *praxis of being-in-the-world*. Just like in the previous case, there is some ground to believe that the primacy of practice indeed occupies a central place in a phenomenological project. We could naturally start with Heidegger whose analysis of tools and our practical access to everyday world where things appear first and foremost that has inspired generations of pragmatic writers.¹⁴ We could think of Merleau-Ponty and his linkage between intelligibility of one's own body and particular goals and project that we realize in the world.¹⁵ Or we could mention Patočka who explicitly emphasizes that even what he describes as movement of truth, i.e., our ability to disclose and re-disclose the world, thus, avoiding the unproblematic immersion in one's own situation, is still "a mode of praxis."¹⁶ We could also think about a great number of studies in the secondary literature that seek to explicate this link between phenomenology and pragmatism. But it is also true that the figure of the *primacy* of practice has not been systematically claimed by phenomenologists; the discussion of praxis in phenomenology has mostly been subordinated to other goals. So, reading the primacy of practice into phenomenology does to the latter the same amount of violence as reading the attempt to account for one's own facticity into pragmatism; it could be done only the cost of decanting some insights and overlooking others.

In the dry residue, what do we attain by moving from the primacy of practice to phenomenology and back? First, we have two violent interpretative moves, each of which is likely to encounter criticism. Second, we should not forget that this movement is only possible under the policy of deliberate ambiguity: we can attribute to pragmatism the attempt to account for the facticity of human existence – only at the cost of diluting what facticity means; we can attribute the primacy of practice thesis to phenomenology – only by remaining intentionally vague when it comes to the definition of what praxis is. So, by moving from one place to another we have hardly attained anything specific; on the contrary, we have suffered a loss decreasing the thoroughness of our explanatory tools. But it wouldn't be completely fair to say that it was useless. For we have also managed to situate the primacy of practice thesis and phenomenology in the same conceptual space and, therefore, to open up a perspective of clarifying or, rather, *defining our deliberately ambiguous concepts anew* in this conceptual space; we have to wait and see whether this prospect would leave us in a better position both

¹⁴ See, for example, §15 of Heidegger's *Being and Time*

¹⁵ See, for example, p. 115 of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*

¹⁶ Patočka „The Natural World Remediated Thirty-Three Years Later,” p. 175

with regard to the task of accounting for the facticity of human existence and explaining the meaning of praxis. We will place at the centre of this mutual movement the phenomenological investigation of what Wittgenstein has described as *a form of life*: by trying to understand what a practice is and how its specific intelligibility occurs and develops, we will seek to conceptualize the initial human situation accounting for the intelligibility and meaningful of human life, which also cover a situation in which this very investigation of praxis is played out. In this sense, we could formulate the basic goal of the present work as an attempt to *formulate the primacy of practice thesis in phenomenological terms*, thus, arriving at *phenomenological pragmatism*, *pragmatic phenomenology* or, if you'd like, *a phenomenology of praxis*¹⁷; we will realize that, if conceived from a certain angle, phenomenology becomes a radicalized pragmatism and pragmatism itself calls for phenomenology.

Reaching this goal has a five-chapter sequence, each including several sub-sections. In the first one, we will provide a background for our investigation by discussing the family of neo-pragmatic approaches and outline the distinctive feature that differentiates neo-pragmatism from existential phenomenology. Namely, we will see how deep suspicion towards ontological problematics motivates neo-pragmatists to approach the problem of praxis in epistemic terms of linguistic praxis. Such a suspicion is typical for the most modern pragmatists with the exception of naturalistically oriented authors such as Peregrin and Rouse (who nonetheless, as we will argue, constitute an exception that proves the rule.) This very aspect – in a different but homological way – substantially limits the explanatory scope of neo-pragmatic approaches and results in a number of problems. Taking as our examples the works the most prominent contemporary pragmatists (Brandom (I.i), Rorty (I.ii) and Habermas (I.iii)), we will see how the lack of ontological questioning results in under-explaining the *source* of normativity in Brandom's account, inflation of truth and relativistic implications in Rorty's work or inability to deal with non-cognitive practices in Habermas.

In the second chapter, we will proceed to existential phenomenology that investigates praxis in ontological terms. We will start with outlining the basic ontological tenets of existential phenomenology (based on Merleau-Ponty's reflections on the phenomenological method) that stresses the *mutual relation* between being of the world and being of the subject and, thus, abandons the transcendental model of argumentation with its rigid distinction *explanans* and *explanandum*. We will both discuss how such a methodological switch helps phenomenology to avoid the objections typically raised by neo-pragmatic authors and how the existential approach proves to be a more flexible approach than the latter. (2.i) Based on this discussion, we will further analyse what might be considered as

¹⁷ For similar attempt to build the specifically pragmatic phenomenology see Švec's "The Primacy of Practice and Pervasiveness of Discourse," also Švec forthcoming

pragmatic elements of Heidegger's early philosophy (making a special emphasis on his conceptual tools that we will rely on in the course of this work) (2.ii) and strong and weak aspects of the current pragmatic interpretations of Heidegger's work proposed most notably by Dreyfus and other philosophers such as Okrent, Wrathall, Haugeland and others (2.iii). While Dreyfus offers us a number of crucial insights concerning the functions and importance of background practices and the notion of *Das Man* developing Heidegger's work in a pragmatic direction, we will also argue that Dreyfus misses the specificity of existential argumentation and sticks to a more traditional transcendental argumentation, which rigidifies his account of background practices into a one-sided "source of intelligibility"¹⁸ resulting in hypostatization of practices and complicating the explanation of their development and occurrence.

The third chapter occupies a central place in this work. In it, we will offer an alternative account of meaningfulness based on Heideggerian vocabulary (3.i). Instead of following Dreyfus and arguing that the meaningfulness of 'possibilities' that human understanding discloses depends upon conformist socialization that introduces us to certain contingent practices, we will argue that practices themselves are a result of Dasein's dynamic settling into the world, a settling that has no other aim but to maximize Dasein's ability-to-be and this by maximizing the available to it possibilities. Taking as our model example games, we will demonstrate how the meaningfulness of practice follows from the interactivity of its possibilities that lead to the disclosure of further, context-dependent possibilities. In the second section (3.ii), we will also see that disclosing interactive possibilities (and, thus, maximizing our ability-to-be) goes hand in hand with the foreclosure of non-interactive ones. By polemizing with both early and later Heidegger, we will arrive at a pragmatic notion of foreclosure that presupposes constant dynamics between opening up and closing off of practical fields; constant disclosure and foreclosure of situations is a skill in which every socialized individual is expected to be proficient.

In the fourth chapter, we will seek to demonstrate how this line of thinking remains capable of accounting for realistic intuitions and preserves the possibility of reaching something like validity. This would among other things help us to avoid charges of performative self-contradiction, a powerful critical tool that Habermas has used in order to criticize his opponents. We will do so first by analysing a specific characteristic trait of cognitive phenomenality, which consists of its orientation on universal validity and its tendency to take contradictory evidence into account, which is something that is, as we will argue, untypical for our everyday understanding and for such practices as, for example, games, art and humour (4.i). Furthermore, based on Heidegger's analysis of philosophical tradition and Plato's

¹⁸ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, p. 154

Mythos of the Cave in particular, we will offer a genealogical analysis of this trait of cognitive understanding; we will argue that cognitive understanding occurs in the context of our attempt to subordinate human understanding to an external criterion (4.ii). Then, we will also demonstrate how this subordination also goes hand in hand with a particular way of maximizing our ability-to-be, thus, demonstrating how these results are consistent with the conclusions we have drawn in chapter 3 (4.iii).

Finally, in the last chapter, we will return to the question of inter-practical interaction. While, the methodological strategy that we rely on in previous chapters consists of emphasizing how meaningfulness is dependent upon its generation in various incommensurable fields and the intra-contextual interactivity of their possibilities, here we would investigate how various practices belong together and interact with one another. First, we will discuss instrumental practices, which are practices that are pursued not for the sake of themselves and depend on the meaningfulness of other practices. In the course of our discussion, we will argue that phenomenological pragmatism should be seen as a counter-instrumental pragmatism, that is, a pragmatism that sees instrumental practices as a special case of practical interaction while stressing at the same time how Dasein's ecstatic being presupposes the search for practices that are pursued for the sake of themselves (5.i). In the second section (5.ii), we will investigate the integrative practices that interact with many further practices and compress them into what we will call cultural *Lichtung*, a cross-overlapping practical space where particular practices complement one another and presuppose certain convertibility of possibilities among them. The figure of *Lichtung* or practical clearance will help us to investigate the question of how and why a range of diverse cultural practices *hang together* becoming unified by the same cultural style into the homological space despite their incommensurability.

I. Ontological Gap in the Neo-Pragmatism

The task of developing something like phenomenological pragmatism naturally faces us with the preparatory task of answering why we need something like an alternative kind of pragmatism in the first place, a task that will take the form of the critical survey of other brands of pragmatism that we will offer in this chapter. More specifically, by gathering a number of modern pragmatic approaches under the term neo-pragmatism, we will first outline the general insufficiency that is typical for the family of neo-pragmatic approaches and then demonstrate how this general insufficiency is manifested in the context of three most viable pragmatic alternatives – namely, in Brandom’s inferentialism (I.i), Rorty’s pragmatism (I.ii) and Habermas’s transcendental pragmatism (I.iii)

To start with, we should first clarify what do we mean by the term ‘neo-pragmatism’ and do so in a more analytic manner. A rather loose category, neo-pragmatism might be taken as including philosophers as different as Davidson, McDowell, Blackburn, Habermas, Rorty, Ramberg, Brandom and others. Although preliminarily, we could rely on two distinguishing features that bring the above-mentioned authors together. The first feature could be described as a general rejection of representationalism, a methodological conviction according to which the content, characteristics and features of ‘conscious experience’ are something that is attributable to the world itself. According to this approach, the content of experience eventually explains acts that display it; as McDowell puts it, “representationalism ... holds that concepts of the representational directedness of language towards the extra-linguistic world can confer a self-standing intelligibility on the idea of, e.g., the content of an assertion, in advance of our needing to advert to inferential relations between such contents.”¹⁹ In opposition to this, pragmatism argues that ‘conceptual content’ can only be explained as in terms of *doing*; objecting to representationalists, pragmatist claims that in order to deploy ‘empirical-descriptive vocabulary... we must *do* something,’²⁰ something that itself would no longer be measurable in empirical-descriptive terms. In this sense, knowing-how has “a certain kind of explanatory priority over knowing *that*.”²¹ Speaking on the most general level (and consciously ignoring the differences that would occur among various pragmatist when it comes to the precise definition of what exactly does ‘doing’ or ‘practice’ mean), we could again refer to the “*Primacy of Practice Thesis*” according to which intelligibility as such should be approached as a problem of praxis.

The second crucial feature that explains the ‘neo-’ prefix of pragmatism is generally explained in terms of the ‘linguistic turn’ and a whole range of implications that it has brought with itself, some of

¹⁹ McDowell, “Brandom on Representation and Inference,” p. 157

²⁰ Brandom, *Perspectives on Pragmatism*, p. 106

²¹ Brandom, *Perspectives on Pragmatism*, p. 65

which have eluded classical pragmatism. More specifically, neo-pragmatists tend to establish a clear “demarcation”²² line between animalistic (or “*sentient*”) and human (or “*sapient*”) way of relating to the world and this by emphasizing a *particular kind of doing* – our linguistic behaviour. What kind of behaviour is it? According to one version of this story, linguistic creatures are capable of “using concepts in judgment and intentional action, being able explicitly to take things to be thus-and-so, . . . entertain[ing] and evalua[ting] propositions, formula[ting] rules and principles.”²³ At the core of this capacity lies “distinguishing the potential beliefs that are incompatible with a given belief, and those that are its inferential consequences.”²⁴ The usage of concepts, claims Brandom, presupposes that “assertions” that we raise are able “both to serve as a reason and potentially stand in need of reasons.”²⁵ Another way of describing this linguistic capability (something that makes us worthy of the title “rational animals”²⁶) is to say that it is impossible to attain something like “propositional attitudes,” to hold beliefs without holding “belief about some belief,”²⁷ i.e., without placing a concrete belief in a non-causal relation of consistency/inconsistency²⁸ with “a world of further beliefs,” which would “give it content and identity.”²⁹ One way or another, we can generalize this crucial for neo-pragmatism emphasis on linguistic praxis by saying (again, in an abstract and preliminary way) that the neo-pragmatic approach to the investigation of the problem of meaning and ‘intelligibility of human life’ is centred around the linguistic and rational practice of *giving and asking for reasons*.

Now, if we talk about the relations between existential phenomenology and neo-pragmatism defined this broadly, we wouldn’t come short of similarities and overlapping interests of all sorts. Whether we are talking about openness to the world (think of McDowell’s rhetoric of openness and a more integral phenomenological emphasis on disclosure (*Erschlossenheit*)), critique of representationalism (which could be easily found in both Heidegger and Sellars) or the mentioned criticism of the view from nowhere, emphasis on *doing* as having primacy over observing (e.g., Heidegger’s available/occurrent distinction and Brandom’s analysis of fundamental pragmatism), it would be easy to find similar-headed discussion in both traditions. Not only there are plenty of studies in secondary literature dedicated to the investigation of similarities between existential phenomenology

²² Brandom, *Perspectives on Pragmatism*, p. 28

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 10

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 66

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 30

²⁶ See Davidson’s “Rational Animal”

²⁷ Davidson, “Rational Animal,” p. 318

²⁸ See, for example, Davidson, “Radical Interpretation,” p. 324

²⁹ Davidson, “Rational animals,” p. 321

and neo-pragmatism; a number of prominent pragmatists themselves (most notably Rorty and Brandom) have noticed and elaborated on such proximity.³⁰

When it comes to dissimilarities and distinguishing features, there is no lack of studies either. Here we could think of Romano's discussion of the different understanding of 'givenness' in two traditions,³¹ Dreyfus's polemics with McDowell regarding the role pre-rational skills and habits play in sustaining intelligibility of our action,³² Sachs's discussion of the notion of presuppositionless knowledge and its role in our inferential practices.³³ While not arguing with those different clusters of differences, we will start with postulating another fulcrum of differentiation that would help us to grasp a systematic difference between neo-pragmatic and phenomenological traditions, namely, their difference regarding the term ontology and the role it plays in corresponding approaches. If existential phenomenology starts with unequivocally strong "ontology is possible only as phenomenology"³⁴ (so far, we shall restrain from discussing what phenomenology considers as ontology and why the ontological level of analysis remains indispensable for it), neo-pragmatism remains suspicious of this term.

This suspicion has a clear source and motivation. For pragmatic writers, ontological rhetoric from the very beginning is placed in close proximity with the "idea that there is nonlinguistic, nonconceptual, noninferential awareness which can either serve as evidence for or itself constitutes empirical knowledge,"³⁵ an episode of what Sellars has famously described as "the Myth of the Given," a rejection of which remains a starting point of neo-pragmatism. A similar line of critique we find in Quine who criticizes "the Myth of the Museum" according to which language simply labels 'meanings' understood as a sort of mental states that could also be labelled differently without changing their content in any way. Contrary to this, Quine assumes that knowledge or belief always presupposes an element of 'indeterminacy' with regard to received stimuli: it requires a 'frame of reference,' the rational reconstruction of the inferential linguistic web, which presupposes an irreducible responsibility of language-users. We can see, in this sense, that ontology or the question of what *is* there is from the very beginning here conceived in epistemic perspective: it is analysed in its relation to the function it plays within our epistemic practices. More specifically, the notion of Myth (both that of the Given and Museum) is meant to limit the role of ontology in epistemic practices: what *is* there cannot be a source of givenness, presuppositionless knowledge. The very question 'what is there' refers us to the linguistic

³⁰ See, for example, Brandom's Thales of the Mighty Dead, „Heidegger's Categories in *Sein und Zeit*“ or Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and others*, "Heidegger, Contingency and Pragmatism."

³¹ Romano, *At the Heart of Reason*, pp. 403-432

³² See, for example, Scheer's *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate* for a useful summary of the debate

³³ Sachs, Intentionality and the Myths of the Given: Between Pragmatism and Phenomenology

³⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 31

³⁵ Soffer, "Revisiting the Myth: Husserl and Sellars on the Given," p. 305

epistemic domain of justification where something like knowledge is producible; it brings us to the realization that “[a]ll awareness of sorts, resemblances, facts, etc., in short all awareness of abstract entities — indeed, all awareness even of particulars — is a linguistic affair.”³⁶

That is why ontological problematics is often discussed in connection to the criticism of what is widely described as *foundationalism*, a view according to which knowledge is based on some immediate, secure foundation that itself does not require any further foundation or inference. The decision to ascribe ontology a greater significance in the context of the investigation of our epistemic practices inclines us to such grounding of justificatory practices in some dumb, brute given assuming that it can be presented to us immediately, i.e., overpassing linguistic mediation by other concepts. And relying on something that is given without any epistemic and linguistic compartments from our side motivates us to build our epistemologies based on this “guaranteed” stratum of reality that is itself independent of historically conditioned language. That means that we would bypass the essential dependence of our beliefs about the world upon its condition – a wider layer of communicatively achieved propositions. The emphasis upon foundationalism, in such a way, skips over the procedures and operations of epistemic domain and grants a sort of a tyrannical force to truth, which enforces itself on human beings. But this attempt of founding epistemology is nothing but a conflation between epistemology and ontology: we are expecting from *being* what we can get only from the epistemic justificatory process. Speaking in Rorty’s terms the world “cannot propose a language for us to speak. Only other human beings can do that.”³⁷ Neo-pragmatism seeks to demonstrate that it is the epistemic level of description that is constitutive of intelligibility: the only way what is there becomes authoritative to us is by being situated within the context of a linguistic network of claims, arguments, criticisms and concepts. We have to accept the fact that nothing can free us from our thrownness in a certain historical situation simply because to be justified means to be referred to other justifications;³⁸ every decision to treat something as an epistemic starting point of our beliefs is entangled in and conditioned by this linguistic communication. For neo-pragmatists, as young Habermas concludes, the ideal of truth is only retainable on “the ruins of ontology.”³⁹

This line of thinking continues what ultimately seems to be the Kantian line of enquiry demonstrating the priority of *access to beings* over *beings themselves*. This time, however, the ‘access to beings’ is no longer seen as explained by the structure of transcendental subjectivity or language as a

³⁶ Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, §29; we should also preliminary stress that we will oppose this usage of the term ontology with Heideggerian and, speaking more broadly, phenomenological usage.

³⁷ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, p. 6

³⁸ See also, Wellmer, “The Debate about Truth: Pragmatism without Regulative Ideas,” p. 97

³⁹ Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 317

“clearly defined shared structure”⁴⁰ (as a “transcendental topic”⁴¹), which is an explanation that itself still carries traces of unclarified, tacit ontological assumption. *Our* epistemic access is explained as an *actual historic* practice consisting of concrete and historically conditioned linguistic interactions among individuals. Linguistic mediation and meaning as such are understood by neo-pragmatists as a result of cooperation instead of being approached ontologically, as a mental process that takes place somewhere within the minds of individuals. It is what individuals *do*, not what they *are*. This culminates in what Ramberg has aptly described as the “post-ontological philosophy of mind,”⁴² which is ready to admit the special status of *cooperation* of minds but not of minds themselves as an ontologically privileged area of the world. So, what we have here is by no means a “failure to be explicit in one’s own ontology,”⁴³ as Bhaskar wants to frame it⁴⁴ – it just is an explicit denial of the fact that this ontology, *what is there*, might be given a special relevance when it comes to the analysis of our meaningful access to the world. There is, we think, a massive consensus regarding this point among pragmatists. Philosophers as different as Sellars, Davidson, Rorty, McDowell, Putnam, Brandom and others should be all seen as continuing this train of thought. Even more naturalistically oriented authors who stress the importance of naturalistic ontology such as Rouse, Peregerin and Dennett still tend to recognize the constitutive status of our epistemic praxis of using language.

Hence, the great emphasis found in neo-pragmatism on the distinction between a human and an animal, an emphasis that manifests itself, for example, in McDowell’s *Mind and World*. Both a human being and an animal *are* to the same sense: they both *are* real participants of the causal worlds responding to its physical stimuli. Nothing else interesting can be said about their being; it is not what they *are* but what they *do* that is interesting. The crucial (and the only philosophically relevant) difference between an animal and a human being is the same as the difference between a Mowgli and a human being – it is the difference in their epistemic access to beings. Ontologically speaking, what is there is the causal world, and the ontological tie between us and the world is that of the causal nature. So, animals (and mowglis) react causally to their environment. Unlike them, people are not simply responding causally to stimuli; they are able to access beings in a different, normative fashion by using concepts, which is ultimately a result of human interaction (i.e. “second nature”) rather than an effect produced by a mysterious human substance. People can access the world normatively because they belong to communities that socialize them into concept-users that are ruled out by publicly recognizable criteria. Thus, McDowell speaks of a special sort of linguistic openness to the world, our

⁴⁰ Davidson, “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs,” p. 446.

⁴¹ Rorty, “Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the reification of language,” p. 337

⁴² Ramberg, “Post-ontological Philosophy of Mind: Rorty versus Davidson”

⁴³ Bhaskar, *Dialectical critical Realism and Ethics*, p. 641

⁴⁴ While we do not subscribe to Bhaskar’s line of criticism that accuses neo-pragmatism of inconsistency, we will still attain a critical perspective on neo-pragmatic methodological strategy

capacity to be normatively guided by it instead of being causally governed. That is why the question of the difference between those two different accesses becomes the main philosophical problem – a difference between language-users and non-users.

This idea has defined an angle from which analytic readers (even those who are generally ‘open-minded’) see Continental tradition. Take Rorty’s critique of Heidegger. According to Rorty, Heidegger’s emphasis on being and the ontological dimension of his work are burdened with the traditional philosophical vocabulary from which he failed to free himself. Heidegger’s notion of Being is nothing else but a pre-critical dream about things themselves, a belief that somewhere on the horizon our knowledge of things and things as they are will coincide. So, while recognizing some of the especially important insights that Heidegger had, Rorty confesses that he wishes that Heidegger never use the term “being,”⁴⁵ as it designates something like “a final relation of a vocabulary to beings.”⁴⁶ Another example of such ‘generous’ reading is Brandom’s quite violent attempt to level the discomfort caused by Heidegger’s distinction between authentic/inauthentic being by translating into a more “secularized” epistemic vocabulary of justification:⁴⁷ first, Heidegger’s ontological categories are transformed into rules of social conduct where they can then safely and discreetly dissolve into the practice of justification. Heidegger’s emphasis on being and ontology, in such a way, is met by pragmatism in the only possible way – with suspicion – even if the value of other parts of his work is recognized. This is hardly surprising. Within pragmatism’s reference system, this sounds a lot like a backslide, a last-minute attempt to re-instantiate the specifically ontological authority of things in themselves and bypass the epistemic and linguistic conditioning.

Naturally, this is not how existential phenomenology understands ontology. But before discussing existential methodology, however, we will analyse the *structural constraint* that follows from the neo-pragmatic approach to ontology. By taken three representatives of neo-pragmatism (namely, Brandom (3.i), Rorty (3.ii) and Habermas (3.iii)), we will demonstrate how the same deficiency manifests itself – although in different forms – obstructing and limiting the scope of possibilities available to pragmatic writers.

⁴⁵ Rorty, “Pragmatism Without Method,” p. 263.

⁴⁶ Rorty, “Representation, Social Practise, and Truth,” p. 216

⁴⁷ See Brandom’s *Tales of the Mighty Dead*, esp. pp. 335-347

I. Brandom's Inferentialism and Naturalistic Complementation

What is specifically human understanding? What is the source of the validity it displays? In this section, we will investigate Brandom's answer to these questions and argue that it stops halfway failing to offer a complete account.

We shall start by stressing that according to Brandom understanding is not a simple ability to differentiate or represent whatever it is that corresponds to some claim. For this is something parrots can do. They can be easily trained to shout, "this is red," when confronted with red things. Nonetheless, their performance would be hardly qualified as displaying an understanding of what has been said. This is because, unlike human beings, parrots do not actually *mean* anything by shouting "red." We know this because if we ask for clarification, parrots are unlikely to explain that by saying "red" they meant a specific colour that is lighter than black and more saturated than pink. Human beings (as '*sapient animals*'), in contrast, are not only capable of differentiating red things from others. They also display something like an understanding of the words they use as they are capable of grasping their *meaning*. What we pronounce, in other words, are not mere sounds but claims with specific conceptual content. So, when I say, "this is red," I know the meaning of the concept "red" and, if needed, I can easily provide an explanation of what I exactly meant. Brandom's fundamental claim, which he describes as "strong inferentialism," is that the meaning of our claims consists of a set of inferential rules. I must be able to master at least some inferences in order to master a concept. So, if I am saying "x is red," I must at least presuppose that "x is colourful." If I am not able to make this inference, I cannot be considered someone who has mastered the concept. Conceptual communication is, therefore, an essentially normative enterprise: connections between inferences are based on ought-type relationships that presuppose correct and incorrect uses, a dimension that cannot be adequately translated into a causal description.

This is a holistic view. If the ability to respond to the environment can be an isolated response to a causal trigger, our ability to deploy concepts can't. I cannot use a single word without knowing many others; to understand a word means to master at least some of its inferential articulations. As Brandom puts it, "grasp of just one concept is the sound of one hand clapping."⁴⁸ This is also a genuinely pragmatic view. Meaning here is associated with the specific *use* of words, with the way they are put in play in more general circumstances of their use – it is essentially a move in a language game made within a given historical community of players. While asserting something, we normatively commit ourselves to certain consequences and become answerable to other players. So, the meaning of

⁴⁸ Brandom, *Articulating reasons*, p. 49 (Hereafter, *AR*)

the utterance “this is red” amounts to a change in the game position of an utterer, who is now treated by other players as committed to a number of further claims. Inferring as a “kind of doing”⁴⁹ is essentially related to taking and treating of certain moves as correct or incorrect within a certain practice. Mastering a word, therefore, is not a simple transmission of knowledge, but a difficult and continuous process where a user is learning how to place this word in the web of other concepts; it is a kind of know-how that is developed by constant practising. I learn how to use a word in the same sense I learn how to act – by learning how to set aside all the unwanted consequences of what I am doing. The question of how well or how adequately the concept corresponds to reality is a second-order question; as Brandom puts it, “it is pointless to attribute semantic structure or content that does no pragmatic explanatory work.”⁵⁰

This pragmatism, however, is different from what Wittgenstein was promoting in an important way. Unlike the former who was convinced that every language is a motley of different language games each having its own specific rules and logic, Brandom believes that language actually has a downtown, a particular language game, which plays a defining role in the functioning of language as such. Brandom’s philosophical project, as Peregrin notes, is not about investigating particular inferences but rather general inferential rules, which are set by this crucial game.⁵¹ These general inferential rules constitute the formal structure of meaningfulness as such, which must be present in every concrete instance of meaningfulness. So, Brandom writes, “what makes something a specifically linguistic (and therefore, according to this view, discursive) practice is that it accords some performances the force or significance of claimings, of propositionally contentful commitments, which can both serve as and stand in need of reasons.”⁵² Brandom, following Sellars, claims here that the very possibility of being contentful is tantamount to the ability of both standing and serving “in need of reasons.”⁵³ Something can have inferential articulation insofar it is placed in this space of reasons. This means that this particular language game, which functions as a core of any language game and defines a minimal condition for qualifying as a propositionally contentful claim is the game of giving and asking for reasons. Consider the following description,

Suppose we have a set of counters or markers such that producing or playing one has the social significance of making an assertional move in the game. We can call such counters ‘sentences’. Then for any player at any time there must be a way of partitioning sentences into two classes, by distinguishing somehow those that he is disposed or otherwise prepared

⁴⁹ Brandom, *Making it Explicit*, p. 91 (Hereafter, *MIE*)

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144

⁵¹ Peregrin, *Why Rules Matter*, p. 8

⁵² Brandom, *AR*, p. 14-15

⁵³ *Ibid.*

to assert (perhaps when suitably prompted). These counters, which are distinguished by bearing the player's mark, being on his list, or being kept in his box, constitute his score. By playing a new counter, making an assertion, one alters one's own score, and perhaps that of others⁵⁴

We can see the most basic make-up of this game. There are different players capable of raising basic moves – assertions – that must somehow “constitute the score” that is ascribed to the players, thus, altering their status (“score”) within the game. Every player involved in the game must be prepared to recognize the behaviour of other players as such “moves” affecting their “scores.” Then, Brandom differentiates three types of basic moves. The first is commitment-preserving inferences, which are deductive. The inference from a claim ‘*q*’ to a claim ‘*p*’ is commitment-preserving if the commitment to ‘*q*’ brings about commitment to ‘*p*.’ So, when I say, “this is red,” I am also committed to “this is coloured.” The second is entitlement-preserving inferences, which are inductive. The inference from ‘*a*’ claim ‘*q*’ to a claim ‘*p*’ is entitlement-preserving if entitlement to ‘*q*’ defeasibly supports entitlement to ‘*p*.’ So, when I say, “this is red” I am entitled (defeasibly) to a claim “this looks nice with brown.” The third is a relation of incompatibility. The inference from a claim ‘*q*’ to a claim ‘*p*’ is excluded if the commitment to ‘*q*’ precludes entitlement ‘*p*.’ For example, “This is red” precludes a claim “this is black.”

Taken together, these three types of inferences constitute the content of every possible claim. Our ability to work with inferences, i.e., with commitments, entitlements, and their compatibility/incompatibility relations, is constitutive of language. Every practice is meaningful only on the background of the practice of giving and asking for reasons. Commitments, entitlements, and precluded entitlements “are what in the first place make possible talking, and therefore thinking: sapience in general.” So, when we are asked to give a reason, or when we ask to give one, we are doing nothing else but elucidating the meaning of what has been said: elucidating or clarifying meaning and the process of justification are conceptually two sides of one coin. The crucial point is that giving reasons is nothing else but manifesting inherent rationality of meaning that is already present on the level of everyday practice. Rationality permeates meaning relations, so everything that is meaningful is also rational. This is a claim Brandom describes as “linguistic rationalism.”⁵⁵

Based on this, Brandom plans to avoid relativistic implications, which are traditionally ascribed to Wittgenstein and Rorty. He emphasizes the crucial distance between what is asserted and what is assertible. An assertion (as asserted) is first of all based on assertibility conditions, which are public

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 190

⁵⁵ Brandom, *AR*, p. 189

rules that specify when it is appropriate to pronounce it. Being correctly asserted (i.e., complying with the public rules), however, does not automatically mean that the assertion adequately grasps what is assertible; I can assert something correctly (like, for example, I say ‘this is red,’ when I am authorized to pronounce this claim, that is, when I have *good evidence* that it is red), while being wrong nonetheless. Brandom emphasizes that what is asserted is based on social and publicly recognizable assertibility conditions but is not exhausted by these conditions as every assertion intends to grasp the *object of assertion itself* that is assertible. So, commitment to the assertion (“this is red”) does not automatically presuppose an entitlement to it (that it *actually* is red) – this is how the game of giving and asking for reasons gains its relevance. Socratic deliberation functions as a paradigmatic example of such inherent instability of entitlements: a systematic investigation might reveal that what one was thought to be entitled to say, is actually non-justified (in reality, it is not red, it just appeared red to me because of the dim light). Our normative attitudes of taking and treating something as meaningful are themselves attitude-transcending⁵⁶ because of this strive for objectivity that is inherent to them. Since participants of the game of giving and asking for reasons are not omniscient, there is no guarantee that what they are entitled to will not turn out to be a false assumption. This, however, does not undermine the objectivity of the game as such. It tells us simply that giving reasons is a “default and challenge” type of activity: any reason is assumed to be valid until it is undermined by a further reason.⁵⁷

Furthermore, an attitude of ascribing of some claim is in an important sense different from acknowledging this claim. For Brandom, there is no way of getting to meaning without simultaneously getting a stand on it. The process of understanding presupposes a second-person perspective attitude. Either I acknowledge what is understood as being adequate to the state of affairs, or I ascribe it to someone while withholding endorsement and, thus, viewing it as non-adequate. For example, the claim “this is red” is meaningful insofar a) I endorse this claim as correct or b) somebody endorses it as correct (when in reality it might be that this is green). One way or another, understanding leads us back to the objective state of affairs – ascribing can be understood only on the background of *possible* endorsement. In both cases, our attitude is context-transcending. Brandom, in such a way, proposes a pragmatic yet realistic approach to meaning that emphasizes both the relational and context-transcending character of meaning. Borrowing Bernstein’s expression, we could say that “a distinction between what is “merely” subjective and what is objective...[is] built into the very structure of social discursive practice.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., 198

⁵⁷ Brandom, *MIE*, p. 176

⁵⁸ Bernstein, *Pragmatic Turn*, p. 134

Now, we might want to recall one of the criticisms Habermas raised against this conception. The problem that Habermas spots is that objectivity of facts occupies an excessively central role in Brandom's enterprise. According to the latter, assertions are expected to be the fundamental building stones in every possible discourse, thus, being constitutive not only of the cognition of the external world but also of expressive, moral, aesthetic discourses as well; "[c]onstative speech," says Habermas "moves to the forefront."⁵⁹ But since the attitude-transcending character of assertions is guided by the objectivity of facts, all these discourses suffer from excessive intellectualization: now every discourse must be modelled on the basis of cognition of the world, which means that moral and aesthetic facts are now placed alongside objective facts about the world. There are normative facts and nonnormative facts,⁶⁰ claims Brandom, but both are facts about the world. The end result is that, on the one side, moral and practical discourses are supposed to deal with some sort of objectivized, pre-existent facts; on another - the description of us as human beings is taken to be modally similar to the description of how things are in the world. This a position that Habermas critically describes as 'conceptual idealism.'

Such a position neglects the important distinction between factual and normative issues and systematically conflates theoretical and practical domains; epistemic justification of beliefs regarding the external world cannot "exhaust" the normative justification of behaviour. Normative justification requires a special type of justification that cannot be reduced to pointing out something in the world. A norm can be given as an objectively existing fact only if somebody attains a perspective of an outside observer. So, an anthropological study, for example, might reveal a fact that a certain tribe organize their behaviour according to some tribalistic normative corpus. From such a perspective, however, norms can never be disclosed as norms in full sense of the word: anthropological or behaviouristic approaches to the normative domain block the phenomenon of justification and its significance from the very beginning simply because any kind of normative justification presupposes, according to Habermas, a dialogical attitude of participants of *behaviour*. A normative debate requires me to take seriously my opponent's claim on validity; it does not result in facts about somebody's behaviour, but in an understanding of behaviour supported by reasons, which might appear to me as correct or incorrect, rational or irrational. The factual description of normativity remains a strictly derivative project simply because norms of behaviour were never part of the world before human beings came into life. Norms of behaviour do not emerge from the objective world, but from the communication among language-users. So, when we raise the claim "bank employees are obliged to wear a tie," we do not simply refer to a fact about the world, but to a certain "value-orientation [that is common] to the members of a bourgeois

⁵⁹ Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, p. 190

⁶⁰ Brandom, "Facts, Norms, and Normative Facts: A Reply to Habermas," p. 365

culture,”⁶¹ which de facto does not depend, or depend to a lesser extent, upon factual arguments regarding facts in the world.

On paper, this objection can easily be avoided. In his reply to Habermas, Brandom stresses that the notion of facts plays in his philosophy far looser role than Habermas has assumed. The facts and their counterpart, assertions, stand for the purely formal description of our linguistic practice. That both kinds of commitments – both doxastic and practical – are formulated in the same normative terms of entitlements and commitments to the facts does not mean that the distinction between the non-normative domain of the external world and the normative domain of human praxis gets blurred. On the contrary, there is a clear distinction between a normative description of non-normative things and a normative description of normative standards accepted in a given community. Brandom has no wish to claim that normative facts such as “one is obliged to wear a tie” somehow existed before there were human beings like non-discursive facts did. The latter is a fact of a different kind than that of the former. Consequently, the justification of normative facts would be essentially different from the justification of non-normative ones: “the justification of practical commitments can involve appeal to other practical commitments”⁶² Habermas’s criticism that the epistemic justification somehow exhausts the normative one misfires. Brandom’s decision to encompass both discursive and non-discursive domains based on the notion of assertions and facts is a methodological decision (which, as Brandom admits, might not strike as self-obvious⁶³). He was trying to present a more general analysis that supplies rules for both types of discourses without intending to conflate them. Similarly, B. Fulton has pointed out that Habermas’s “validity claim” is similar to Brandom’s “assertion.” Brandom’s analysis does not aim at demolishing the distinctions between two different domains but at emphasizing that inferential rules govern any possible discourse. This does not exclude that there might be different inferential patterns that introduce further specific details to the rules of justification that were outlined by the general structures of rationality.

I think that the situation is not that simple, however. Habermas might have rushed with his critique making a number of unwarranted assumptions about Brandom. There is one particular point, nonetheless, where the confrontation between them appears to be more substantial. For obvious reasons, it is vitally important for both authors to employ the possibility of learning within their system. In Habermas’s terms, it must be possible for a learning process to go beyond its *a priori*, i.e., to be able to learn something that was not presupposed by the background and to revise this background correspondingly. In Brandom’s terms, attitudes of linguistic speakers must be attitude-transcending –

⁶¹ Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, p. 172

⁶² Brandom, “Facts, Norms, and Normative Facts: A Reply to Habermas,” p. 366

⁶³ *Ibid.*

commitment and entitlements must be aimed at objectivity, to things as they are, which is why it is possible to introduce a correction to one's own attitude. We have seen a paradigmatic example of such a correction in Brandom. My commitment to the claim "this is red" can be undermined by a further claim "no, this is green." Because my attitude to the first claim is context-transcending, i.e., it is essentially and structurally motivated by the tendency to get things right, I am obliged to accept the second claim (if it is right) and withdraw my commitment to the first. Now, in case of disagreement regarding the objective world, which is normatively taken to possess *some sort* of independence from our attitudes about such a world, we have the independent worldly logic that frames and sustains any kind of disagreements. Such a logic guarantees that in case of a disagreement, a reconciliation is possible because there must be the *same* world about which we disagree; the objective world makes concrete disagreement meaningful by ensuring the possibility of "transcendence" of particular attitudes. The situation is somehow different when the claim "bank employees are obliged to wear a tie" is undermined by a further claim 'dress code is a manifestation of social repression and must be abandoned.' We can go further, of course, offering other practical arguments and counterarguments until the issue is settled. This, however, is not sufficient to prove Brandom's original point. The real question is whether I can actually learn something from such a polemic. What makes us think that these two claims can be reconciled? Unlike non-normative facts, the normative domain does not seem to display a certain independence from our attitudes (at least, not in the same way non-normative facts display it). On what basis, then, can we correct our normative claims? Even though we obviously can spot and correct some inconsistencies, any substantial normative disagreement seems to be left without any real prospect of reconciliation. Consequently, the transcending character of our attitudes becomes questionable if not idle.

Brandom claims that he has willingly left aside moral topics in *Making it Explicit*. His motivation was to avoid all too common conflation of normativity and ethics and emphasize that the latter is obviously a far narrower topic than the former. Such a decision – although not a mistake taken in itself – left crucial things unexplained, which eventually resulted in Habermas's worries. The real question consists of the ontological status of the normative domain. If the ontological status of the world can be left out as self-obvious – we could hardly argue with the fact of independence of the objective world that transcends particular attitudes – the status of normativity begs much more questions. Since Brandom does want to analyse normativity without reducing it to non-normative factors ('baking a normative cake out of non-normative ingredients'), we are brought back to the questions we have formulated at the beginning of this section: what is the *source* of understanding? What *are* norms? For what do we have them? Brandom's answer here is insufficient: nothing truly follows from the fact that we are normative, rational animals because this is a purely formal answer. It

simply assumes that there must be a reason that would be acceptable for both parties. But why should there be one? According to what criterion better reasons are produced? *What is the source of the normative power that they possess?* This question of what norms *are*, i.e., of their ontological status, in such a way, cannot be left untackled.

Before switching to Rorty, I would like to investigate one alternative account that seeks to resolve this problem in a way consistent with Brandom's account since this option will frequently reoccur as a polemic target in the course of this work. Namely, let's take a look at Peregrin's book *Why Rules Matter*. As Peregrin argues, the problem with Brandom's conception is even more severe than we have described above: it turns out that some inferences about the objective world might be in such a massive contradiction with others that the prospect of their correction begins to look illusory. For example, the well-known made-up word "tonk" that allows any kind of inference is in principle capable of correcting other inferences every bit as much as it is capable of being corrected by them. This case demonstrates perfectly that a mere ability to deploy reasons and our self-identity as rational creatures is not sufficient to establish even minimal contact with the world; the capacity of using reasons does not guarantee in any sense that such reasons are not "a frictionless spinning in the void,"⁶⁴ to borrow McDowell's expression. Reason-giving, therefore, is a process that is meaningful only on the background of the priorly established contact with the world. Again, this line of thinking obliges us with a further task, namely the task of investigating what such a practice of giving and asking for reasons *is*.⁶⁵

Peregrin's solution to this problem is based on appealing to natural selection. As he puts it, "if there were our ancestors who engaged such kinds of concept instead of (or in addition to) our ones, we might assume that they were wiped out by natural selection. The possibility of the introduction of such concepts is as real as the possibility of cutting off one's arms, but we need not upset ourselves too much about either reality."⁶⁶ This is a missing stone in the mosaic of Brandom's conception. The prospect of reconciliation of conflicting normative inferences is ensured by some sort of fundamental unanimity that is forged by natural selection. So, people who think that the sole goal of social life is to make sure that everyone can walk on their hands might have equally non-contradictive justification; but unfortunately for them, they were eliminated by natural selection. And since we have been not, we must have some common ground of our normative vocabulary because it was this vocabulary that contributed to our survival. Any disagreement we have regarding what one ought to do and how to live a life is potentially resolvable as it might occur only on the background of this evolutionary forged unanimity.

⁶⁴ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 11

⁶⁵ A similar line of criticism was raised by Rouse against McDowell and the latter's unclarified divide between the first and the second nature.

⁶⁶ Peregrin, *Why Rules Matter*, p. 41

This is what makes our normative attitudes attitude-transcending, thus, creating the very possibility of seeing some norms as better and more justified. The elegance of this argument consists in that it does not lapse into some version of the Myth of the Given. That is, it does not claim that because we are placed in a certain environment, we end up having corresponding concepts. The environment does not force directly any content into our inferential web leaving the central claim of inferentialism stays untouched: only an inference can elucidate another inference. What the argument says is that some inferential normative practices have been wiped out, and some haven't. Those which stayed are likely to have some certainties on which everyone can agree. The reason why one ought not to eat shrimp in, say, ancient Semitic culture, for example, was that it violates God's will, not that it contributes to self-preservation. Still, making such an inference did help to preserve a community alive, whereas the lack of it increased the chances of premature death of its members. This solution elucidates a largely presupposed but still implicit ontological background of Brandom's position without sacrificing any of its essential elements.

The cornerstone of Peregrin's strategy is what we might describe as evolutionary holism. It seems clear that there can be no one-to-one relation between survival and culture. Some practices like hunting are directly tied to survival, others – like the mentioned example of dietary recommendation – indirectly, and practices like chess or football seem to display a minimal or lack of connection at all. A methodological solution here is to treat language as a whole, a whole that is permeated with different areas with different degrees of freedom and spontaneity, but which nonetheless is tied to the process of adaptation to the environment. Evolutionary holism still holds that meaningfulness and evolutionary advantage are *essentially interconnected*; but in order to make this interconnection more plausible and compatible with inferentialism, it is *softened* by allowing intermediate stages of explanation between inferential (which is operative on the level of communication and the practice of giving and asking for reasons) and fundamental explanation. In other words, that language and culture have the aim of evolutionary adaptation as a whole means that the content of every concrete practice and every concrete norm makes sense only insofar it *eventually* contributes to such an aim *in whatever way it contributes to it*. Evolutionary holism, in other words, maintains that *the whole set of practices and meanings* ranging from hunting to last year fashion trends are themselves meaningful in virtue of their contribution (either direct or indirect) to the preservation of a given community; by grounding norms in something non-normative, evolutionary holism (alternatively, evolutionary inferentialism) holds that existence of *every* norm (again, either directly or indirectly) is dependent on this non-normative source.

This solution, however, remains problematic. The main reason for this, I think, is that the proposed explanation comes too easily, which results in a relatively low explanatory weight. The

strategy here is to explain something that does not make sense in the proposed system (i.e., practices that do not demonstrate any contribution to evolutionary success) at the cost of something that makes such sense (i.e., practices that do demonstrate it.) The real value of this strategy depends on the extent we can actually trace the first back to the second. If we are successful in empirically demonstrating that, say, game-playing reduces stress that surrounds the life of a hunter in a given tribe, the evolutionary explanation gains weight. If we are not, we are simply extending the connection, which does not prove the original point but instead *relies* on it. Now, the problem, as I see it, is that with the exponential growth of the number, complexity and non-instrumental character of practices in modern societies, it becomes impossible to propose any kind of empirically palpable connection between most of our practices and evolutionary adaptation. How do practices like football help our survival? It might be answered (with a pinch of salt) that it displays some evolutionary winning skills. But the further we get, the more impalpable this explanation looks. What about rock, paper and scissors? What about techno music? Pouring milk and cereal into the open mouth on camera? Evolutionary advantages here become thinner and thinner until they are transformed into an empty ‘well, there must be one.’ The evolutionary hypothesis, thus, turns from a solid, empirically demonstratable theory into an empty hypothesis that postulates an explanation without offering any real explanation. This strategy is guided by the assumption that the content of practices *must* have an evolutionary explanation rather than by the actual need for such an explanation. This strategy claims victory far too easily without any substantial efforts and implications: a link to the evolutionary success *de facto* tells us nothing new about the practice; it rather explains things away, than actually explains them.

Peregrin argues that “when the communities started to function as what can be called societies (i.e., when rules started to play a crucial role), the tangible barriers of nature that channel evolution became increasingly replaced by artificial ones,” and that “we, twenty-first-century Westerners, evolve due to pressures that are often not directly a matter of the availability of natural resources or of fighting for survival with our own hands; the pressures that shape us now have to do with social standards and our abilities to live up to the needs of our society.”⁶⁷ The idea is that cultural evolution shouldn’t be considered on an equal footing with natural one. The difference might be thought of as the difference between hardware and software, where natural selection stands for the hardware and cultural one represents software: whereas animal behaviour is selected naturally, culture has elaborated its own way of selecting the fittest. This means that rational justification is a finer continuation of natural selection by novel means: if natural selection reveals the fittest for life in nature, cultural selection does the same for cultural life. Thus, “the ‘cultural’ spreading of ‘software’ behavioral patterns [piggybacks] on the

⁶⁷ Peregrin, *Why Rules Matter*, p. 132

‘natural’ spreading of the ‘hardware’ ones.”⁶⁸ Now, I think that in a certain sense, this conception is undeniable. Naturalistic ‘hardware’ does provide the necessary material for the cultural ‘software’ to function (of course, there is a question of what we exactly mean by these terms but let’s leave aside this moment). But what is really at stake here is a question of continuity: cultural selection is taken to be a continuation of *the same logic* of natural selection, only this time with other means in a more fine-grained domain. Once again, it is hard to see any real need for such an approach other than its ability to bypass the question of the self-standing ontological status of normativity because, at least at the first sight, the social selection is the exact opposite of the natural one. If for the latter the main question is whether something is capable of preserving itself, for the former the main question is rather whether this something is worthy of being preserved. The survival of the fittest is substituted with the question of what kind of fit do we want to survive. It requires an additional logical step to level this crucial distinction, a step that brings relatively little to the table in terms of the actual explanation of how our cultural selection works.

Second, the proposed approach, although only mildly reductive, loses its touch with the actual content of our experience. The claim that language and culture as a whole have the aim of evolutionary adaptation, as we have seen means also that the content of every concrete practice and every concrete norm makes sense *only insofar as it contributes to such an aim*. Again, they might contribute in some non-direct, non-obvious ways, but they must contribute if they are to make sense. But for the most part, however, neither can be found in the phenomenal content of engagements. On the one side, there obviously can be no talk of some direct impact that non-instrumental practices have on evolution. When I play football, for example, I am only concerned about taking good positions, passing, communicating with teammates etc.; the meaning of my engagements, goals and emotions belong to the game itself and the way I understand it. The attractiveness and meaning of my activity cannot be explained by the fact that it involves some skills or motivational complexes that might be of use to a caveman. On the contrary, it makes those “default” skills and motivations attractive *by* incorporating them in the space of the game where they receive a new, richer significance and gain their specific intra-contextual meaning. It is not obvious why we should consider the mere activity of running as an explanation of our interest to a more complex activity of running towards the goalposts. A direct, Dennettian evolutionary explanation would make sense only insofar as newly elaborated skills would make us better equipped for survival. But that is exactly what is not the case. Evolution is supposed to minimize and effectuate our efforts having the goal of self-preservation in the background; human practices, in contrast, often show

⁶⁸ Peregrin, *Why Rules Matter*, p. 129

us how to maximize them and make them less practical in order to make them more meaningful.⁶⁹ So, our default motivations, skills and desires get sophisticated, re-elaborated and incorporated into new situations based on a principle other than a direct impact they could have on our survival. We would reserve our discussion of the logic behind this maximization of the practical participation until chapter 3; at this point, we should merely stress that we must explain how practices of this kind tend to distance themselves from the evolutionary use through complication and re-interpretation of our skills.

Furthermore, when it comes to the practices that we pursue for their own sake, their relation to the rest of the language and other practices seem to demonstrate an opposite dynamic than is assumed by evolutionary holism. Being absorbed in games or other non-instrumental practices, I tend to forget about all other aims I have; if we are to describe the relation between game-playing and other segments of culture, it would be a relation of distancing rather than that of approximation. Non-instrumental practices, which we generally pursue for their own sake tend to constitute more self-enclosed systems of intelligibility,⁷⁰ which makes part-to-whole relation to the culture *less* important. So, phenomenologically speaking, re-interpretation and sophistication of our skills and motivations does not originate from the language and culture as a whole and the specific function it plays in the context of this whole but from the game itself. Their meanings are set entirely within the confines outlined by the rules of a particular practical space, which is the reason why it is so easy to explain those meanings and their implications to someone who does not have the same cultural background as us (perhaps even to someone who does not even speak our language): for football, it is not *that* relevant to be linked to other parts of culture. This means that the evolutionary explanation that explains the intelligibility of a game in terms of its holistic situatedness in a further context of cultural practices (and we have seen above that evolutionary holism is committed to demonstrating that every practice and every meaning must eventually be explainable in terms of their relation to their non-normative, evolutionary source) can be introduced only as a second-order logical supplementation and this at the cost of the massive overstretching of its basic concepts. The result is the transformation of such an explanation into a transcendent and almost magical theory that is located nowhere and everywhere at the same time. As a “thin” hypothesis, as I have described it in the previous passages, it is still acceptable, but if we want some real explanatory power from it, it very quickly shows the lack of any real use.

Third, such an account is also partial. The two above-mentioned reasons combined leave underexplained the question of how non-instrumental practices evolve. Since evolutionary explanation is at the same time too essentialistic and too loose, we are confronted with the following problem: if we

⁶⁹ See, for example, Elster's *Ulysses Unbound. Studies in Rationality, Precommitment, and Constraints* or Suits's *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* for analysis of how unnecessary complication makes our activities more interesting for participants.

⁷⁰ I should note here that a number of terms I use here are used in a pre-liminary way; I will discuss them in greater detail in chapters 3 and 5

are claiming, on the one side, that everything essential about any practice is related to the evolutionary adaptation and, on another, we cannot really hope to explicate how this evolutionary adaptation is manifested in an actual non-instrumental field, we are stuck in a situation where any kind of conscious improvement of practice is impossible. How can we have a meaningful debate concerning football, if we don't know how exactly it contributes to our survival and why we find it interesting at all? Should there be more areal duels, which would make the game more physical, thus, promoting survival strategies based on the brute force? Should there be more passing in order to reward cooperative behaviour? Or should we rather try to increase the speed of the game, so the players would run faster displaying another evolutionary attractive skill? It seems that we would have to go on absolutely blindly realizing that we have made a worthy change only after this change has been accepted and tested. Of course, there is a kernel of truth in such an idea: it is not possible to see all the implications of any significant change. But we can hardly go from this point to the point where we have absolutely no way of foreseeing what constitutes a desirable change. A meaningful, reason-giving debate regarding a non-instrumental practice is possible only because such a practice has its own self-standing and non-instrumental meaning that is not reducible to anything else. Because we can grasp this logic as self-standing, it is possible for us to think of an improvement. *What we are improving, in other words, is exactly a given practice and not the language as a whole.*

Aside from this incapacity to explain the status and dynamics of non-instrumental practices, there also is a well-known Hegelian argument against Kant. The argument consists of the fact that such strategies encapsulate us in a particularistic position. Because our fundamental consensus was, at least partly, established externally through being exposed to a certain influence from the environment, there is no way we can recognize this limitation and overcome it. Evolutionary selection functions as a Kantian condition of possibility, which is neither meaningful nor meaningless; it enables without being enabled itself. This means that any possible experience is doomed to carry with itself a logical tie back to the enabling element, which undermines our ability of transcendence and leaves us with a truncated notion of reason. The inferential system is, therefore, trapped in a particular perspective, which invites charges of scepticism and relativism – how do we know that what we are saying is context-transcending if there is a context, which we would never be able to transcend? If we meet a person with a different set of views, which he has acquired in different evolutionary circumstances, does it mean that there is no sense in talking to this person at all? This brings us to a counter-intuitive notion of moral realism that lacks a substantial element that we expect it to have according to our everyday expectations.

We should conclude this section by stressing where our argument head exactly. What we criticize here is not an investigation of the natural aspect of our normativity and our being as such.

There can be no denying that this aspect can and has been successfully investigated. The problem, rather concerns the distinction between the *self-standing meaning of normativity* and its *evolutionary meaning*; more precisely, we have asked ourselves whether we should abandon this distinction and claim that the self-standing meaning of normativity *simply is* its evolutionary meaning and treat the latter as a manifestation of the former? Can we satisfactorily resolve the question of being of norms in a naturalistic way?

Philosophers like Dennett (who expresses the positive answer to this question with a much greater level of explicitness) indeed seem to suppose that we do and that it is necessary and self-obvious to abolish this distinction are themselves guilty of the systematic conflation of *the questions of origin* with *the questions of being*.⁷¹ That something was created through evolutionary selection and that something turned out to be useful in terms of self-preservation does not explain automatically *the content and logic* of what was created. The feeling of aesthetic pleasure that was without any doubt forged by evolution does not consist in preferring evolutionarily advantageous things over non-advantageous ones. It consists of preferring those of aesthetic value, which *just happened to be* evolutionarily advantageous to us. But the evolutionary conditions could change without having any impact on our aesthetic capacities: we would still prefer beautiful over ugly even though it would have a moderately negative impact on our chances of reproduction. Aesthetic perception is guided by its own logic, which does not coincide with the logic of natural selection. If we want to investigate this type of perception, we would have to deal with the self-standing of perception: we would have to investigate basic geometrical patterns, the way we are responsive to colours etc. So, evolution results in establishment of certain patterns of behaviour, but these patterns have self-standing meaning that only temporarily coincides with the logic of evolutionary success without being reducible to it. It is one thing to say that my feeling of aesthetic pleasure has an evolutionary origin, and it is a completely different thing to claim that this feeling simply is a continuation of evolutionary selection. While the former is an undeniable and empirically verifiable claim, the latter is a result of *confusion between fields*, a traditional metaphysics moment that reduces everything to One and, consequently, treats the claim 'being forged by something' as synonymic to 'being nothing but this something.'

So, when Dennett accuses Brandom's approach of being magic and potentially creationistic⁷² arguing that since this approach is not tied to evolutionary and naturalistic vocabulary (Dennett's own version of the metaphysical One), it must be spiritual and ghost-like (Dennett's version of a heteronomous, irreducibly different element that is not tolerable within a reductionist metaphysics), he

⁷¹ We will give a more systematic criticism of this move later based on Heidegger's idea of *ontological difference*

⁷² See Dennett, "Essay on Robert Brandom, Making it Explicit"

only gives out the metaphysically conditioned character of his own thinking. Once this implicitly metaphysical attack on heteronomy is dropped, there is nothing controversial about investigating something without tying it to the evolutionary process. This is neither a magical nor creationistic position, but simply a non-reductionist one: that created entities have certain conditions of their creation does not mean that they are reducible to those conditions. An investigation of the nature of our normativity and of our being as such does not differ in content from the investigation of our aesthetic or gustatory capacities: we must start investigating them on their own terms and based on their own logic and build up our theories based on it. The biological perspective on this self-standing logic is either a fully compatible but only complementary perspective or a reductionist one. Brandom, thus, is absolutely justified in attempting to found meaning within social language-games. The real problem here is that his approach does not explain sufficiently what the source of normativity *is*, i.e., what kind of ontological status it has. As we have seen, naturalistic complementation, while correctly identifying the problem, goes, nonetheless in the wrong direction when solving it.

II. Rorty: Instruments and Innovations

Rorty's master move is to stop treating the language as a unitary whole and approach it in a Wittgensteinian spirit – as a motley of different language games or vocabularies, which are incommensurable, and which serve different aims. Rorty follows what he thinks is a Wittgensteinian and Davidsonian idea that vocabularies should not be seen as means of representation of reality but rather tools that we have for a simple reason – to help us to reach our vital goals. Consequently, we need to understand that a choice of vocabulary doesn't have anything to do with its alleged "intrinsic" qualities. The very idea of some sort of inherent rightness or any other privilege of vocabulary over others is mistaken and, eventually, meaningless. What matters is whether this or that particular vocabulary is suitable for a specific aim that we are confronted in a given moment: just like we use hammers when we need to fixate something on the wall, we use a vocabulary of photons when we need to predict and control the production of solar energy. So, instead of comparing different vocabularies and establishing a hierarchy among them, we should ask instead what kind of vocabulary we need right now and how it could be useful for us, contingent historical beings that are "always already" confronted with certain necessities of life. As Brandom nicely puts it, "assessment of tools is always relative to a purpose; to describe something as a tool is only to say that it has a purpose, not to specify some particular purpose."⁷³

Rorty goes as far as to question the importance of argumentation and logical consistency. Taken in itself it does not matter how uncontradictory or adequate ideas are. What matters here is how they work; the right question, says Rorty, is whether "our use of these words gets in the way of our use of those other words?"⁷⁴ If the use of words is not precluded by other words, the quest for logical consistency draws to a close indicating that the tool that we have elaborated works fine. Logical consistency is something that makes sense only within a given vocabulary, i.e., only insofar we share a certain goal and certain ways of coping with it. Once we have left this shared background, a search for inconsistencies becomes not only hopeless but also a meaningless job to do. For every tool will be inconsistent if applied to an unsuitable aim. So, we shouldn't bother too much about contradictions among different vocabularies since there is no such point from where these contradictions can be sorted out in any philosophically interesting way. For Rorty, an attempt to criticize a certain vocabulary as inconsistent with other vocabularies sounds a lot like an attempt to demonstrate that our use of hammers is wrong because they don't give us any aesthetic pleasure. A hierarchy of vocabularies can be established only from a standpoint of a certain aim, which renders it either wrong or trivial – to claim

⁷³ Brandom, "Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism," p. 168

⁷⁴ Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*, p. 12 (Henceforth, *CIS*)

that hummers are bad for singing would indeed be either meaningless or simply wrong. A metaphysical attempt to capture the essence of vocabularies and outline some sort of a criterion or meta-aim would always be a mere projection of a single vocabulary onto others. So, while polemizing with McCarthy, Rorty admits that he wouldn't know, for example, how to prove Hitler wrong. Being safely placed within the confines of his own vocabulary and pursuing his own goals, Hitler or some other psychopath wouldn't be in much trouble denying our ideas about suffering and human decency as completely irrelevant or distorted.

In a situation where two vocabularies clash with one another, the only credible thing (and relatively inefficient) left is to attempt to formulate the problem in a different vocabulary. "The method," says Rorty, "is to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior."⁷⁵ So, instead of proving or demonstrating that somebody is wrong, an enterprise that is doomed to failure from the very beginning, we should try to view the situation differently hoping that such a view would be promising enough – "the only thing that can transcend a discursive strategy is another discursive strategy - one aimed at other, better, goals."⁷⁶ That is what not only writers, poets or politicians but philosophers as well should do as "interesting philosophy," says Rorty, "is rarely an examination of the pros and cons of a thesis."⁷⁷ In other words, philosophy must, first of all, seek to disclose new horizons showing us possibilities of different forms of life, which makes it a matter of experimenting rather than mere argumentation. We should be ready to say to ourselves and to others something like "try thinking of it this way,"⁷⁸ and be freethinking enough to see what follows. Consequently, we should *tempt* "the rising generation" to adopt these new forms of behaviour by demonstrating that the new vocabulary and new aims will eventually turn out to be more "attractive"⁷⁹ or "plausible."⁸⁰ Any such genuine philosophical enterprise will look logically weak, absurd and possibly even scandalous exactly because of its novelty that is incompatible with previous vocabularies. But as history shows us, new approaches are accepted even despite appearing logically vulnerable exactly because there was something promising about them. So, there is no way (and not much sense either) in proving Hitler wrong; what we can do is show that a different mode of thinking would be more promising, which is a sort of thing that at least sometimes "actually changes people's minds."⁸¹

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 9

⁷⁶ Rorty, "Universality and Truth," p. 7

⁷⁷ Rorty, *CIS*, p. 9

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 85

⁸¹ Rorty, "Chapter 12. Truth and Freedom: A Reply to Thomas McCarthy," p. 637

It is important to emphasize how the latter move allows Rorty to outmanoeuvre the performative self-contradiction, of which he is often accused by various authors. This objection would unpack as follows: an immediate response to Rorty's position would be an accusation that it itself allows itself the possibility it denies. The claim 'everything is intelligible with regard to a certain goal' attempts to characterize intelligibility as such and, therefore, transcends particular intra-contextual instrumental relations. This is a point that such authors as Habermas, Putnam, Blackburn and McCarthy have been trying to demonstrate in numerous attempts.⁸² Rorty, however, came the closest to avoiding the contradictory consequences. This is because he is willing to go all the way and admit that his own thinking is nothing else but a tool itself, a tool that is supposed to resolve a particular problem within a particular community. Rorty is keen to remind that he has a particular auditory in mind – "liberal pragmatists," which he addresses as he believes that his approach might be useful and, therefore, valid for them. Rorty, thus, has no wish to claim that he somehow discovered the essence of history and that his own beliefs are truer than others. On the contrary, he says quite self-consciously, "conforming to my own precepts, I am not going to offer arguments against the vocabulary I want to replace. Instead, I am going to try to make the vocabulary I favor look attractive by showing how it may be used to describe a variety of topics."⁸³ So, Rorty does not think of himself as polemizing with his numerous critics. He is simply using his chance in order to show "how nice things can be"⁸⁴ if we accept his approach; he is trying to "convert" his opponents instead of force-feeding them truth in an apodictic geometrical fashion by showing how can his approach be useful and demonstrate to the "rising generation" that his problems and his solutions are attractive enough to switch the older problems off. As Brodsky puts it, "this proposal urges us to set [traditional] goals aside" believing that accepting new goals "would globally alter the character of human life."⁸⁵

The two major tasks Rortian liberal finds himself confronted with – that of avoiding cruelty and creating oneself, which roughly corresponds to public/private distinction – are goals that are not universal in any sense but belong to a certain community. We should be careful to avoid seeing them as meta-goals that are common to all societies in one way or another. For this would be an attempt to describe the essence of history as such, whereas Rorty's fundamental idea is that we can make sense of anything only with regard to a certain vocabulary and certain aims. So, early Christians for sure did not think that saving themselves from cruelty or even minimizing cruelty at any cost is the best thing to do, just like any traditionalistic culture doesn't think much of the prospect of self-creation. There were

⁸² See, for example, Habermas's „Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter“ or McCarthy's „Private Irony and Public Decency: Richard Rorty's New Pragmatism.“

⁸³ Rorty, *CIS*, p. 9

⁸⁴ Rorty, "Chapter 12. Truth and Freedom: A Reply to Thomas McCarthy," p. 637

⁸⁵ Brodsky, "Rorty's Interpretation of Pragmatism," p. 326

different goals, different vocabularies and, consequently, different views on history. Not only this is not a problem – it proves the original point: our culture and our view are as particularistic as every other. It is precisely this particularity, says Rorty, that leads us to the recognition of the inherent contingency of every possible vocabulary. Our emphasis on contingency is *not* a step forward in getting a truer understanding of how things with vocabularies and histories really are. We attain such an attitude simply because it has become a useful tool for the particular aims that we as members of 20th century liberal society find ourselves confronted with; seeing history as a sequence of contingent incommensurable vocabularies serving different aims is a useful kind of seeing for the liberal pragmatists. Rorty's irony, in such a way, is not a universal position; his recognition of his own particularity is itself particular. And because Rorty has thoroughly uprooted all the claims for context-transcendence from his position, he is able to avoid self-contradictory implications that other “post-modern” thinkers, whom Habermas has criticized in his *Discourse on Modernity*, didn't.

I have a lot of sympathy for Rorty's project. At this point, however, it should be stressed that his sophisticated manoeuvres come at a great cost. Rorty offers us a story about history, which is nothing else but a contingent sequence of different goals and corresponding tools for coping with it. He reminds us constantly that we, as consistent ironists, must be aware that this story itself is not the essence of history but only a tool, a nominal description that works well for liberal pragmatists. But what about our goals themselves? Those goals, which “always already” guide us, and which make it possible for us to make sense of things, are not themselves tools. We have them for no further reason. Otherwise, we would fall into a version of endless regress: if all goals we have are tools for further goals, then there would be neither tools nor goals, and the very notion of instrumental pragmatism would be rendered unconceivable. At least some fundamental goals must be pursued for their own sake. Why, according to what principle, do we adopt them? The major problem with Rorty's conception is that we are not allowed to ask questions of this sort. Since our capacities of making sense of things are bound to particular vocabularies, and vocabularies are goal-oriented, we can analyse the process of attaining goals only through the prism of some other particular goal that we already have. We are prohibited from going further and asking what kind of process this is, i.e., what such goals *are* and why do find some goals convincing and some don't. This is a kind of enterprise that crosses the boundaries of particular vocabularies and investigates *what vocabularies are as such*, which would be an ontological kind of inquiry. We would have to ask who we ourselves are and what we do in our existence. For Rorty, abstaining from this move amounts to acknowledging our historicity. An attempt to transcend the particularity of vocabularies is an illegitimate attempt to break free from history, which always ends up the same way – as a mere projection of one vocabulary into others. We cannot break free from the

world and take a look at what history is from a bird-eye point of view; there is no way we can really get what kind of essence history has.

But here is where Rorty's nominalism cracks in the most important place since, in fact, Rorty's approach presupposes some essence even though it acknowledges that it cannot even try to grasp it. There must be a real historical process, which *supplies* us with goals and solicits to create corresponding vocabularies, and which remains, at the same time, necessarily irreproachable for historical beings such as ourselves. So, even though we cannot say anything of substance about this historical process, we must hold that it has decisive power over us. Since we cannot ask how we accept goals as such, the general logic of attaining and dropping particular goals while remaining inaccessible to us, structures nonetheless our capacities of making sense of things: not only can't we describe it – we receive our ability to describe anything at all only based on it. There isn't anything nominal about such a situation. What we are offered here is to settle for the fact that every possible vocabulary is only an appearance of history, a manifestation of the fundamental principle that can and will appear differently at some point. We cannot know how goals come into life – all we can know is based on those goals that have been already metabolized. This, I think, is nothing but a form of essence/appearance dualism, which gets reintroduced at the very heart of Rorty's approach. History asserts itself as an “unmoved mover” – something that enables forwards while not being enabled backwards, thus, remaining hidden and inapproachable in the same way any good old-fashioned metaphysical essence does. Specific vocabularies, on the other side, are *manifestations* that can only present to us an appearing side of history – this might be a story about salvation, Absolute Spirit or contingent goals. What is important is that all of them are true to the same extent as all of them are manifestations of the same essence.

This cripples our capacity to choose among different goals and vocabularies, which is by no means an idle problem for Rorty. Since he stresses that history is discontinuous, he also needs to explain how genuinely new elements come into life and suppress older ones. But when it comes to finding a way of analysing such innovations, it turns out that Rorty is much more explicit regarding how we should *not* analyse them. That is, he spends a lot of time arguing that a switch from one vocabulary to another is not an argumentatively justified move from something inadequate to something truer. The positive part of his account comes down to very few vague notes and his general emphasis on experimenting. We should try thinking differently and maybe, just maybe, it will turn out that this new way of thinking is more attractive. But what do the terms such as “promising,” “better” or “attractive” mean? What kind of explanatory work do they offer? Those concepts are supposed to convince those “rising generations” to change their values and goals, yet, it is absolutely not clear what is their actual content. What exactly should happen during our experiment that we suddenly find a democratic society “better” and more

“attractive” than a Nazi one? Rorty cannot give any answer to this question because, in fact, his own methodological assumption precludes him from saying anything substantial about it. For the way new goals come into life, and the way they create possibilities of new discourses is a process that is inaccessible to historical beings. It happens on the other side of the history that remains necessarily invisible for us.

So, Rorty talks about “a hundred years of inconclusive muddle”⁸⁶ that leads to a change in vocabulary for one reason only – he has no explanation other than a behaviouristic one. We tried and we tried and we tried, and then somewhere along the way we have found ourselves doing things in a new way. The proactive terms Rorty uses in order to describe a change in goals and vocabularies are only meant to hide the essentially non-human side of this change, a side that requires no conscious participation. Behind the pragmatic terms he employs hides an assumption that we are *moved* by the history and its goals that simply enter our lives at various historical periods. We, thus, can only hope that history will tell us that our values are better than somebody else’s and that they would appear to others as promising as they appear to us. But this can only mean that Rorty attempt to defend freedom against truth is an attempt to jump out of the frying pan into the fire: he has freed us from the ‘tyranny of truth,’⁸⁷ a power of objective reality to enforce itself upon us without our cooperation by selling off to the far worse tyranny of chance, an absolutely unknown principle that can be barely formulated as an intelligible problem.

The unsatisfactory consequences of this approach become especially obvious when we reach Rorty’s discussion of self-creation. In two words, the fundamental goal of self-creation consists of the urgent need to assert one’s own uniqueness and individuality through the creation of novel aims and vocabularies. One cannot make sense of one’s own irreducible individuality and spontaneity if one continues to express himself in a vocabulary that was created by somebody else and take somebody else’s goals as one’s own. But this emphasis on novelty is extremely problematic. Indeed, if taken by itself, novelty as such is a bad criterion. Vocabularies make it possible for us to re-create and re-describe ourselves not so much because they are novel – we can think of dozens of novel ways of expressing ourselves every day but none of them would be worthy of serious consideration. Other than being novel, vocabularies must be promising enough, and they must find fertile ground in one’s own existence. It is not just about novelty and making oneself unique – it is also about genuine thinking, depth and richness, which cannot be reduced to the mean of self-expression. We naturally and justly tend to consider a novel claim that is nothing else but an attempt to assert one’s own uniqueness as idle. The

⁸⁶ Rorty, *CIS*, p. 6

⁸⁷ Arendt, “Philosophy and Politics,” p. 78

most valuable element of self-creation cannot be expressed in terms of novelty, which only accompanies it as a by-product. And even then, the genuine novelty is not always the case: it might be sometimes hard to differ specifically between Auden and Rilke in terms of novel means that Auden has introduced, but no one would argue that he has failed to establish himself as an original poet. Rorty rightly undertakes the problem of creativity and reinterpretation that undoubtedly plays a crucial role in modern societies; people create new identities and find new words to express themselves far more frequently than in more traditionalistic cultures. But he completely lacks the relevant conceptual tools to make sense of it. For Rorty the nature of this process, although clearly present and important, is a complete mystery, which is why he has to access it through the accidental and observable characteristics such as novelty.

All these problems and unwanted consequences, I think, eventually boil down to Rorty's neglect of ontology. As we have seen, he prohibits from the very beginning the questions like what goals and vocabularies as such are. He speaks of the *temptation* to "look for criteria is a species of the more general temptation to think of the world, or the human self, as possessing an intrinsic nature, an essence,"⁸⁸ adding later that "it is to say that the term 'intrinsic nature' is one which it would pay us not to use, an expression which has caused more trouble than it has been worth."⁸⁹ By his lights, as we have seen, an enquiry concerning our 'intrinsic nature' would mean an illegitimate switch from epistemic concerns to investigations of things themselves without reference to our epistemic commitments. But despite his best efforts, his approach is still incomplete without this ontological line of questioning. And being incomplete, it replicates some of the most criticisable traits of Heideggerian obedience to Being: we have to be *receptive* or open in our experimentation in order to grasp the potential 'attractivity' of new goals that might occur to us; Man is the shepherd of Goals. So, contrary to his claim that "we no longer worship anything, where we treat nothing as a quasi-divinity, where we treat everything - our language, - conscience, our community - as a product of time and chance,"⁹⁰ Rortian practices do preserve this receptivity to the history that gives itself to a man in mysterious ways - it just makes it so obscure and unclear that it becomes complicated to spot and evaluate its real explanatory weight.

Rorty thinks that there is a kind of either/or situation: either we postulate some intrinsic nature of human beings, thus, locking them up within a particular worldly frame or we preserve their freedom at the cost of abandoning any talk of intrinsic natures. So, we must choose history (and freedom) *over* ontology (and metaphysical truth); "the historicist turn has helped free us, gradually but steadily, from

⁸⁸ R. Rorty, *CIS*, p.6

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22

theology and metaphysics - from the temptation to look for an escape from time and chance.”⁹¹ Recognition of our historicity amounts for Rorty to dropping the talk of ontology and of what it is like to be a human leaving this question to concrete practices developed in given historical circumstances. But this juxtaposition only reveals a serious limitation of Rorty’s approach. If the price we have to pay for freedom becomes so extensive that we find ourselves cut off from the most important questions of who we are and what kind of goals we have in our existence, then there must be a problem in the very way we pose this problem. So, instead of backsliding into traditional metaphysics, we should stop thinking of the situation as if we have no history in one pocket and history all the way down in another. One way of doing this (which would be pursued in further chapters) is to confront Rorty’s idea of historicism with Heidegger’s famous note that the historicity of Dasein is “prior to what is called history,”⁹² a note that Rorty is too quick to dismiss as overly traditional. Not only will this leave some of the most crucial Rortian insights intact but strengthen them by leaving aside implausible consequences and fostering his position with finer conceptual tools of analysis. The originality of Rorty’s insights will be rendered even more evident once found on more solid methodological ground.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. xiii

⁹² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 17

III. Habermas's Transcendental Pragmatism

Finally, I want to explore a more Continental perspective on the problem of meaning and normativity offered by the “Kantian Pragmatism” of Habermas that combines a closer bond to the ontological aspect of the Kantian project with an extensive overlap in interests and methodology with Rorty’s and Brandom’s approaches. The agreement among the three thinkers is mostly built around three points. First, Habermas, just like Brandom and Rorty, holds that meaning and understanding are essentially intersubjective phenomena: they are possible only insofar there is an “intersubjective relation between the speaker and at least one hearer capable of adopting a critical position.”⁹³ The genuine mode of speech is realized from a second-person of view; understanding a claim means also taking a stand on it, thus, endorsing it or ascribing it to a partner in communication. Second, Habermas is following Wittgenstein in treating meaning as an objectivation of use. What we mean by an utterance depends on how this utterance is located within a more broadly defined level of praxis. The starting point of Habermasian, therefore, is not formal systems that enable communication, but the actual praxis of deploying speech acts in everyday situations. Third, Habermas also postulates an intimate connection between meaningfulness and rationality. We can understand the meaning of something only insofar as we are able to place it in rational relation to other claims, viewing it as a possible reason or conclusion for other claims. An ability to give and ask for reasons is not a situational tool but the constitutive element of meaning as such. In such a way, all three authors converge on the point that meaning is a social, pragmatic and rational phenomenon (although Rorty would of course have a much more flexible idea of rationality).

But unlike Brandom who does not elaborate on different inferential patterns, and unlike Rorty who postulates a plurality of incommensurable vocabularies, Habermas does explicitly differentiate among the three of them. He holds that there are three different domains of validity (objective, moral and expressive), a distinction that succeeds the Kantian differentiation between practical and theoretical reasoning. Even though the process of justification is seen as rational through and through – we can understand something only by placing it within the space of reasons – the rules of justification are in an important sense different in each corresponding domain. While being rationalistic and reason-based, they are different with regard to their aim; since we are doing different things while participating in different types of discourses, our reasons are guided by different criteria. While talking about the external world, we tacitly accept a presupposition that there is a transcendent, objective world and our claims about it are potentially reconcilable. While talking about morality, we presuppose that there

⁹³ Habermas, *On Pragmatics of Communication*, p. 186

must be a rule that will be acceptable for all the participants. Finally, when expressing feelings, we must do it sincerely. In Kantian terminology, those aims are regulative ideas, which enable discourses by regulating their rules and organizing our experience. Instead of being part of discourses, regulative ideas delimitate and structure what counts as a better reason with regard to a particular aim; reasons function as a rock and regulative ideas as a hard place.

Habermas, however, uses a different term to describe this regulatory function. In the spirit of the time, he seeks to de-transcendentalize Kant's project avoiding theological and mentalist implications of an enclosed subject that enables thinking from the other side of the world. The shortest way of doing this, in Habermas's mind, is by transferring these transcendental regulative ideas from the subject's mind to the domain of social praxis. Consequently, he wants to replace the term "regulative *ideas*" with "formal-pragmatic *presuppositions*." The latter term does the same amount of explanatory work the former did: those are presuppositions we "must" make to make any sense at all; they are "ideal"⁹⁴ (or better, "idealizing") rather than simply factual. But since Habermas wants to locate formal-pragmatic presuppositions on the level of human praxis instead of tracing it back to the subject's mind, the "must" of these presuppositions is purely grammatical; it "has a Wittgensteinian rather than a Kantian sense."⁹⁵ These presuppositions, continues Habermas, stems from the conceptual interconnections – they are the foundational cores of language games not constitutive principles of our minds. Those "ideal" presuppositions, therefore, are at the same time factual since, although unreachable and counterfactual if taken in themselves, they are actually made by anyone who enters a discourse. Habermas, therefore, attains a more modest position than Kant. All he wants is to analyse particular language games and their specific rules, so he can leave a number of questions aside such as the problem of perception, naturalism or brain structures. Habermas does not need to deal with the mysterious synthetic powers of a subject that unifies and grounds the validity of claims. The validity of claims within language game is in a certain sense analytical: if I am raising a claim about a certain thing in the world without holding a presupposition that there is an external independent world, I am simply contradicting myself; if I am saying that something ought to be done without presupposing that there is such thing as a rational norm acceptable for rational agents, then I am contradicting myself in the same fashion; if I am raising an expressing claim, I must, in general, assume that expressions must be sincere in order to be valid.

On the other side, Habermas holds a much stronger connection to Kant than his pragmatic contemporaries. Habermas does not go as far as Wittgenstein and Rorty saying that there are as many different "musts" as there are language games. Transformation of Kant's regulative ideas does not result

⁹⁴ Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, p. 25

⁹⁵ Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, p. 86

in abandoning the strong transcendental position and in favour of goal-relative vocabularies as proposed by Rorty. Habermas is claiming that “practices for which we cannot imagine functional equivalents in our sociocultural forms of life are ‘fundamental.’”⁹⁶ Three domains of validity that Habermas has specified constitute a formal skeleton of language as such, an “inherent *telos* of human speech.”⁹⁷ Habermas, thus, wraps the all too familiar Kantian a priori into a new pragmatic paper, which is what makes Habermas’s position interesting for the current purposes: Habermas adopts Kant’s ontological assumptions much more explicitly. Just like Kant’s tripartite questioning (what can I know, what can I do and what can I hope for) was aimed at elucidation of who we *are*, Habermas formal-pragmatic presuppositions are not tools we have for something else. The a priori structures of language describe what we can in general do with it, and who we, rational language-users, are. The explanation cannot go further. Human beings are beings that know the objective world and seek a just community and sincere expression. Those things define who we are not because they are justified; on the contrary, they are what makes justification possible. Even though Habermas transforms Kantian regulative ideas into ideal pragmatic presuppositions, he did not alter the ontological role they are supposed to play. He only gives us a clear, more plausible answer concerning the existence of such presuppositions: they exist in human praxis since they must be made by actually existing individuals every time they perform a speech act.

It is this point that defines the nature of the disagreement between Habermas and analytic pragmatists such as Rorty and Bernstein and others. The disagreement sources from the fact that these idealizing presuppositions are supposed to answer questions, which are prohibited by analytic pragmatism. The latter holds that it is not possible to demonstrate the strong transcendental status of formal-pragmatic presuppositions since those presuppositions themselves are subjected to the epistemic limitations being placed in a particular discourse. As Bernstein points out, “the various attempts to spell out these [ideal] conditions amount to little more than a promissory note – little more than a glorification of what we now take to be the best standards of justification.”⁹⁸ In other words, Habermas claims to overcome the specifically epistemic limitations imposed by the historically conditioned character of our cognitive capacities, which is an attempt that is doomed to failure.

I don’t want to subscribe to this line of criticism here (although analytic pragmatists have the point, which points to the methodological problem of the status of cognition discussed in greater detail in chapter 4) believing that Habermas’s attempt to investigate who we *are* not only is defensible but also necessary. At this point, however, I want to emphasize aspects that make this particular Habermasian attempt to investigate who we *are* undefendable as it stands. Let’s once again take a look at the

⁹⁶ Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, p. 86

⁹⁷ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. I, p. 287

⁹⁸ Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn*, p. 128

expressive domain of validity, which according to Habermas, covers a broad group of claims that can be understood primarily based on the criterion of sincerity or authenticity. When somebody expresses his mood, feeling or desire, we have no way of accessing this claim other than tracing its “practical consequences,” thus, testing if the speaker behaves “consistently thereafter.”⁹⁹ Understanding an expressive claim, in such a way, amounts to the understanding of what consequences he is actually committed, which is a basic pragmatic claim. Demonstratable adherence to consequences here functions as *reasons*; so, if we are confused by a certain expressive claim, we tend to say something like “I don’t believe you mean it” expecting that a person in question would provide us with some consequences that would support and provide justification for his claim. Expressive claims, in such a way, have “meaningful expressions, understandable in their context, which are connected with criticizable validity claims”¹⁰⁰ just like claims regarding the objective world or normative rightness. The meaningfulness of an expressive claim is, therefore, equally dependent upon the rational game of giving and asking for reasons that help to elucidate the meaning of expressive validity claims.

Not every sincere claim, however, can count as rational. As Habermas further argues, “we call a person rational who interprets the nature of his desires and feelings in the light of culturally established standards of value.”¹⁰¹ So, it is not enough to demonstrate what practical consequences I am ready to accept in order to convince other people that my claim is rational. In order to be rational, those consequences must be in proximate agreement with generally accepted standards of behaviour and forms of life; my terror of open spaces might be quite sincere, but nobody will automatically agree that it is rational and acceptable in any way. So, Habermas uses Normand’s example showing how the marginal and obscure desire to have “a saucer of mud” can be rendered more understandable by linking it to the taste of “rich river smell.” Habermas, however, does not want to admit that community standards have the final word on the validity of expressive claims. Just like the rationality of private mental states is affected by the expectations imposed by the standards of a given historical community, community standards themselves can be well altered if faced with appropriate criticism. The most essential element of expressive rationality, in such a way, is not whether or not somebody’s preferences coincide with that of communities, but an ability to “adopt ‘a reflexive attitude’ towards such feelings:” if I am sufficiently rational to justify my desires and link them to corresponding practical consequences, it might well happen that a new standard will be accepted by a community. A well-justified expressive claim might

⁹⁹ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. I, p. 15

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 20

motivate other people to recognize “in these descriptions their own reactions to similar situations”¹⁰² and, thus, to accept the raised expressive claim as their own.

As we can see, the validity of claims belonging to this domain is somehow restricted: the validity of a claim does not presuppose its automatic acceptance. Expressive claims are not expected to be universal and we cannot expect that everyone who hears some well-justified feeling would adopt it as their own. If the consequences I am prepared to hold contradict what is generally accepted, my claim would be valid, sincere and understandable to a certain degree even though it would lack sufficient resources to appear convincing enough in order to be accepted by other members of my community. The only guaranteed result is that validity claims become *more* understandable but not sharable. Habermas’s analysis of sincerity was elaborated to provide an explanation of phenomena that can be broadly described as non-cognitive or, at least, as less cognitive than moral and objective phenomena. The game of giving and asking for reasons is employed here in order to “guide” our understanding instead of prescribing it. As, McCarthy puts it, “the general idea here seems to be that our wants, needs, feelings, emotions, attitudes, sentiments, and the like are not normally shaped directly by the force of arguments.”¹⁰³ While discussing this problem, Ingram makes an even more telling remark saying that “what guides perception. . . is the perlocutionary - or non-explicit and prediscursive - effect attached to what are otherwise simple, non-evaluative descriptive statements such as ‘The drawing X is particularly balanced.’”¹⁰⁴ The latter claim, I think, is key to understanding Habermas’s position. As is well known, perlocutionary effects are excluded by him from the domain of communicative actions: they are parasitic on illocutionary forces that enable reaching mutual agreement among actors. Desires, evaluations and motivations of a different sort (as constituted by this perlocutionary effect) have no *meaning* or *logic* of their own: they receive one by being placed within the linguistic sphere where different agents explore their expressive capacities having the possibility of an agreement in their background. So, rationality plays a much more formal role in the expressive domain than in normative and objective ones: normative and objective domains also imply certain ontological presuppositions – that of the objective world and ideal society. In the case of the expressive domain, however, rationality functions as a purely *auxiliary* force that links expressive, subjective elements with one another, thus, making it possible to cover the gap between an endorsed desire and an unendorsed one. The idea here is that non-rational elements (feeling, desires etc.) are mediated through the rational structure of language and attain a sort of shareability, a possibility of being expressed and shared with other members of communication. So,

¹⁰² Ibid., 17

¹⁰³ McCarthy, *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory*, p. 187

¹⁰⁴ Ingram, “Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment,” p. 85

Habermas says that “expressively determined forms of interaction (for example, countercultural forms of life) do not form structures that are rationalizable in and of themselves.”¹⁰⁵

This is one of the main reasons why Habermas wants to keep morality and ethics apart. The project of rational reconstruction of language, which postulates rationality as the transcendental condition of any possible meaningfulness, is naturally challenged by phenomena that are less cognitive or non-cognitive at all. Habermas’s strategy for avoiding this problem is, first of all, to soften the role of reason when it comes to such phenomena (it “guides” instead of prescribing) by saying that perlocutionary effects become meaningful once being placed in a rational linguistic praxis, while “in and of themselves” remaining meaningless. So, “better or worse” of desires and feelings, their meaning has little to do with them themselves but with their social and rational employment. Second, Habermas tries to isolate and localize this non-cognitive area. Moral theory, which is occupied with universal questions, universal rights and duties (“we-perspective”) is different from the questions of one’s own private feelings and desires, which arise “in the context of a particular life history or unique form of life.”¹⁰⁶ This unique form of life, in other words, is a question of identity and of how I should live *my* life right. “Obviously,” says Habermas, “there is no answer to such questions that would be independent of the given context and thus would bind all persons in the same way.”¹⁰⁷ The project of rationalization and development of society cannot be linked to ethics. Expressive domain with its limited validity can hardly employ any progressive movement anywhere simply because it can hardly overcome its own particularistic implications and reach universality – there is no sure way to render my values and preferences universally sharable. But insofar as this “ethical” domain is localized and denied any substantial influence on the structure of society and processes of coordinating actions, this is hardly a problem for Habermasian theory.

Except that it is. Once the meaning of expressive elements becomes so purely formal and detached from perlocutionary effect, little can be done to sew them back together; rephrasing Davidson it can be said that once meaning and ‘perlocutary effects’ go separate ways this way, no shotgun wedding could marry the original mates. Take, for example, Habermas’s suggestion that the explanation of rationality or irrationality of expressive claims is based on potential shareability: if I recognize my own reactions in somebody’s expression, I am likely to accept it. This is clearly insufficient logic. An evaluation of desires (as good/bad, rational/irrational or worthy/unworthy) has little to do with the fact that somebody shares or doesn’t share them: we might have desires that we consider irrational and yet endorse them just as we can think of rational desires that we don’t endorse. Acceptance is a second-

¹⁰⁵ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. I, pp. 238-9

¹⁰⁶ Habermas, *The Future of Human Nature*, p. 3

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

order perspective that does not explain our evaluations but presupposes it – at least according to our everyday intuitions. The mere fact of presence in me of some desire, if we accept Habermas’s basic assumption that desires have no self-standing meaning, tells me nothing about its acceptability; it just is what it is. The question of how unbiased or particularistic our evaluation is not important here; what matters is that because of his inability to make sense of this *distinct normativity* of expressive elements, Habermas inverts the normal course of explanation saying that we accept something as worthy *insofar we share it* (e.g., ‘I am scared in this situation, therefore, it would be also rational for other people to be scared in it’), instead of holding the self-obvious *share-insofar-worthy formula* (e.g., ‘this situation is worthy of being scared, so I should be scared if I happen to be in it’). If accepted, this line of thought would completely relativize the expressive domain and encapsulate individuals since every individual would consider his desires as rational and everything that disagrees with them as irrational.

Habermas tries to correct this unwanted implication by recognizing the possibility of re-evaluation the desires in the light of the cultural norms; by doing this, he intends to soften this self-centred nature of expressive rationality. But this kind of correction is, in fact, an over-correction that runs counter to Habermas’s starting point. If the meaningfulness of expressive claims indeed consists of their shareability (I can share your experience, therefore, your experience is meaningful), then it is not clear why would somebody go from one’s own private desires that are rational *per se* to exploring irrational ones. How would we even attain the “reflective attitude” to our desires if the starting point of every understanding is necessarily our desires and feeling themselves? Assuming that there is, in fact, this possibility of problematizing the expressive claims in the light of cultural values means that their meaningfulness *has never been* a matter of their shareability but always a matter of what is *ought* to be shared, which is prescribed by the community. If my own feelings and desires are a criterion of meaningfulness, there is no way we could evaluate them in the light of cultural norms; if I do this evaluation nonetheless, there is no way my own private feelings and desires can still be considered as a criterion of meaningfulness of the expressive domain.

Habermas sometimes tries to avoid this impasse by conferring a special sense on authenticity implying that some desires or feelings are true or “appropriate” and some are false or “inappropriate,” which is a criterion that seems to be neither reducible to private experience of individuals nor to the established communal standards. Thus, Habermas argues that not only a community can correct the irrational feelings and desires of individuals but also individuals via rational argumentation can change the communal standards of what is considered rational in the expressive domain. However, the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate is quite a complex distinction to hold for someone

who has no straightforward answer to the immediately arising question “appropriate to what?”¹⁰⁸ Since neither one’s own private feelings, nor community standards can function here as *explanans*, we are left clueless with regard to what makes a given value more appropriate. While Habermas relies on the self-obvious intuition that there is a sort of typical worthiness connected to the expressing domain, he is, in fact, unable to provide a sufficient theoretical basis to explain it; Habermasian system cannot give us a place hard enough to provide any sort of orientation in the expressive domain explaining to us what counts here as a better reason. The reason for this is, of course, Habermas’s methodological decision to identify rational and meaningful and push our desires, pre-rational forms of life into the area of perlocutionary effects. As a result, this formal-pragmatic presupposition does not offer us a truncated validity that nonetheless ‘guides’ us, but lacks of any validity at all. The purely formal conception of expressive rationality has no way of penetrating the self-standing worthiness of our expressions.

These problems become especially obvious when we look at Habermas’s later theory of aesthetic experience, which is meant to play precisely this medium where “the *adequacy* of value standards, the vocabulary of our evaluative language generally, is made thematic.”¹⁰⁹ Over and over, he stresses that “aesthetic experience” can render a certain desire or feeling to be “a rational motive for accepting the corresponding standards of value.”¹¹⁰ Aesthetic claims, which, according to Habermas’s renewed position,¹¹¹ are not placed within a specific domain of validity, “intermesh” all three domains and encompass them by the hypothetical “truth-potential.”¹¹² An authentic expression of a perlocutionary effect systematically refracts everyday situations resulting in an alteration of a system of intelligibility and the creation of new meaning. Habermas speaks of the power of art to “open our eyes”¹¹³ letting us to “disclose anew an apparently familiar reality.”¹¹⁴ According to this revised, later approach, such a re-disclosure is no longer subjected to the criterion of sincerity only but also raises claims on worthiness, that is, on “artistic truth, aesthetic harmony, exemplary validity, innovative force, and authenticity.”¹¹⁵ This move, however, only further deepens the above-mentioned problem. Habermas wants to remove the aesthetic experience from the everydayness and its routine problem-solving; consequently, he subjects it to criteria lying outside the strictly cognitive domain. But by trying to defend our cognitive capacities from aestheticization he ends up impoverishing aesthetic experience up to the extent where it becomes impossible to find any actual content in his appeal to worthiness. As we have seen, perlocutionary effects are not rationalizable “in and of themselves,” so they cannot say

¹⁰⁸ Ingram, “Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment,” p. 83

¹⁰⁹ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol.1, p. 20

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Habermas has rethought his original intention of grounding the aesthetic experience in expressive domain after being criticized by Wellmer

¹¹² Habermas, “Questions and Counter-Questions,” p. 237

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 207

anything regarding their worthiness. They are what remains necessarily silent as our ability to talk and make sense of things is directly dependent upon illocutionary, not perlocutionary force. By moving art into the domain of perlocutionary effects, Habermas, thus, not only softens the criterion of aesthetic experience but releases any kind of constraints imposed on aesthetics, thus, enclosing it in an ‘everything goes’ kind of perspective implying that every perlocutionary effect is as meaningful as any other. So, when Habermas says that art demonstrates how it is possible to create new standards of value and convinces a community that something new is worthy of being accepted, we are still left clueless with regard to how exactly it happens; we are clueless about what makes certain perlocutionary effects worthy of being expressed and others not so much so.

Because of this, his idea of the aesthetic process and aesthetic learning acquire peculiarly objectivistic traits. According to Habermas, modern aesthetics, which is parasitic upon the differentiation among various domains of validity, seeks to “unbound” and “decentre” our subjectivity in order to investigate this pre-discursive and pre-rational phenomenon, which gives us a chance of grasping “the expurgated elements of the unconscious, the fantastic, and the mad, the material and the bodily, thus to everything in our speechless contact with reality which is fleeting, so contingent, so immediate, so individualized, simultaneously so far and so near that it escapes our usual categorial grasp.”¹¹⁶ Aesthetic learning is unique in the sense of disclosing something that resists this “usual” rational, meaning-oriented grasp: a work of art can lay an effect upon us, but there is no way we can conceptualize and rationalize it. But since there is no clear explanation as to why it is meaningful enough to express “the expurgated elements of the unconscious, the fantastic, and the mad, the material and the bodily” and not something else (which, by itself, already is a formidable logical difficulty), Habermas can only localize aesthetic learning in the domain of the means of expression (not in something that is worthy of being expressed.) The means of art and its content get radically detached: we can have a rational debate only concerning means of explication, i.e., about how rational means enable a coherent expression – but the expression itself remains incomprehensible for any comparison or analysis. Aesthetic learning, in this sense, would be measured in nothing else but in “greater fluidity and flexibility in modes of access to our desires and feelings.”¹¹⁷ There is a number of quite implausible presuppositions here: aesthetics is not an accumulation of data about what ‘triggers’ people; the process of aesthetic creation is not that of blind experimenting; finally, subjectivity is not some sort of experiencing toolbox, which can be filled with different sorts of experiences. The habermasian approach treats the aesthetic process as if it was a quasi-scientific enterprise that tries to extract and research non-

¹¹⁶ Habermas, “Questions and Counterquestions,” pp. 200-201

¹¹⁷ White, *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas*, p. 149

rational elements based on tools that are external to the subject matter, thus, arriving at “some kind” of knowing. In this sense, a particular effect of, let’s say, Munch’s *The Scream* would amount to some sort of activation of our pre-existent capacity of despair that enters into almost chemical reaction with an intelligibility of a modern individual and results in a unique kind of further unanalysable disclosure. Not only this picture denies any genuinely formative power that art has; it also commits itself to some form of aesthetic “Myth of the Given” suggesting that desires and feelings have somehow pre-existed and then only found their expression in a certain technique.

This is only a part of the problem. Along with the attempt to analyse the expressive domain by softening its claim on universal validity, the second part of Habermas’s plan – to localize it and deny important functions – fails as well. The strict division among the three domains of validity is simply unsustainable. This is an aspect that has already been tackled by such authors as Bernstein, Warnke and others. Bernstein, for example, has claimed normative and ethic dimensions, “values and norms” is a “dynamic shifting continuum”¹¹⁸ rather than two separated domains. A prohibition of torture goes hand in hand with what can be considered as torture (psychological torture? dietary restrictions? waterboarding?) and this concrete application cannot be even theoretically distinguished from the universal norm itself.

He inclines us to take the prohibition of torture, which is ‘a good candidate for a universally binding norm.’ Yet, what exactly constitutes a torture depends upon a whole segment of aspects that cannot be detached from more particularistic, culturally dependent aspects. Can we consider waterboarding a full-blown torture, asks us Bernstein? This would depend on discussing “its history and how it is used, and what are its effects on victims, what sorts of physical and psychological pain it inflicts, etc.” And if here answers still appears to be too obvious, we could go further and ask what about psychological torture? What about dietary restrictions? While Habermas’s distinction between revealing and justifying universal norms on the one side and applying them on another can be sometimes useful, it would be a mistake to assume that we have “clear or fixed criteria for determining what constitutes torture, and can then decide whether they are applicable to the practice of waterboarding.” Warnke makes an even better example asking whether abortion should be prohibited.¹¹⁹ The answer depends upon whether or not we think of it as murder, but there is no way of answering what constitutes murder without relying on some ethical and religious presuppositions. In other words, we need to acknowledge the basic pragmatic point that the use of norms determines their meaning and that the domain of contingent and particularistic cultural application of norms co-participates in

¹¹⁸ Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn*, p. 196

¹¹⁹ White, “Communicative Rationality and Cultural values,” p. 130

determining the meaning of universal norms. Having fully acknowledged this fact, we realize that aesthetic values and forms of life turn out to be much less innocent and more influential than Habermas wants them to be. This means that the entire Habermasian system based on rationalism and overcoming relativism is endangered. If non-cognitive elements of meaning, which have no claim on unlimited validity, are influential enough to affect the normative and objective domains, then Habermas will end up sitting on the same bench with the world-disclosing type philosophers such as Heidegger, whom he was so desperate to prove wrong.

In such a way, Habermas, despite offering us a description of who we are and what do we do in our lives, continues to hold that our epistemic capacities (whether it concerns the objective, normative or expressive domain) *define* who we are instead of holding that it is our epistemic capacities that are *defined by* who we are. This decision forces him to stretch our capacity to provide justification too far covering even those elements that are naturally less responsive to reasons or not responsive at all, which results in the above-mentioned problems. Habermas's approach reveals its narrowness because it is unable neither to explain, nor properly isolate non-cognitive elements of human existence, thus, failing to provide a sufficiently broad and satisfactory account of our capacities of making sense of the world and ourselves.

Summary of the first chapter

In this chapter, we have seen how the typical to neo-pragmatism priority of the epistemic starting point over the ontological one results in different versions of the same problem: once we have picked the investigation of the condition of possibility, a socio-linguistic practice of the game of giving and asking for reasons, as our starting point, we have committed ourselves to the task of explaining the whole domain of human intelligibility in epistemic terms, which is a move that limits the number of available explanatory strategies and eventually results in truncated accounts of meaning and understanding. Brandom's general omission of the question of the *source* of normativity, Rorty's *overstretching* of the process of justification in an attempt to cover the whole breadth and richness of human existence, Habermas's attempt to *expel* a significant part of human existence into the domain of partial rationality and non-rational perlocutionary effects are all signs of the same conceptual shortage, a general inability to make relevant distinctions and to treat different phenomena differently. In the following chapter, we will investigate how this limitation can be avoided by appealing to ontology, and this without finding ourselves in the network of problems that are traditionally linked by such an appeal; we will start from being hoping that the attempt to make sense of our epistemic capacities

ontologically will turn out to be more successful than the reverse attempt of making sense of our meaningful access to the world epistemically.

2. Pragmatism of Existential Ontology

Turning our attention to existential phenomenology and its emphasis on ontology, we should start by acknowledging the specific way in which ontology is treated here. The existential approach seeks to account for its own facticity by expressing an ontological interest in a particular being, a concrete subject, its position in the world and the influence that follows from such a positional and contingent character of its existence. If neo-pragmatism as “epistemological behaviourism”¹²⁰ seeks to argue in favour of *epistemization of ontology*, that is, to demonstrate that an appeal to ontology (to what is there) has as its condition particular epistemic practices (what we *do* as cognitive agents), existential ontology attempts to *ontologize the epistemology*: instead of questioning the epistemic condition of our appeal to ontology, existential phenomenology tries to further explicate in what sense our epistemology can be said to *be*. Differently put, neo-pragmatism specifies a certain doing that makes it possible for us to access the world in a meaningful way while existential phenomenology investigates *what kind of being this ‘doing’ has*. It starts with an assumption that being of a concrete individual who exists in the world is just as much a pre-condition of any enquiry as any kind of epistemic practice that is employed for making this enquiry.

A typical and, perhaps, the most explicit example of how the phenomenological emphasis on being is different from the pre-critical dream of delegating the epistemic authority to ‘things themselves’ is a Sartrean argument around which the whole structure of *Being and Nothingness* is laid out: “being of a phenomenon”, says Sartre, “is not resolved in a phenomenon of being.”¹²¹ The argument has several steps. First, following the fundamental phenomenological maxima *‘Wie viel Schein, so viel Sein’*, Sartre equates existent and its appearance: from now on, appearances refer us neither to essences hidden behind of appearances of things nor to their mysterious *powers* of things that get actualized (e.g. famous Nietzschean “the lightning flashes” where the power of ‘flashing’ precedes the effect of lightning) but to the very being of things: we can say that a thing *is* insofar it appears and its appearance gives us nothing but its being. But what about being of phenomena? Can we apply the same rule saying that *being* of phenomena consists of their appearance? Hardly. While our access to beings in the world is essentially phenomenal, the access itself (phenomena) cannot be phenomenal in the same sense – otherwise, we would fall into the endless regress where every act of appearing would require another act of appearing in order to guarantee its existence; an appearance of a table, for example, would require an appearance of the appearance of the table in order to establish its being, which, in turn, would require

¹²⁰ Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, p. 173

¹²¹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. xlix

yet another appearance. Appearances of things, therefore, cannot sufficiently substantiate their own claim on existence; they themselves “can not be measured by knowledge.”¹²² Being of phenomena requires further clarification: in what sense phenomena *are*, i.e., have their own being, asks us Sartre? As something known, phenomena refers us first to knowledge and then to “the being who knows (in his capacity as being, not as being known)...”¹²³ This means that we must abandon the primacy of cognition (i.e. the fact that things are given phenomenally) if we are to explain the *existence* of cognition (i.e. the very being of this fact of givenness) and to search for the trans-phenomenal being of the subject, who alone avoids the condition of phenomenality – existing insofar being disclosed. By abandoning the primacy of knowledge, we, thus, discover the being of the subject who exists even though it is not accessed or cognized in any way, a simple fact that can be best illustrated by a sudden bout of nausea: I surely *am* nauseous without any regard to noticing or not noticing it thematically.

Is this a foundationalist claim? The simple answer is no, not at all. It does not describe any ontologically privileged starting point that would provide the foundation of our epistemologies. It is a purely *formal* indication. It is important to understand that Sartre is not Sellars. His primary interest is not related to *what* is given and *what* epistemic rules must underlie this givenness; the ontological line of Sartre’s enquiry does not intrude into the area of competence of epistemology. This is clearly stated by Sartre himself who acknowledges that epistemology and ontology *mutually* presuppose one another: “if every metaphysics in fact presupposes a theory of knowledge,” claims Sartre, “every theory of knowledge in turn presupposes a metaphysics.”¹²⁴ So, Sartre does not deny that his enquiry regarding the ontological status of phenomena is an epistemic enquiry, which is subjected to specific rules and procedures of epistemic practice. What he says is that epistemology as a whole still necessarily presupposes being of the subject. This ontological emphasis says nothing about what we can know other than that whatever it is that is to be known must be related to our own being. What we are talking about here is a claim so uncontroversial, that, I think, nobody would ever deny it. McDowell shares basically the same view: he would definitely agree that there surely *was* something (that we presumable share with animals) before it became nausea that is potentially expressible in a proposition ‘I am feeling nauseous.’¹²⁵ The real tension concerns the value of this claim. Can we or can we not treat it as trivial and irrelevant, as neo-pragmatists did? Can we neutralize the ontological dimension and transpose everything genuinely interesting in the domain of “second nature,” that is, the domain of

¹²² Ibid., pp. l-li

¹²³ Ibid., p. li

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. l

¹²⁵ See, for example, McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 125

epistemic interaction? Or should we postulate, along with phenomenologists, a more intimate connection between who we ourselves are and what we are able to know?

In the previous chapter, we have seen the structural limitations that follow from the first position; in this chapter, we will explicate the consequences that follow from the second one. In the first section (2.i), we will discuss in more detail phenomenology's relation with the Myth of the Given along with the basic ontological claims that existential phenomenology raises. Already at this point, we will see that the ontological starting point attained by phenomenology wins additional space for manoeuvre in comparison to neo-pragmatism and proves to be a wider and potentially more flexible approach. While demonstrating this aspect, we will mostly draw on Merleau-Ponty's. Despite this emphasis, however, our goal for this section is not to explicate Merleau-Ponty's position, but rather to outline the general contours of what I think is the same basic principles accepted by such authors as Sartre, Heidegger, Patočka, Todes, Barbaras whom we could broadly encompass with a broad label of existential phenomenology.

In the second section (2.ii), we will concentrate on early Heidegger's notion of understanding explicating its pragmatic motives and its conformity with the basic pragmatic maxims. Furthermore, we will see that Heidegger's approach also introduces a range of conceptual tools (the notions of significance (*Befindlichkeit*) and for-the-sake-of-which (*Worumwillen*)), which make it possible to grasp the mutuality of the relation between the world and Dasein in pragmatic terms; these would help us later to formulate the basic pillars of phenomenological pragmatism, (a fuller account of which would be presented in chapter 3.i-3.ii and chapter 5) and formulate the for-the-sake-of-itself nature of meaning-relations.

In section three (2.iii) we will discuss the current pragmatic readings of Heidegger, especially Dreyfus's analysis of *Das Man*, average background practices and their role as a *source of intelligibility*. While overtaking some of Dreyfus's claims as crucial for the development of phenomenological pragmatism, we will also criticize his general methodological orientation that overlooks the specificity of phenomenological argumentation, which leads to antinomies and inability to provide a consistent account of the flexibility and changeability of everyday practices.

I. Ontological Perspective of Phenomenology vs. the Myth of the Given; Emulation vs. Reconstruction

The task of analysing the methodological specificity of phenomenological emphasis on ontology naturally brings us to the figure of Merleau-Ponty who arguably provides the most lucid discussion of the specificity of the phenomenological method; since *Phenomenology of Perception* frequently uses Kantian methodological guidelines as a background against which the phenomenological method should be defined, we will start with a brief outline of Merleau-Ponty's criticisms. For the sake of the argument, we should leave aside the question of whether Merleau-Ponty offers an adequate analysis of Kant's ideas and follow instead the way this particular interpretation provides him with a stage for the development of his ideas. Based on this we will formulate the basic ontological principles of existential ontology that set as their starting point the pre-reflexive givenness of the world; after this we will also contrast them to the neo-pragmatic criticism of the *Myth of the Given*.

According to Merleau-Ponty, Kant's project was to determine *what we can know* based on *knowing who we are*. His method was based on a presupposition that certain *a priori* structures are *transcendental*, i.e., they function as a form of our experience that cannot be deduced from experience itself but make it possible in the first place. Investigation of who we are, therefore, takes in Kant a form of investigation of such *conditions of experience*. Ultimately, this led Kant to the assumption that such form "embraces and constitutes the world:"¹²⁶ since *a priori* cannot be deduced from experience but enables it as such, it must be prioritized; *a priori grounds a posteriori*. So, on the one side we have a constituting transcendental subjectivity that imposes certain necessary categories on the world, and, on the other side, the world that receives this form, thus, becoming experienceable. What we have here, in other words, is a strict dichotomy between form and content, subject and object, *a priori* and *a posteriori*. The problem emphasized by Merleau-Ponty is that, eventually, this approach runs counter to Kant's own goal of defining "our cognitive powers in terms of our factual condition."¹²⁷ Because Kant's analysis of who we are has led him to a presupposition that we are essentially a consciousness that "surrounds" and "constitutes" the world, the very factuality of our being becomes unapproachable for him. If everything genuinely constitutive of subjectivity is a matter of necessary "must" and everything genuinely constitutive of the world is a matter of contingent "is", the "is" of subjectivity becomes essentially obscured, the empirical self becomes hopelessly detached from transcendental, and the very situatedness or *fact* of our existence is rendered irrelevant.

¹²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 353 (Henceforth, *PP*)

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 256

Kantian apriorism remains derivative and insufficient: the position that conceptually spreads apart the world, which receives *a priori* structures, and the subjectivity, which applies them, itself presupposes a more originary position based on which we can perform something like this conceptual differentiation. Before being reflected upon and decomposed into *a priori* and *a posteriori*, the experience must be first *lived* in its organic totality, thus, presenting the world as it is to us. The position that would explain this lived experience somehow from the outside, from the point of view of its condition is *unfit* to serve as “a basis of my thought. It is now, in the living present that the synthesis has to be effected, otherwise thought would be cut off from its transcendental premises.”¹²⁸ The concrete, factually existing layer of lived experience necessarily precedes and explains the transcendental and universal one; “the true subject of thought is the person who achieves the conversion and resumption of action at this very moment.”¹²⁹ In other words, *the radical reflection* on the human condition that Merleau-Ponty is advocating for must recognize that it itself is a part of the very condition, which it is supposed to explain; it must recognize that the reflection on the conditions of experience is a part of the living present where it is realized. Experience – no matter how paradoxically it sounds – is more original than its own condition of possibility, and the phenomenological analysis of ‘pre-reflective experience’ must precede the logical analysis of its conditions. Recognizing that any reflection is “intrinsically carried by facticity”¹³⁰ and, thus, acknowledging the dependency of the reflective level upon the pre-reflective one, such radical reflection sets as its main goal the task of *finding its way back* into the pre-reflective givenness¹³¹ of the world before it gets analytically decomposed by reflection. It tries to find a way of conceptualizing the pre-reflective givenness that has always been familiar to us (even too close and familiar in order to be spotted and conceptualized as a part of the normal course of everydayness)

Kant’s explanation, in such a way, has taken for granted what it was meant to explain: his reflexive approach does not really disclose the constitutive principle of the world, but only “retraces the outline of a constitution of the world which is already realized.”¹³² Before being constituted and revealing its *a priori* conditions, the world has been already there, given in all its austere clarity and transcendence. Instead of this deduction of necessary rules of constitution we should “set every conceivable being against the background of this world,”¹³³ we must investigate a priori “genealogically” within the context of our world. Fundamental analysis of who we are must reveal not isolated a priori constructions,

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 149

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Richir, *Méditations phénoménologiques*, p. 388., emphasis mine

¹³¹ The notion of ‘given’ and ‘givenness’ would be helpful in the context of the following comparison between phenomenology and Sellars’s *Myth of the Given*; however, it needs to be stressed that since the notion of givenness is not one of the notions that Merleau-Ponty uses in a systematic fashion, we should understand it at this point rather loosely, in a sense of *meaningful presence* or *meaningful access* to the world avoiding associating it with particular phenomenological projects (e.g., with Husserl’s analysis of intuition as ‘originarily giving.’)

¹³² Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 351

¹³³ Ibid., p. 256

but a priori 'in action' showing it as already engaged with the world, as gripped by the world. The aim of our philosophical efforts, therefore, shouldn't amount to explanation or "reconstruction"¹³⁴ of non-reflective experience. We should have "the ambition to make reflection *emulate* the unreflective life of consciousness"¹³⁵ since, again, a „radical reflection amounts to a consciousness of its own dependence on an unreflective life which is its initial situation."¹³⁶ The aim, in other words, is not simply to explain but to reconcile our conceptual apparatus with a being who I myself am; the lived experience must "recognize itself in the idealizations we draw from it"¹³⁷ because this lived experience has an ontological priority over those idealizations. So, essences must be brought into existences¹³⁸ and the "must" of human existence must find closure in its fact and Kant's transcendental project must be transplanted in the context of the ontological movement of existence.

What does this return to the pre-reflective experience mean exactly when it comes to ontological commitments? We can formulate two basic pillars that are common among existential phenomenologists. First of all, we should acknowledge that phenomenology's ontological emphasis on a concrete individual presupposes the investigation of the *fact of this access* to the world. So, phenomenology is not interested in the subject understood as a particular entity among other entities and endowed with special properties like consciousness or desire but in this factual experiential openness. Thus conceived, subjectivity cannot be detached from the world even conceptually; that is to say, the relation to the world is not something that is imposed additionally on the self-subsisting being of the subject – subjectivity *inherently* relates to the world because being a subject simply consists of being-related to the world. There are many ways to cash out this point. The Sartrean "existence precedes essence," Heideggerian "[Dasein's] essence lies in rather in the fact that it in each instance has to be its being as its own,"¹³⁹ Merleau-Ponty's "I am wholly outside myself,"¹⁴⁰ Patočka's "existence as a movement"¹⁴¹ although different with regard to their specific philosophical projects, share this fundamental point that our existence is defined by its ecstatic movement towards the world and things themselves; subjectivity places its own being outside itself, somewhere in the world. So, one word every existential phenomenologist would agree on when it comes to the analysis of subjectivity is "transcendence": Dasein, consciousness, body – all of them are constituted by the movement of transcendence, thus, *realizing* their own being amongst things they are not. That is why we can be a problem to ourselves, e.g., we can find or lose ourselves, – our being can never be given as objectifiable,

¹³⁴ Ibid., p. x

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. xvii, emphasis mine

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, p. 87

¹³⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*

¹³⁹ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 10

¹⁴⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 474

¹⁴¹ Patočka, *Natural World as a Philosophical Problem*, p. 163

self-subsisting in-itself, but can only be *performed* in the world; we ourselves are entities which in their Being have this very Being as an issue;¹⁴² I am in fact *for* a fact.¹⁴³ Incorporating this emphasis on transcendence means avoiding the traditional encapsulation of the subject, which substitutes our being-related with detached subjectivity conceived as a locus of immanent experience. As Wrathall puts it, awareness of myself can only take the form of being “aware of myself *as* experiencing the world; I am not aware of myself as having a subjective experience.”¹⁴⁴

Second, neither can the world be detached from subjectivity. The givenness of the world, its meaningful presence cannot explain itself – there must be a subject for whom the world would be given and who would bring the world out of its concealment. Again, this very same insight is expressed differently by different authors: if Sartre, as we have already seen, places appearances of a being in dependence on being of a subject or consciousness, Heidegger, for instance, claims that the very meaning of entities (‘being of entities in Heidegger’s vocabulary’) is dependent on Dasein; but both Sartre’s *cogito* and Heidegger’s *for-the-sake-of-which* are meant, among other things, to emphasize that givenness of the world *happens* somewhere and *for* somebody. There is something like a “miracle of expression,”¹⁴⁵ as Merleau-Ponty puts it, which presents the world in a particular way to me, a kind of expression that is not inscribed in the ‘objective content’ of the world but presupposes a dialogical interaction, an unnessitated and miraculous answer of the world to my enquiry. Without going into many details, we could at least generally say that givenness of things in themselves necessarily bears with itself some sort of *existential significance*: as ‘nihilated’ by consciousness (Sartre), as mattering for us (Heidegger), or as co-existent, akin to my body (Merleau-Ponty, Todes). Even though the phenomenon isn’t made by me, it is made for me.¹⁴⁶ While it is a transcendent irreducible thing that gives itself to me, there always is a sort of subjective testimony that discloses it from a particular perspective (and this includes not only the physical point of view but also the social and linguistic embeddedness since, as we claimed above, something like embeddedness from the very beginning is nothing but an ecstatic movement to the world). Because it is a particular being who brings things out of the concealment, their unconcealment necessarily remains referred to this perspective; this particularity of a phenomenon is encoded into the very nature of the appearing in-itself. The presented, given world, in such a way, always preserves (at least implicitly) the sense of accomplishment and effort: we recognize that something is given to us, and that our own being is responsible for the way things appears to us.

¹⁴² Heidegger, *BT*, p. 68

¹⁴³ Marion, *Being Given*, p. 145

¹⁴⁴ Wrathall, “Existential Phenomenology,” p. 39

¹⁴⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 230

¹⁴⁶ Marion, *Being Given*, p. 146

In such a way, both the world and the subject are parts of inseparable unity: things themselves are given as ‘real,’ disclosing their own significance, and yet they can only disclose themselves in a particular fashion for a being that occupies a particular position in the world and for whom its own being is at stake. This *openness*, meaningful presence of the world presupposes both being part of reality and being part of our experience,¹⁴⁷ which characterizes givenness as a paradoxical “in-itself-for-us”¹⁴⁸ structure. This strange nature of a phenomenon is explained precisely by the ecstatic character of our being developed in the previous paragraphs: since I find my being on the outside, I can only do so by taking up a certain “proposition of the world,”¹⁴⁹ a proposition of the world to show itself to me according to its own logic and its own initiative. So, by moving from the reflective to pre-reflective level, we substitute the explanatory inequality between what conditions and what is conditioned with the relation of mutual explanation, something Patočka describes as “co-conditioning”¹⁵⁰ between what appears” and to “whom it appears.” We could see, in such a way, *the pièce de résistance* of Merleau-Ponty’s critique of Kant: the transcendental method that prioritizes investigation of the condition of possibility must be substituted by a *post-transcendental* one that substitutes the unequal relation between the condition and the conditioned with the mutual relation between ecstatic subjectivity that searches for a ‘proposition of the world’ and the world that must be revealed by the subjectivity. So, it is neither subjects, nor objects, but a relation of openness (expressed by Heidegger’s formula of *being-in-the-world*) between them that is constitutive of our pre-reflective experience. The subject is nothing without its ecstatic immersion in the world; the world is mute without the subject that discloses it in its being – and both become visible through their mutual movement towards each other.

The question now is whether this line of thinking is exposed to the neo-pragmatic criticism of the foundationalism. The simple answer is no, not at all. As we have claimed above, the phenomenological emphasis upon givenness, description and conceptual reconciliation with the pre-reflective experience does not say anything with regard to *what exactly* should be our starting point. As Zahavi and Thompson puts it, “the given in the phenomenological sense is not non-intentional sense-data, but the phenomenal world;”¹⁵¹ phenomenological starting point gives us no ‘privileged representations.’ This is because this ontological argument does not have the epistemic motivation in the first place (in this sense, we should disagree with Dillon’s reading of Merleau-Ponty who misses this switch in orientation and claims that Merleau-Ponty is committed to a special form of foundationalism.¹⁵²) It doesn’t attempt to say what epistemic conditions must be fulfilled in order for us to access a certain being. It merely

¹⁴⁷ Bourgeois, “Pragmatism and Phenomenology, A Recent Encounter,” p. 180

¹⁴⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 322

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 510

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Patočka’s „Subjektivismus Husserlovy fenomenologie a možnost „asubjektivní“ fenomenologie,“ p. 394

¹⁵¹ Zahavi and Thompson, “Philosophical Issues: Phenomenology,” p. 84

¹⁵² Dillon, *Merleau-Ponty’s Ontology*, pp. 52, 175

emphasizes that this epistemic condition of possible access to beings must itself be considered as something that exists, that is, as belonging to the factual openness of the world and displaying a certain experiential aspect, without accounting for which the analysis remains incomplete; *whatever* and *however* something is given, it must be given in the context of one's own being. Merleau-Ponty expresses this very insight at the beginning of *Phenomenology of Perception* saying that "whatever the subtle changes of meaning which have ultimately brought us, as a linguistic acquisition, the word and concept of consciousness, we enjoy *direct access* to what it designates. For we have the experience of ourselves, of that consciousness which we are, and it is on the basis of this experience that all linguistic connotations are assessed, and precisely through it that language comes to have any meaning at all for us;"¹⁵³ or, speaking in terms of Heidegger's fundamental ontology, we might say in a more concise fashion that the epistemic condition of the possibility must itself be "entrenched" ontically.¹⁵⁴

So, the aim of the ontological appeal to givenness is not to ground some particular knowledge and establish the possibility of *presuppositionless knowledge* but to link any possible knowledge with the simple fact that it happens in the context of our being. Although different in spirit, tools and general methodology, phenomenology agrees with analytic pragmatism in refuting both empirical and intellectual foundationalism.¹⁵⁵ It has nothing to do with the epistemic authority of 'non-Dasein-like beings'¹⁵⁶ whether it be a correspondence-type requirement to answer to some objective state of affairs or a prospect of the final reconciliation between thought and reality. Similarly, it should not be confused with the idealism that seeks to explain the appearance of the world in terms of the structure of the subjectivity. The real conflict between phenomenology and neo-pragmatism has to do with their basic methodological decisions. While the latter holds the strict division between the first and the second nature claiming that it is the casual world that exists in a proper sense and meaningfulness of our access to the world is a matter of social behaviour, the former treats meaningfulness as an ontological problem because it views meaningfulness (or, more precisely, "search for meaning") as a fundamental determination of a being that we ourselves are. If we pursue this second option, then we indeed cannot restrict ourselves to the investigation of the epistemic conditions of our access to the world but must investigate the ontological, experiential aspect of this access in the context of being-in-the-world; epistemic mediation should be somehow enlarged in order to incorporate the 'direct access' to something that this mediation designates. Without this enlargement, the essences of language would remain "separated" and the task of plugging meaningfulness back into existence would remain incomplete.

¹⁵³ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. xvi, emphasis mine

¹⁵⁴ See Heidegger, *BT*, § 4

¹⁵⁵ There have been plenty of works in scholarly literature dedicated to the explication of this point. For instance, Sachs (2017) has argued that Merleau-Ponty is not committed to the Myth of the Given as he simply adds motor intentionality to Sellarsian dichotomy between causes and norms.

¹⁵⁶ See, for example, Heidegger, *BT*, § 7T

This is what makes the relations between existential and analytic standpoints so ambiguous and prone to misinterpretation. Though phenomenology (at least, its existential part) is not committed to neither to subjectivist nor to objectivist foundationalism, it feels wrong on the subconscious level to argue that a philosophical tradition that emphasizes givenness as one of its main orientational points and chooses as its motto a perky “back to the things themselves” denies all allegations in connection to the Myth of the Given. Rhetorically, the phenomenological method gives its critics plenty of reasons to suspect it in both empirical and intellectual foundationalism; Heidegger’s claim that there will be no *Sein* without *Dasein* and its basic make-up, *Seinsverfassung* (something that we might take as a sign for an attempt to found intelligibility in ‘subjective schemes’) co-exists with another extreme of saying that we must disclose things themselves as they are independent of our ‘will’ (which would be a symptom for empirical foundationalism.) But what on paper looks like a logical combination of two extreme polarities, represents, in fact, one of the most substantial advantages of existential phenomenology: presuppositionless character of the given is compatible with conditioning by particularity of one’s own existential position, which brings what is given out of its concealment.

And here is where the ontological emphasis becomes crucial. The reason why phenomenology is capable of mixing up mediated and unmediated in a way that makes it possible for it to escape contradictions and charges of foundationalism is that the particularity of my position from where things are seen is strictly speaking *not* a presupposition but *being* of a presupposition; it is not simply *made* but *lived through*. As constituted by transcendence, subjectivity discloses reality and brings it into unconcealment in particular existential modality *according to its very being*. So, what appears is indeed given immediately as things themselves, but it appears to a particular, historically conditioned way of seeing things, which I myself *am*. The idea of the strict division between conditioned and unconditioned gets blurred because at the very heart of the Myth of the Given, the ecstatic ontological self-realization takes place that binds them together into a unified movement of being-in-the-world. From this point of view, our ability to see things differently, first and foremost, does not amount to a simple epistemic switch from one hypothesis into another; it is rather a change in our way of being, i.e., in the way we comport ourselves to the world. Think, for example, how a judge’s whistle announces the beginning of the game. In a blink of an eye, friends are converted into opponents and teammates, the amorphous space gets mottled by “lines of force” and possibilities of various sorts; suddenly, we find ourselves absorbed in a space of a game where the rest of the world recedes into the background. What I see is a ball as itself, an opponent as himself etc.; being of a player gives us a different vision of the world as compared to, say, being of a friend; consequently, they deal with different types of immediacies. An attempt to intellectualize this “blind” act of ecstasy into an epistemic hypothesis, while no doubt possible, does not do justice to what actually happens to me: phenomenological speaking, the

whistle does not trigger the whole scope of epistemic operations, thus, reinterpreting the given in the light of the newly introduced presupposition. It does not follow from the newly imposed conceptual frame but from being disclosed from a different existential perspective as a result of a change in our being. What happens here, in other words, is not placing entities and events in an altered “logical space of reasons” but in a different space of existence. “The whole difficulty is,” says Merleau-Ponty, “to conceive this act [of opening up the world] clearly without confusing it with a cognitive operation.”¹⁵⁷

Do we need this conceptual diversification? While it should be obvious at this point that the pragmatists’ charges in foundationalism are misplaced when addressed to existential phenomenology, it is also true phenomenology has no knockdown argument against this Wittgensteinian, Sellarsian/Quinian¹⁵⁸ paradigm. Since the latter finds its own way of accounting for one’s own facticity by referring to linguistic practices, pragmatists might consistently claim that the ontological-experiential aspect of existential phenomenology is redundant and the proposed diversification of conceptual tools is excessive. Epistemic tools are logically sufficient in order to deal with a broad range of problems; so, it might be very well argued that the provided ontological emphasis is redundant. As with the example above, a switch in our attitude towards things might indeed be interpreted as a hypothetic, epistemic switch that rests entirely on our inferential web of propositional claims and the capacity to apply it correctly. That this epistemic interpretation is not doing justice to our lived experience does not constitute by itself an argument against it; the phenomenal inadequacy matters only within the argumentative frame that takes lived experience as a point of departure.

As one could expect, the most significant encounter between those two traditions – the Dreyfus-McDowell debate – remains inconclusive. Dreyfus and other phenomenological pragmatists insist that such an existential emphasis makes it possible to describe much more adequately bodily normativity, our everyday coping with the world and skill acquisition, while McDowell and those sympathetic with a more analytic approach argue that they have sufficient conceptual resources to *account* for such phenomena (while the task of being phenomenally adequate to this experience is simply not on the table). In the same way, McDowell argues that Dreyfus is the one who fails to account for the fundamental normativity that makes it possible for us to differentiate between correct and incorrect moves and that differs people from animals. Since (contrary to Dreyfus’s criticisms) McDowell’s “pervasiveness of conceptual” thesis does claim neither that there is an explicit act of judgement involved in every act of dealing with the world nor that it is performed by a detached,

¹⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 215

¹⁵⁸ In addition to the above-mentioned works, we could also add Quine’s *Ontological Relativity* (1969) as a methodological reference

contemplating mind over the amorphous empirical data,¹⁵⁹ it indeed can cover all those episodes that Dreyfus considers as paradigmatic cases of non-conceptual absorbed coping. More than this, McDowell's idea of implicitness presupposes that a) conceptual capacities are "passively drawn into operations,"¹⁶⁰ (at least in the basic form of "this" or "that" types of conceptuality) and that b) the linguistic rationality that is "at work"¹⁶¹ in "adjusting of one's thinking to the deliverances of experience"¹⁶² helps him to account for the element of passivity and motivatedness of our experience. So, once again, if we don't see neo-pragmatism as resolving the tasks of existential phenomenology (just like we have advised above to stop viewing existential phenomenology as dealing with the set of problems typical for neo-pragmatism), it proves to be inherently consistent at its basic level.

That is not to say that this approach is without a problem, however. Although analytic pragmatism is successful in the logical explanation of our relation to the world, the general explanatory scope of such an approach remains rather limited, which is the point that we were trying to demonstrate in the first chapter. Analytic pragmatism is not so much mistaken as it is limited, and this is by its own standards. What is lost here is any chance of a sufficiently broad and non-formalistic answer to the question of *who* we are and *what for* we use reason. The abstinence from a question of being cuts so much from their conceptual resources that sooner or later it faces either the need to overstretch its basic explanatory tools or leave underexplained quite substantial pieces of social reality. This might result in Brandom's truncated analysis of the source of understanding, Rorty's inability to provide a sufficiently general analysis of what goals are and reasons why we accept them or Habermas's failed attempt to localize and formalize non-cognitive elements of human existence. Brandom, Rorty and Habermas are paralyzed – each in his own fashion – by their inability to introduce new conceptual tools that would enable them to explain satisfactorily what *are* norms as such, what *are* vocabularies and what *is* expressive normativity; they are unable to properly thematize the question of being and the meaning of being. The "rational reconstruction" of the ontology of being-in-the-world in terms of linguistic praxis, although methodologically excused from the necessity to take something like "construction" (or, in other words, our pre-reflective experience) as a starting point – will nonetheless fail to make a complete sense of itself as a reconstruction exactly because it becomes radically detached from what *motivates* it to 'construct' in the first place; it loses touch with our pre-reflective being and our unmediated touch with the world.

¹⁵⁹ See McDowell, "The Myth of the Mind as Detached," see also Rouse's *Articulating the World* for a useful discussion. d

¹⁶⁰ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 12

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 29

At this point of the present work, the ontological emphasis of phenomenology might still seem too vague, only nominally distinguishable from the epistemic emphasis of neo-pragmatism and offering equally vague gains. One thing, nonetheless, is certain: if compared to analytic pragmatism, phenomenology appears to be offering a potentially broader perspective. The Myth of the Given does not have the capacity to satisfactorily grasp the phenomenological given, which “no longer fits into the coordinates of the empiricism-Kantianism debates.”¹⁶³ The mutual dependence between the world and Dasein offers us a wider, more differentiated vocabulary, which cannot be adequately translated into the vocabulary of the Sellarsian Myth. For even though their aims overlap in some important ways when it comes to defending oneself from the dangers of objectivism/subjectivism or foundationalism, the crucial element is introduced making it possible to ask in a more substantive way what justification *is*, that is, what existential meaning does it have and what kind of being does it presuppose. In other words, this approach opens up a way of investigating an ontological, existential significance, which can then be complemented with an investigation of epistemic significance in a sense of a particular modality of existential significance. This insight, although in a somehow distorted way, was formulated by Dreyfus as a distinction between a “ground floor” and “upper stories.”¹⁶⁴ What is actually at stake here, I think, is the fact that the process of justification as well should be seen not as something “grounded” in our existence, but as a possible way of being in the world. There are no floors labelled as ‘being’ or ‘cognition;’ cognition is a way of being but being is not exhausted by cognition. Existential phenomenology, far from denying the epistemic aspect of our life, paves the way to the question of what justification *is* as such based on the question of what kind of being a subject has. Ontological emphasis on phenomenology, in such a way, neither is a domain-specific kind of enquiry nor an attempt to undermine our rational capacity – it is rather an attempt to encompass them by a broader domain of human existence.

The paragraph 13 of *Being and Time*, in this, sense can be seen as a programmatic point shared by all existential approaches: here Heidegger argues that cognition is a “founded mode” of being-in;¹⁶⁵ it is a type of relation to the world that presupposes being-in-the-world as something constitutive of the being of Da-sein.¹⁶⁶ This means first of all that rightness and wrongness of cognitive act depend upon a being that first formulates the very possibility of the cognitive relation to the world, and second, this particular type of relation to the world shares the same existential determinations as other types. Therefore, being-in-the-world as a universal structure of our being must be given a certain amount of

¹⁶³ Romano, *At the Heart of Reason*, p. 430

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, Dreyfus's “Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise.”

¹⁶⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 56 (henceforth, *BT*)

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57

priority over cognition, which is seen as a particular modality of being-in-the-world. Analysis of being retains a priority of the analysis of cognition. As we remember, Sartre opens up *Being and Nothingness* in a similar vein arguing that being retains a methodological priority over cognition since being “can not be measured by knowledge.”¹⁶⁷ it exists without needing to be known, before any (self-)knowledge and, thus, functions as a condition of any knowledge. Thus, we must according to Sartre investigate the *pre-reflective* being of the subject avoiding confusion between self-awareness that is constitutive of being of the subject and self-knowledge that is dependent upon being of the subject. We must investigate the subject in terms of its capacity to be, not in terms of its capacity to know. These two examples share the same emphasis on the primacy of pre-reflective being (an emphasis, which could be seen as constitutive for the whole tradition of phenomenology);¹⁶⁸ and this emphasis is based upon the same line of argument that consists of an attempt to demonstrate how explanation and knowledge are themselves grounded in being of a subject and his pre-reflective communication with the world.

In this sense, we could conclude this section by saying that the existential approach offers us such a *chance* of forging a broader conceptual apparatus exactly because it starts with specifying the existential foundation of rationality (as a way of being-in-the-world) instead of rationalizing the existential foundation of being a human.

¹⁶⁷ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, pp., 1-li

¹⁶⁸ See, for example, Romano *At the Heart of Reason*

II. Pragmatic Elements in Heidegger

Prioritizing the ontological emphasis of phenomenology over Sellar's Myth as our starting point, however, does not mean that we have to abandon the idea of pragmatism altogether. It rather faces us with the challenge of redefining our notion of pragmatism. For this goal, we should turn to Heidegger's early writings which offer us a set of unique conceptual tools that will help us to explicate this alternative meaning of pragmatism that is based on the mutual relatedness between the subject and the world.

Specifically, we could start with his notion of *understanding* (which is sometimes used by Heidegger in a wider way as *Seinsverständnis*, disclosedness of being of entities, or as a sub-structure of this disclosedness; we will predominately use the wider sense but we will also rely on a more detailed analysis of a narrower meaning) that for Heidegger has no cognitive value, first and foremost, but signifies our ability to *access* beings as they are. He starts with the traditional for phenomenology attempt to avoid both objectivization and subjectivization of this access: understanding (which Heidegger also describes as "perceivedness of the perceived"¹⁶⁹ in his lecture course *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*) is expected to give an object as it is and not its mental appearance; "the mode of uncovering ... must be determined by the entity to be uncovered."¹⁷⁰ On the other side, Heidegger also emphasizes that understanding isn't automatically guaranteed by the entity in question. In order for things to show up as they really are, a corresponding sort of understanding must be achieved. We can discover things as they are only *after* such understanding is secured. Think, for example, of Chinese hieroglyphs. It is possible that instead of reading them, I will take them to be some chaotic drawings and, therefore, fail to intend them as they are. So, even though understanding "must be determined by the entity to be uncovered," the entity in question doesn't guarantee that this understanding will be achieved (it does not, for instance, 'cause' a corresponding understanding). That is why Heidegger claims that understanding is irreducible to extantness,¹⁷¹ mere physical occurrence of objects.

Heidegger offers the following definition of understanding in *Being and Time* that helps to overcome both of the above-described dangers: it is a projection onto possibilities.¹⁷² The first thing that needs to be clarified regarding such a definition is that we shouldn't conflate the term "projection" (German "Entwurf" meaning "draft" or "construction") with some inner psychological state that is violently imposed on reality. In a psychological sense, projection means something that isn't "really" there, something untruthful, which must be clarified. Heidegger, on the contrary, stresses the

¹⁶⁹ Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 48 (henceforth, *BPP*)

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 70

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 277

ontological aspect of projection. The point is that we cannot grasp entities as they are simply by looking at them; in order to be accessed, they need to be projected or related to something else. My understanding of what a hammer is, for example, isn't a contemplation of the handle attached to an iron head. It instead consists of my ability to use it in various ways (hammering nails, crashing things etc.) The understanding of what a hammer is is disclosed by something other than the hammer. So, according to Heidegger things don't simply occur as themselves but must be somehow *brought* to themselves. Speaking in Heidegger's terms, Dasein *freies* things to be themselves. We can see, therefore, why it is so misleading to treat projection psychologically: even though without Dasein there would be no projections, the fact that things can be accessed only through such projection doesn't follow from some psychological, "merely" subjective will, but from things themselves, a thesis that Wrathall incisively described as a "relational ontology."¹⁷³ We disclose things through projection, not by imposing our subjectivity on them. Projection lets things unpack themselves – it lets entities be themselves.¹⁷⁴

But what is projected and where exactly does this projection go? As an ontological structure, Heidegger claims, understanding projects the being of Dasein "equiprimordially" onto "significance as the worldliness of his world" and Dasein's "for-the-sake-of-which."¹⁷⁵

The first term – significance – stands for the fact that we understand entities and activities based on a system of references. Projection reveals a specific function that a given entity or activity performs, and the way it is related to other things and activities.¹⁷⁶ By doing this, projection reveals its "in-order-to"¹⁷⁷ showing in what relation this entity or activity should be grasped – as serving to what aim. This is what defines its identity as a specific thing or a specific activity. Significance, in such a way, presupposes a part-to-whole relation: we grasp the entity as a part, in view of some referential whole. For example, to be itself, a chair must be referred to tables and eating, among other things. If conceived without this reference, the chair is hardly a chair at all; it is rather a piece of wood or a stand. Furthermore, the term "for-the-sake-of-which" is meant to emphasize that this system of references cannot be indifferent to Dasein. Significance, claims Heidegger, is grounded in "for the sake of which:"¹⁷⁸ taken as a whole, it doesn't serve to any further specific aim, but corresponds to Dasein's ability-to-be. To signify something as relevant for Dasein also means to embody a certain potential for its being. What is disclosed by understanding, in other words, "equiprimordially" uncovers Dasein's

¹⁷³ Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment. Truth Language and History*, p. 136

¹⁷⁴ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 103

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78

ways of being; it *matters* to it as providing a certain way of living in the world. A projection onto significance is, thus, equiprimordially a projection onto certain praxis of living a life.

It is important to stress that Heidegger insists that understanding necessarily “*co-discloses*”¹⁷⁹ (*miterschlossen*) both significance and for-the-sake-of-which. Together, they equiprimordially constitute being-in-the-world as a whole.¹⁸⁰ The point is that for-the-sake-of-which doesn’t precede concrete significant things; the latter as “needs in themselves” doesn’t find its realization in the former. Any sort of for-the-sake-of-which, i.e. any such praxis of living a life, must already occur as a concrete comportment of meaningfulness of which is granted by a referential whole. This is a crucial claim. Heidegger’s approach isn’t akin to de La Rochefoucauld’s reflexive strategy that reveals egoistic motivations behind every act. He doesn’t believe, as Spinoza did, that there is something like *conatus* and an objective essence of Dasein, which predetermine what significant things Dasein is going to strive for. What Heidegger wants to demonstrate is that this relation is reciprocal: significance and for-the-sake-of-which come into existence through mutual merging. In this sense, the claim that any kind of entity (whether it be a hammer or Higgs boson) might be grasped only for-the-sake-of Dasein isn’t anything else but a general expression of the already familiar *ecstatic* character of Dasein’s being. For-the-sake-of-which doesn’t bear with itself any specific content. As ability-to-be, Dasein always has *something* to do (*etwas zu können*); it is this purely formal “something” that belongs to it as a constitutive element. On the contrary, “significance” is what defines *for-the-sake-of-which exactly Dasein exists* by giving to it some determinate content. Heidegger’s point, therefore, isn’t to show significant things as a manifestation of Dasein’s will, but to simply show that any kind of significance must be potentially contributable to Dasein’s existence. So, a hammer is to hammer nails and build homes; Higgs bosons are to confirm the Standard Model – but all these frame what can be done, observed or created by Dasein as such, all these belong to its being-possible (*Möglichsein*). To put it differently, an act of understanding discloses things as they are based on their own significance (as defined by other things and events) and, at the same time, it discloses Dasein as the ability-to-be *about* such things. By doing this, it conceptually substitutes the subject and object into indivisible components of being-in-the-world.

Understanding might be inauthentic if it is lost in significance and treats entities as self-obvious or it can be authentic as long as it remembers that any concrete comportment is enabled only for-the-sake-of Dasein.¹⁸¹ The important thing here is that this twofold structure is preserved in every case: *being-in* the world presupposes *beings* in the world and otherwise. These two moments are covered by

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 134

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 134

¹⁸¹ The role authenticity plays in understanding is explicated in more details in other accounts (see, for instance, Haugeland’s “Truth and Finitude”); we will talk more about it in chapter 3.ii

the term “possibility”: entities have possibilities that make them themselves and, at the same time, they give Dasein some possibility to be. This explains why things in their “ownmost” being still appear as “serviceable”, “usable” and so on.¹⁸² In such a way, through projection, Dasein gets what Heidegger calls the room-for-maneuver (*Spielraum*, literally – a room for play) of its ability-to-be,¹⁸³ a key term that is often undertranslated. *Spielraum* is existential space, a network of interconnected possibilities that mutually enable each other, thus, providing a livable place for Dasein; and the only reason why it is livable is because it is mottled by such various possibilities. It is this existential space disclosed by understanding that explains the nature of Dasein’s relation to the world. First and foremost, Dasein doesn’t have beliefs or representations. Neither does it make judgements or formulate propositions. Its being is being-possible: for the most part, it is occupied with what can and cannot be done, with projects that can be realized etc., thus, realizing its own being as a possibility. This existential awareness of available possibilities is knowledge of a very specific sort – it has nothing to do with a voluntary creation of a specific plan or immanent self-perception.¹⁸⁴ It is ‘knowledge’ of one’s way around the world, which is equivalent to the knowledge of one’s own self. As understanding, Dasein “‘knows’ what is going on, that is, what its potentiality of being is.”¹⁸⁵

Once again, we can see the ontological emphasis of phenomenology in action: on the one hand, we have things as they *are* (ontological level of description), not as they appear as conditioned by our other claims within the context of the linguistic social praxis (epistemic level of description), but on the other hand, we have ecstatic being of Dasein that *brings* things to *their* being and find its *own* being through such bringing. What makes this formulation of the ontological emphasis valuable in the context of formulating something like phenomenological pragmatism is the distinctness of his vocabulary: his pairing of the terms of significance and for-the-sake-of-which, their consequent application at the level of practice and defining of Dasein in terms of its room-for-manoeuve, its existential *praxis* makes it possible for us to approach the question of what practices *are*, how they occur and develop. Already at this point, we should stress that this point has crucial methodological consequences for Heidegger’s entire philosophical approach (as well as for the current work): by doubling his basic explanatory tool this way, he obtains the possibility of approaching the self-standing intelligibility of things and events without losing, at the same time, the very possibility of explaining something. Things and events *make sense on their own terms*, and Heidegger introduces *the required conceptual means* in order to analyse and clarify this *‘making sense on its own terms*; he manages to

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 135

¹⁸³ Ibid. (Der Entwurfcharakter des Verstehens konstituiert das In-der-Welt-sein hinsichtlich der Erschlossenheit seines Da als Da eines Seinkönnens. Der Entwurf ist die existenziale Seinsverfassung des Spielraums des faktischen Seinkönnens.)

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

explain phenomena without the need to go deeper, i.e., to find some *underlying explainer* beyond it that would somehow help us to make sense of a thing in question.

III. Phenomenology and the Primacy of Practice Thesis (I): Dreyfus's Pragmatism.

Of course, the idea to read Heidegger's early work as related to the Primacy of Practice is hardly new. At the end of the 20th century, Dreyfus and Okrent made a series of attempts to explicate and develop pragmatic motives in Heidegger's philosophical project and to demonstrate what other contemporary pragmatists lack.¹⁸⁶ This was based on putting Heidegger into a dialogue with American Pragmatism, and Dewey in particular, showing that both Heidegger's and Dewey's approaches should be interpreted as committed to the same "primacy of practice" thesis; both are interpreted as claiming that any sort of intelligibility and meaningfulness originates from our background practices, which are "complex structures that sustain action"¹⁸⁷ making it possible for us to cope with the world. Cognition and our search for theoretical truth are further grasped as a "continuation of practice by other means."¹⁸⁸ By doing this, Dreyfus and Okrent have managed to build a highly original and independent pragmatic system, which leans on the resources provided by Heideggerian phenomenology, but which of course goes far beyond what Heidegger intended to say. In this section, we will investigate this contribution; what we will also do, however, is to demonstrate how the originality of their claims remains constrained and eventually undermined by insufficiently re-considered methodological background that they still retain the typical for neo-pragmatism search for the conditions of possibility rather than phenomenological emphasis upon the mutuality between conditions and conditioned.

As one would expect, Heidegger's notions of understanding and possibilities remain in the focus of pragmatic readers who further accentuate its pragmatic aspect. According to Dreyfus,¹⁸⁹ the term "possibilities" has even more specific meaning for Heidegger than I have outlined above. Heidegger, claims Dreyfus, isn't interested in enlisting of "things that are logically or physically possible."¹⁹⁰ His interest lies in what Dreyfus calls "existential" possibilities, i.e., possibilities that are actually open in a situation, thus, making possible our orientation in it. Borrowing the expression from James, Dreyfus speaks of them as "live options"¹⁹¹ that source from our very placedness in a certain context. To give a quick example, my placedness in the kitchen equips me with possibilities of making breakfast or a cup of tea. Logically, it is also possible to sing here, but singing doesn't follow from this position. Taken together, such options/existential possibilities constitute a "room-for-maneuver", i.e. set of meaningful and appropriate involvements available for Dasein. In the same fashion, M. Wrathall

¹⁸⁶ See, for example, Okrent "Heidegger's Pragmatic Redux," or Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*

¹⁸⁷ Dreyfus and Wrathall, „Background practices," p. 4

¹⁸⁸ Rorty, "Heidegger, Contingency and Pragmatism," p. 31; Rorty "Rorty, Taylor, and Dreyfus: A Discussion," p. 50

¹⁸⁹ In this section, I will mostly address Dreyfus's work as the most original contribution to the development of the phenomenological pragmatism.

¹⁹⁰ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 115

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 115

speaks of the “leeway,” situations that “provide us with a range of possibilities for pursuing a particular course of activity or a particular identity.”¹⁹² As thrown, Dasein finds itself always already in a certain situation and already in possession of some possibilities. Even though such possibilities come into being through Dasein, Dasein doesn’t get to choose or create them spontaneously from his “free-floating”¹⁹³ being. Dasein *is* these possibilities rather than just having them: they aren’t an addition to his autonomous being-in-itself but constitute its very being as they “limit and make sense what to do.”¹⁹⁴

According to Dreyfus, the concrete situation is able to be understood because of our “local background”, a “range of possibilities that Dasein ‘knows’ without reflection,”¹⁹⁵ which defines “the room for maneuver in the current situation.”¹⁹⁶ In particular, concrete possibilities organically follow from the general and non-thematic background possibilities “making up significance” (like, for example, a possibility of hammering follows from the background of building). Dreyfus treats such background as “the average public practices”¹⁹⁷: it is our general techniques and skills acquired through the social training that define what we can do and what makes sense for us to do each time. Only because practices delimitate and specify the use of entities “there can be any understanding at all.”¹⁹⁸ In the same way, Carman says “the way anything manages to be expressively intelligible is by conforming to the public and anonymous norms governing our shared background practices.”¹⁹⁹ Another example (this time Wrathall): “background practices make the world, in general, intelligible to us.”²⁰⁰ And lastly, by Blattner, “the intelligence and intelligibility of human life are to be explained fundamentally in terms of practice, and the contribution that cognition, conceptuality, and theory make to it is derivative of the contribution made by practice.”²⁰¹ In this sense, background skills, habits and norms or, in short, background practices that we are trained into during our socialization ground actual possibilities and meanings accessible for understanding. These practices make us Dasein and sustain us in our status of Dasein by disclosing the very possibility of meaningfully governed activity.

Another important aspect is that Dreyfus (along with other phenomenological pragmatists) is insisting (bringing Wittgenstein as a witness) that the background doesn’t consist of explicit or implicit beliefs, which differs Heidegger from theoretical holists such as Davidson and Gadamer.²⁰² It is made of “habits and customs, embodied in the sort of subtle skills which we exhibit in our everyday interaction

¹⁹² Wrathall, “Heidegger on Human Understanding,” p. 190

¹⁹³ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 115

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 95

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Carman, *Heidegger’s Analytic*, p. 236

²⁰⁰ Dreyfus, Wrathall, “Background practices,” p. 9

²⁰¹ Blattner, “What Dewey and Heidegger Can Learn From Each Other,” p. 59

²⁰² Dreyfus, “Holism and Hermeneutics,” p. 4

with things and people.”²⁰³ Since it isn’t a belief system, the background cannot be explicated, justified or even thematized. In support, he again quotes Wittgenstein: “Giving grounds [must] come to an end sometime. But the end isn’t an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting.”²⁰⁴ So, either we admit that we need some sort of non-cognitive skill to apply for the purposes of cognition or justification or we fall into endless regress.²⁰⁵ Practices themselves are historically contingent and ungrounded as such, as Dreyfus stresses many times. In the end, it is just the way we happened to act. The pragmatic readings, in such a way, “ground” intelligibility in shared practices that are themselves ungrounded.²⁰⁶ They view average everyday practices as a sort of practical substrate, i.e. actually existing (although ungrounded and contingent) skills, norms and habits that are sustained and transferred by the anonymous power of publicity.

These three points, namely that (1) understanding primordially is based on grasping meaningful or existential possibilities open in a given situation, (2) that meaningfulness or intelligibility as such is grounded in the background practices and (3) that such practices consist in skills, habits and not beliefs, represent a point of convergence among pragmatic interpreters, which is covered by the rather broad label of “primacy of practice.”

First of all, we need to stress that Heidegger’s pragmatic readers recognize the unique status that ontology (and, in particular, Heideggerian notion ‘for-the-sake-of-which’) plays in Heideggerian account. This is something that makes it possible to differentiate the pragmatic interpreters both from other neo-pragmatists such as Brandom and Rorty on the one hand, and from American pragmatism which make a greater emphasis on naturalistic ontology²⁰⁷ (we could take a more contemporary example, by referring to Peregrin (see chapter 3.i) and Rouse (see chapter 4.i)). As a unique brand, Anglo-American pragmatism offers us an investigation of intelligibility of entities that has as its final referent not in social praxis of justification or biological structures of agents but in Dasein’s ecstatic being that overtakes certain cultural for-the-sake-of-whichs, which has no other explanation other than Dasein’s general search for something to do in its existence; as Dreyfus puts it, “I am my for-the-sake-of-whichs. These organize and give sense to whatever specific possibilities I am pressing into. If I am currently building a house, understanding who I am requires understanding what is going on, which in turn brings in my towards-which (a finished house) and ultimately my for-the-sake-of-which (being a

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 8

²⁰⁴ Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 44

²⁰⁵ Dreyfus, “Holism and Hermeneutics,” p. 8

²⁰⁶ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 96

²⁰⁷ See, for example M. Okrent, “Heidegger’s Pragmatic redux”

homemaker, let us say).²⁰⁸ In other words, Dasein does something and participates in the world not because it is somehow justified but because it has a particular way of being; participation in practices is a *measure* of Dasein's being.

While making an important step forward, this particular appeal to ontology of Dasein remains insufficient and, eventually, untenable. Dreyfus, Okrent and the consequent generation of pragmatic readers of Heidegger remain in an important way a hostage to their own originality: by revealing the undeniable similarity between Heidegger's and American pragmatists' emphasis on the primacy of 'practical' understanding, they nonetheless remain under Dewey's influence when it comes to the precise formulation of the Primacy of Practice according to which any sort of intelligibility and meaningfulness *originates* from our background practices. As Dasein (e.g., as a writer, a homemaker, *someone* etc.), I am constituted by the public practices that first disclose the possibility of meaningfully-governed behaviour. The primacy of practice formulated this way places the source of meaningfulness beyond any possible human competence, leaving us without any possibility of feedback on it, which is a position that Dreyfus describes with the term "structural inauthenticity:" since I become capable of making sense of things based on the background practices (i.e., "the source of meaningfulness" as a *condition*), then by the very definition I myself (as *conditioned*) cannot reconsider my own condition under the threat of contradicting to it (and to myself as conditioned). Practices have explanatory priority over my being: because background practices create and sustain *any* intelligibility, *any* possible finding, criticism or creative solution must be already presupposed by the background practices, otherwise it won't be meaningful at all. The background is something that "*lends intelligibility to criticism and change.*"²⁰⁹ This means that any actual success or failure in the world is irrelevant to it because it defines what counts as a problem, what counts as a success or failure beforehand. Every correction of the practices, every act of learning must be already accounted for by the background practices: whereas concrete practice can and do fail and succeed on the daily basis, the practical background itself is what defines the very terms in which something succeeds and fails and, thus, it is not liable to the same criterion itself (the only thing we could oppose to it is an experience of meaninglessness and uncanniness revealed in Heideggerian anxiety). Such an approach renders them to be an objectified and self-subsisting force that one-sidedly enables any possible meaning forwards without being enabled backwards. It retains, in other words, a loosely understood transcendental structure with its strict differentiation between what is enabling and what is enabled and a consequent explanatory subordination of the enabled to the enabling. As Cerbone notes, Dreyfus (and a consequent generation of pragmatic writers) still

²⁰⁸ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 114

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99, emphasis mine.

understands background “as explanatory, as contributing in some way to our understanding of how intentionality is possible. So there is still the background—something there—that plays a certain kind of role in our understanding or making sense of things.”²¹⁰

We have seen that Dreyfus views average practices as ungrounded habits, norms and customs that ultimately is nothing but a contingent way of acting. But facing such an explanatory workload, this definition seems clearly insufficient. How, for one thing, such habits of action can change given their almost omnipotent capacity of constituting Dasein without being constituted by it back? Dreyfus, of course, considers the possibility of change in the background, saying that “new technological and social developments are constantly changing specific ways for Dasein to be.”²¹¹ He also gives a lot of consideration to Heidegger's history of being and different epochal disclosures of the world.²¹² But because of an objectified account of practices, this remains a purely nominal possibility. If being of Dasein (as constituted by public practices) cannot allow any feedback, then what exactly causes a change in the background? Any social change must be first located in the background. But then we would have to explain why the background practices change and what goals they pursue, something that we could loosely describe with a term *telos*. Unlike Dewey, however, Heidegger never mentioned an objective *telos* of practices (whether it be coping with the environment or development of the labour power), and it is hard to suspect him of sympathy to any such attempts. But without any account of what such a *telos* might be, that is, without any sufficiently elaborated account of objectified being of practices, the very idea of a change in the objectified background seems to lose its foundation: if it is not Dasein that introduces changes into background practices (since it has been constituted by them), and not some objective *telos*, then why do practice change?

Later in his career, Dreyfus has proposed a different solution to this problem, which, as Wrathall pointed out, is “consistent with the idea that all intelligibility is ultimately grounded in social practices.”²¹³ He proposed a special account of cultural expertise, a sort of practical “*phronesis*”²¹⁴ which allows Dasein to understand a situation without relying on average norms and skills. Expert Dasein has a much more subtle sense of the situation, which cannot be covered by the rather general and abstract everyday norms. The typical example is a social actor who knows without any explicit rules when to tell the truth and when it is wiser to lie (even though social rules prohibit lying as such). As I see it, however, this account is either incompatible with Dreyfus's original claim or doesn't introduce

²¹⁰ Cerbone, “Ground, Background and Rough Ground,” p. 76

²¹¹ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 98

²¹² See Dreyfus and Spinoza, “Highway Bridges and Feasts. Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology”

²¹³ Dreyfus and Wrathall, “Background practices,” p. 12

²¹⁴ Dreyfus, “Could Anything Be More Intelligible than Everyday Intelligibility?” p. 29

anything new to his original position. It seems that according to such an approach, mastery over practice consists exactly of our ability not to lean on the original background, instead substituting it with a richer and more efficient set of background skills and assumptions; expertise, in other words, presuppose an introduction of new elements into a system of intelligibility. Expertise discloses possibilities that were not accounted for by the average background and consequently adapts the background so it can capture new possibilities. To claim that much more subtle possibilities are already presupposed by the practice means to completely ignore the fact that an expert (exactly because of his expertise) doesn't follow the same set of rules and can potentially reformulate the very meaning of these practices on a permanent basis. If, on the contrary, Dreyfus holds to the original claim saying that such changes are already presupposed by the background and the expert Dasein is only receptive enough to reflect on such changes, then this solution would not differ from the original one according to which practices change autonomously and Dasein just grasps this *fait accompli*.

Another approach to the change in the background was proposed by J. Haugeland²¹⁵ and C. White²¹⁶ (and supported by Dreyfus himself²¹⁷) who draw a parallel between T. Kuhn's account of normal and revolutionary science and Heidegger's notion of authentic/inauthentic understanding. Haugeland claims that our paradigms of understanding can fail and become inappropriate to given circumstances (when a teacher, for example, realizes that the traditional methods of teaching no longer work), which gives us chance to reconsider this paradigm in order to continue the activity. White, along with Dreyfus, outlines a more general analysis claiming that it is possible to commit a "leap from dominant practices to marginal ones" that rediscovers the world for Dasein "when current practices run into anomalies."²¹⁸ Once again, this move, if combined with the primacy of practice thesis, claims more than it is actually allowed to. Kuhn's account of scientific revolution presupposes a task placed outside the paradigm, namely, a potential integration of all the data into one non-contradictive system, and an explicit proposal of how this can be done in the most efficient way. The primacy of practice, which claims that *all* intelligibility as such is based on the background practices, excludes the possibility of a meaningful task placed outside them. Any possible failure as well as any possible success, therefore, must be already presupposed by the background practices. But the following question arise, why does the background predetermine certain practices to fail and why do they occur as such? Is this because they help (or fail to help) to adapt to the environment? Or is it because they are a manifestation of the

²¹⁵ Haugeland, "Truth and Finitude"

²¹⁶ White, *Time and Death: Heidegger's Analysis of Finitude*

²¹⁷ Dreyfus, "Foreword to Time and Death"

²¹⁸ Dreyfus, "Foreword to Time and Death," p. 52

development of labour power? Once again, the lack of an answer to this question represents a crucial missing element in the account of practices.

In other words, pragmatic readers of Heidegger are stuck somewhere in-between American Pragmatism and phenomenology. Naturalistically oriented pragmatism presents an objectified account of practices, views background as a self-subsisting and one-sided source of intelligibility and sets up an objective criterion – evolutionary adaptation to the environment, – which explains what our background practices are, how do they occur and evolve. The primacy of practice thesis according to which practices one-sidedly ground intelligibility is, thus, applicable to philosophers like Dewey or James who remain committed to both aspects. The conception that results from such an approach might be insufficient and narrow (we have provided some criticism in chapter 1.i and 4.i) – but is at least internally coherent. However, if we attribute the same type of the primacy of practice to phenomenologists, we would turn the problem into an open paradox. Phenomenologists criticize any idea of self-standing objectivity stressing instead the primacy of lived experience and the way objectivity can be given to us; but despite omitting this objective criterion, which is obviously incompatible with phenomenological methodology, pragmatists preserve the residual objectified account of practices that function as a one-sided source of intelligibility. This can only result in a partial and obscure approach: the principle according to which practices occur and evolve remains unclear since any subjective feedback is excluded and the objective criterion is omitted. Without reference to the evolutionary theory and naturalism (or any other objective criterion of change in the background practices), approaches that solely explain meaningfulness in terms of the background practices reach an untenable conclusion.

In what follows, I will try to demonstrate that explication of pragmatic motives within the phenomenological tradition must take a different direction adjusted for its specificity. First and foremost, this means *restructuring* the idea of the Primacy of Practice in a corresponding way resulting in an account of pragmatism that wouldn't explain our being by practices, but instead will view our being *as* practical, a slight difference that will nonetheless result in a new sort of pragmatism.

3. Phenomenology and the Primacy of Practice Thesis (II): Existential-Phenomenological Pragmatism

Pragmatic interpretations of Heidegger, as I have attempted to demonstrate, provide a sort of *grounding* for understanding, even if this grounding is itself ungrounded and consists of unjustified and unthematized ways of action, skills, etc. This very grounding creates a practical frame within which both our practical and unpractical comportments take place: the nature of our relation to the world is pragmatic because any possible meaning disclosed by understanding as such has a pragmatic *source* – ungrounded ways of action; thus, even theoretical comportments must eventually originate from such a pragmatic source and, by virtue of that, themselves be pragmatic. Such pragmatism, thus, retains a transcendental structure with the strict dichotomy between what is enabling and what is enabled, which results in the hypostatization of practices. Wittgenstein has aptly characterized such a problem as “the illusory image of a greater depth”²¹⁹ of the background (Cerbone has argued that the very same objection is applicable to Dreyfus’s reading of Wittgenstein²²⁰): that our background practices do, in fact, shape and form us *for the most part* does not mean that they are transformed into a ground that explains human intelligibility without being explained back. By gaining this explanatory weight and inconspicuously transforming into something *more fundamental* than what they explain – in a word, by rigidifying into a ground of understanding – background practices abandon the phenomenal surface and reclaim the traditional *deep-sited function* of an unexplained explainer – even though this explainer itself seeks to sever all connections to the traditional metaphysics and describe itself as ungrounded ways of action and judging.

In this chapter, we will see that this is not the only way of introducing the primacy of practice thesis in the phenomenological tradition. Namely, we will argue that bringing together of phenomenology and pragmatism must proceed from phenomenology’s double-edged emphasis on ontology (i.e., emphasis on things themselves and Dasein as an ecstatic relation that brings things to themselves) and from its stress on the *mutual dependence between phenomena and Dasein*; and this without lapsing back into its ‘explanation’/grounding of this mutuality *in* particular practices. The explanatory balance between practices and Dasein will be restored based on a phenomenological analysis of meaning and its genesis that would demonstrate that it is our relation to the world itself that is pragmatic, i.e., that it consists of disclosing and maximizing the possibilities of acting and thinking (section 3.i); furthermore, in section 3.ii, we will investigate how this pragmatic genesis of meaning is related to the disclosure/foreclosure of various situations of being-in-the-world.

²¹⁹ Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, VI, § 31

²²⁰ Cerbone, “Ground, Background, and Rough Ground: Dreyfus, Wittgenstein, and Phenomenology”

1. Disclosing a *Form of Life*

We could start by going back to the notions of logical and existential possibilities. As we have seen, the idea proposed by Heideggerian pragmatic readers was that existential possibilities make sense, whereas logical possibilities don't. This was explained by the fact that existential possibilities, unlike logical ones, follow from certain backgrounds or practices. The problem here is that logical possibilities must make at least some sense in order to be intended at all. This fact can hardly be explained solely by the reference to "de-worlding,"²²¹ i.e., the second-order process of abstraction from the context, as Dreyfus insisted. Our everyday orientation in the world presupposes not binary coding into existential/logical possibilities but an endless variation of deeper/narrower grasps on the situation. Again, it seems too far-stretched to explain all these endless variations of understanding through the different intensities of abstraction. This impasse along with the wider structural difficulties can be avoided if we reformulate the situation relying on a different methodological principle. Namely, we could try to translate rigid oppositions into flexible ones: instead of treating existential possibilities as meaningful and logical possibilities as meaningless, we could say that both of them are meaningful but to a different extent. In this case, they would only be the extreme parts of the same "equiprimordial" spectrum of meaningfulness. Such a move will eventually bring us closer to the phenomenological method (as formulated by existentially oriented authors): if formulated based on it, the resulting approach would refrain from postulating any kind of privileged *explanans* and, thus, any kind of strict division between enabled and enabling. Practices will be no longer seen as a *source* of meaningfulness: they don't *make* anything meaningful; they can only make it *more* meaningful. As we will see, this approach can potentially describe our everyday experience much more adequately. But at this point, it only brings a new question into light: practices themselves are now what needs to be explained in the first place since it is no longer clear why exactly isolated possibilities are less meaningful than the ones that follow from some background.

We can take, as a guiding example, a possibility of taking a shot in football. It might be an existential possibility if a player has certain skills and norms in his background. If he doesn't, however, the possibility loses its existential character: it would still be possible for the player to kick a ball towards the goalposts, but it wouldn't make *much* sense for him. Naturally, we can try to explain the rules of the game to this player hoping to transform shooting into a meaningful possibility. So, we start by explaining this very possibility: the player should kick the ball inside the goalposts (I). This is a fairly transparent and understandable task but *what's the point*, he might ask. What's the meaning of

²²¹ Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 86

this? When the trainee raises these questions, we add that (2) there is a goalkeeper trying to parry his shots with hands. Furthermore, we also add that (3) other players from the opposite team will try to tackle the ball and (4) score by themselves. And finally, (5) there also are teammates to whom the player can pass the ball in order to keep possession. As a result of such an explanation, we have introduced the background and thus transformed (1) into a sufficiently meaningful possibility. The same works for each of the mentioned possibilities. We can start the explanation with (5), which taken by itself would be more or less meaningless and then add (3), (4), (1) and (2). Or we could start with (3) and add (5), (1), (2) and (4). Order here is irrelevant: each possibility is made meaningful because other possibilities are included. They receive existential character because of their interconnection with other possibilities.

Now, what exactly happens between (1) and (2), so they can become mutually more meaningful? Of course, merely placing them alongside each other isn't enough to explain such a transformation. In order for (1) to make sense, it must somehow interact with (2). But what is a meaningful interaction? Why do shooting and passing interact meaningfully, whereas hammering and singing don't? Can we suffice with saying, as, for example, T. Schatzki and other practice theorists do, that they interact *because* they belong to a "dispersed nexus of doings and sayings,"²²² i.e. belong to a practice? Or can we along with Bourdieu claim that interaction between possibilities should be explained based on habitus that is ingrained in subjects through their socialization into objective social structures?²²³ Apparently, we can, but only at the cost of abandoning the insights we have started developing. This is because explaining interactivity of possibilities by referring to their shared background signalizes exactly the gradual thickening that melts the background into a ground; in the course of the explanation, the background, so to say, takes on water becoming more and more ponderous and cumbersome until it submerges under the surface obtaining its "illusionary depth" and starting to enable without being enabled back. Is there a different way of accounting for this interactivity, though?

Borrowing a term from Heidegger, it could be said that a meaningful interaction sets out "leeway", a room-for-manoeuvre, where possibilities are limited by the possibilities they interact with and, at the same time, they are disclosed by them. This moment belongs to the very meaning of the word *Spielraum*.²²⁴ limitation here doesn't negate possibilities completely but leaves open a chance to overcome itself. This gives the involved possibilities a certain space for manoeuvre, which enriches their content. Continuing the example, the possibility of a shot can never be the same after we add the

²²² Schatzki, "A Primer on Practices," p. 14

²²³ Bourdieu, *Logic of Practice*, (see, in particular, the chapter on *habitus*)

²²⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, pp. 107, 145

goalkeeper to the game. Because the goalkeeper limits scoring, shooting has now subdivided into the possibilities of taking an accurate shot towards the corner (1a), curving the ball (1b), tricking the goalkeeper with a feint (1c) etc.; analogously, goalkeeping now includes the possibilities of parrying the shot with hands (2a), legs (2b) or coming off the line (2c). An interaction between (1) and (2), in such a way, turns into an interaction between (1a) (1b) (1c) and (2a) (2b) (2c) because it enriches both sides of the *relata* through mutual limitation. Each of these freshly disclosed possibilities is context dependent. They aren't conceivable without each other as they presuppose each other analytically (borrowing the term from Merleau-Ponty, we could say that each of them presupposes "indeterminate vision"²²⁵ or, better, 'indeterminate presence' of others that refers us to our ability to "reckon with the possible"²²⁶): the shot into the left corner presupposes also a possibility of the shot into the right one. Because I can shoot in both directions, the goalkeeper stays centrally, ready to dive to either side. If one of these possibilities is removed (a right corner shot), the other two (a left corner shot, a goalkeeper dive) becomes meaningless as well: there is not much sense for the goalkeeper to stay centrally if I am going to shoot towards the left side only. But this would mean that there is not much sense to place a shot into the left corner either since the goalkeeper will easily save it. The whole activity is rendered meaningless if the right corner shot is removed. Shooting, therefore, makes sense precisely as a possibility of placing a shot into the top corner/trick shot/etc. – *it is meaningful insofar that it inherently presupposes other possibilities and is presupposed by them*. On the contrary, shooting, conceived as a mere placing of a ball within the net, is barely meaningful because it doesn't presuppose anything but itself. In such a way, the *productivity* of interaction, its ability to disclose further context-dependent possibilities that presuppose both of the *interactants*, *seals* the interaction in a meaningful bond.

The (1)-(2) couplet possesses something we might describe as *disclosive potential*, namely, a potential to establish interplay, *Spielraum*, leading to the disclosure of further, *complex* possibilities, i.e., possibilities inherently presupposing other possibilities. Because of this inherent complexity or richness, we can grasp them as more meaningful.²²⁷ If we add (3) to these two possibilities, it will further increase the disclosing potential of leeway already set by the (1)-(2), because tackling, more goalkeeping possibilities and shooting are disclosed as well. Shooting will also include the possibilities of timing and positioning, tackling will include the possibilities of deciding a distance and blocking, and goalkeeping will presuppose possibilities of cooperation with teammates. Taken together, possibilities (1), (2) and

²²⁵ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 6

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 125

²²⁷ The complexity of existential possibilities, in such a way, overcomes the quantitative-qualitative distinction: what differs meaningful possibilities is not a particular quality or characteristic but its linkage to *quantity* of other possibilities; at the same time, their interactivity is not a matter of *quantity* but of their possible interactivity, the relations of meaning that they are capable of building.

(3) sets out a richer interplay, i.e. they have a greater disclosive potential and, thus, the possibilities disclosed by their interplay are more meaningful than possibilities disclosed by (1) and (2). This means that the practice of (1), (2) and (3) is better, more meaningful than the practice consisting of (1) and (2) only. The same happens when we add (4) and (5). Each of them becomes more meaningful because it is enriched by the interaction with leeway constituted by different possibilities; and the leeway itself gets enriched by this interaction. So, here is the first major claim that we raise in this section: possibilities don't interact and become meaningful because they belong to some practice. On the contrary, practices are created and sustained as a result of the specific interaction of possibilities that maximizes disclosing potential. *A background isn't anything else but a set of essentially interrelated and mutually disclosed possibilities, not a ground that enables them.*

Of course, games might appear as an arguable choice of a model example for an investigation of the genesis of meaning.²²⁸ But this is only at the first sight. The idea of using games for the sake of analysing praxis as such is neither new nor even original: a similar emphasis can be found both within and outside of the phenomenological tradition. We could think of, for example, Merleau-Ponty's analyses of spatial orientation in the world based on the description of football²²⁹ or a more general claim by Ricoeur according to which "games are excellent practical models."²³⁰ Ricoeur refers to Wittgenstein's later philosophy, which explicitly links linguistic intelligibility and the notion of games in the sense of grammatically sustained possibility of action. A less obvious but equally important corroboration we could find in Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*: here Huizinga demonstrates how certain essential structures of what we consider as games (such as competitiveness, separation from the rest of the world etc.) are in fact locatable in many further practices such as war, hunt, struggle, right, art, science etc. Huizinga also provides a substantial analysis of the self-understanding of more primitive cultures demonstrating that an analogy between games and practices as such goes, in fact, far beyond scholarly discourse and is manifested on the level of everyday language. Pursuing this common line of argumentation, we have only transposed it to the problem of meaning and meaning-formation: based on the discussion of meaningfulness of a game, we have tried to outline *a move-based structure of practical intelligibility as such*; only because games constitute *more* self-enclosed systems of intelligibility, it becomes *easier* to interpret them as a system of moves and track the dynamics of their intelligibility. In principle, the same could be demonstrated with regard to any practice as such. An introduction to any practice *necessarily* takes the form of learning what moves (or possibilities) are available to an agent;

²²⁸ We could find a similar analysis but from a different domain in a recent Romdehn-Romluc's article "Thought in Action" where she demonstrates how a gradual introduction into activity of climbing also sophisticates the practical space making it more meaningful at the same time nuancing bodily movement of an agent: because rocks and human bodies are interactive, each of the involved possibilities is further complexified and becomes more meaningful.

²²⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, pp. 168-169

²³⁰ Ricoeur, *Oneself as Other*, p. 154

rephrasing Patočka, we might say that this introduction takes ‘*a move of human existence*’ as its basic unit. Learning available moves, in turn, takes the form of its gradual complexification by delimitating them against other possible moves in a fashion that binds them together in a homogenous space where they presuppose one another. A meaningful move is situated in a field that is *corrugated* enough in order to prop this move against further possible moves. Without this interconnective pinning, the move remains nothing but an empty logical gesture crossing the whole breadth of practical place at one fell swoop without finding any resistance.

So, if accepted, what does this brief etude of phenomenology of meaning tells us? First and foremost, it demonstrates that the ability of projection onto possibilities is a pragmatic ability from top to bottom but not because such a projection is based on embodied skills and habits. *It is pragmatic simply because it aims at maximization of our ability-to-be*: understanding is guided by the necessity to provide more disclosive or more complex possibilities of being (i.e., possibilities inherently presupposing other possibilities), which enrich our being-in-the-world by giving to it more content; it seeks to *anchor* our situatedness and *intensify* our being-in-the-world by disclosing more possibilities. We participate in practices because they (with different degrees of efficiency) situate us in the world. A person unaware of football would hardly recognize the specificity of his own situation if placed on a football field. For him, the related possibility of kicking the laying ball would appear as a logical gesture, which says almost nothing about what can be done in such a situation. On the contrary, for an expert, this possibility discloses the whole world of further possibilities in which Dasein can *indwell*. In the second case, we have a situation that better discloses Dasein as ability-to-be or as being-possible; we have a richer, more extensive being-in-the-world. We, thus, arrive at the second major claim: the concrete practices are not the source of meaningfulness but means of its maximization because configured the way they are, possibilities maximize the disclosive potential and make the most sense, *which maximizes Dasein’s ability-to-be and helps to make the most sense out of its existence*.

To get a clearer idea of this, we can once again revoke Spinoza and his notion of “conatus.” Spinoza sees conatus as a fundamental principle according to which “each thing, as far as it lies in itself, strives to persevere in its being.”²³¹ A relation of an individual to the world is, thus, explained as grounded in its determined essence, which aims at the specific self-realization as prescribed by this essence. What happens when we drop the objectified approach to this relation? For one thing, we could no longer describe conatus as “perseverance.” For there isn’t anything to persevere: as an ecstatic movement to the world, Dasein has no content of its own. We, thus, cannot postulate an essence that

²³¹B. Spinoza, Ethics, part 3, prop. 7

then finds its predetermined application even on the conceptual level, because the way Dasein exists is exactly through the world: understanding discloses ways of being in the world equiprimordially with things in this world. So, the reason why we are drawn to the world is not that it is prescribed by our particular essence; it is because of the ecstatic character of our existence that can find its way of being, only by elaborating it in the world, amidst things themselves. What Dasein's conatus consists of is, in other words, a *formal need* to take roots in the world by showing what can be done, said or observed in it: understanding strives to enable *some* form of being and to give to Dasein's existence *some* content; *ab initio*, it is guided by the necessity to maximize its ability-to-be.

By proceeding this way, we *ontologize* the Primacy of practice thesis in accordance with the specificity of phenomenology's double-edge emphasis on ontology: something like a particular practice makes sense only in the context of the dialogue between being of Dasein who seeks to reach the world and the world that announces itself to Dasein; the dynamics of meaning is also a dynamics of this movement of settling into the world that presupposes being of both elements. Conceived this way, the primacy of practice thesis does not resolve itself into the Primacy of *Practices*, i.e., practices that would have complete formative power over Dasein, but into *Dasein-like practices* (*daseinmäßigen Praktiken*), that is, practices that are nothing but *ways of building relations* between Dasein and the world, not something that enables such relations. Practices might be seen as structuring Dasein but only at cost of seeing practices as already structured by Dasein's ability-to-be-structured, its *active* search for something to do. The very relation of grounding here (even if this grounding would itself be ungrounded like we have seen in Dreyfus), at the most basic explanatory level, gives way to the relation of complete mutuality and an ontological inclination towards intensification of this mutuality: practices are attempts to render the world *more* for the sake of Dasein and Dasein *more* for the sake of the world. Any attempt on hypostasizing practices as the grounding element of intelligibility or imposing some sort of objective criterion (i.e., a criterion that would presuppose a one-sided principle of development of practices that would require no dialogical interaction with Dasein) on them quickly reveals itself as an alien, excessive element.

Thus, we can explain Dasein's thrownness in a sense of its participation in contingent practices, without a constant resort to the transcendental inclusion (or as Schürmann puts it, "transcendental opening")²³² in particular practices that views the latter as a *methodologically* unavoidable condition of possibility of any intelligibility. It is undoubtedly true that Dasein, as an "essentially thrown" being, is always already 'in' practices and that it cannot simply decide to withdraw from them by some voluntary

²³² Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, p. 85

decision, thus, rising above the world. Of course, public practices structure Dasein *for the most part* (this is because culture, *Das Man*, knows so much more about being in the world than a particular Dasein; integral cultural practices (see chapter 5.ii) are so efficient in maximizing Dasein's ability-to-be that we *de facto* cannot imagine any alternative to them.) What we want to argue against is a methodological decision to interpret this thrownness in a transcendental way; we should stop viewing our 'thrownness' as a *contingent fact* of being situated in particular practices and start viewing it as a *structural tendency* to find oneself in those *contingent practices*, i.e., a tendency to take roots in the world in an attempt to reveal what possibilities of being such a world can offer to us. From this angle, what is inescapable are not specific practices but our own practical being-in-the-world that "presses forward into possibilities;"²³³ we, thus, can ask why we participate in this or that practice but not why we participate in them at all – this is just who we *are*.

So, on the fundamental explanatory level, we participate in practices not because we are historically situated and because certain practices are, thus conceived, unavoidable; a radical reflection on human existence must acknowledge that we do so *simply because they are meaningful*, i.e., they efficiently root Dasein into the world by supplying it with possibilities of being. And since this rooting takes the form of the ecstatic search for *something to do* that has no terms of its own and that can exist for the sake of itself only by possibilities that are not of its own making, we might as well say that meaningful, disclosively rich practices *are meaningful on their own terms and for their own sake*. Apparently, Agamben was trying to express the very same insight by defining a "human life" as "a life that cannot be separated from its form" since this is "a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself."²³⁴ human existence *is* by pursuing possibilities of being *just* for the sake of this very possibilities and recognizes itself as such a pursue. Fundamentally speaking, there can be no extra-practical foundation, no further reason that could explain why a given practice is meaningful. As such 'forms of life,' practices indeed exist "without why,"²³⁵ as Schürmann stresses: there are no 'ends' of practices other than those that they announce themselves. In other words, there is no overarching, fundamental end or goal that would encompass all practices and operate as their practice-transcendent foundation (e.g., the goal of self-preservation, reaching *eudaimonia* etc.) and one-sidedly explain them – practical life eventually culminates in this "anarchic" *non-Grund* of an answer to the question why we do the things we do: 'for no particular reason; just for the sake of it.'

²³³ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 136, translation modified (original: „Warum dringt das Verstehen nach allen wesenhaften Dimensionen des in ihm Erschließbaren immer in die Möglichkeiten?“ *Sein und Zeit*, p. 147)

²³⁴ Agamben, *Means without Ends*, p. 4

²³⁵ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy*, p. 18

This is why, again, games prove to be a crucial example: the specific intelligibility of games, which is according to its very definition non-instrumental²³⁶ and pursued *just* for the sake of it (games are *just* interesting) further emphasizes the specific way of being of Dasein, *homo ludens*, who searches for something to do in the world. Entering the practical space of a game reveals with far greater intensity the growing phenomenal inadequacy of explaining a self-standing, for-the-sake-of-itself kind of intelligibility of a game-field based on enforcing to it some external goal. It needs to be acknowledged, of course, that this intuition is far from unique as well. It finds its different elaborations in the works of such authors as Fink, Sartre and Gadamer. Gadamer, for example, criticizes the false subjectivation of games and concludes his analysis by saying that play as a mode of self-presentation is “a universal ontological characteristic of nature.”²³⁷ In a different manner, Fink stresses the privileged status of games saying that “playing becomes a distinguished – because it is scarcely restricted – possibility of human freedom.”²³⁸ Sartre argues along the same lines claiming that “play is, to be sure, not compelled by the desire to possess, and hence to have, its object; this might lead us to consider that in play, whose basis is action, it is doing that is primary.”²³⁹ But such a conclusion would be erroneous because “the act is not its own goal in itself;”²⁴⁰ the true goal is to explore our own being through game. With his typical astuteness, Sartre concludes: “the desire to play is fundamentally the desire to be.”²⁴¹

Just like admitting the self-standing intelligibility of practices (that they are pursued for the sake of themselves as interesting) does not lead to abandoning our attempts of explaining them as such (this because our explanatory element – Dasein – is a non-self-standing ecstatic movement outside of itself), neither it leads to relativism. We can perfectly well differentiate between more and less meaningful practices and this without abandoning the self-standing intelligibility of their decentred, anarchic life. This is because we can differentiate between something in the world that can root us better or worse: we can feel that certain types of praxis disclose a richer situation offering us *more* possibilities, which makes us more responsive to them. We can, therefore, start answering the question of why do we participate in this or that particular why do we participate in this or that particular practice without attaining a view from nowhere simply because all practices are an exercise of the ability-to-be;²⁴² all of them are measured with regard to their ability to anchor Dasein’s ecstasy in the world.

²³⁶ This of course does not mean that there are no instrumental practices; rather, we should hold that instrumental practices are a special case of non-sufficiently meaningful practices (see 5.i for a discussion of instrumentality)

²³⁷ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 112

²³⁸ Fink, *Play as a Symbol of the World*, p. 26

²³⁹ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 742

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² (this claim, of course, presupposes a discussion of the possibility of cognitive self-interpretation that will be offered in chapter 4)

Not only this - we could also explain better the question of *practical genesis*: the approach that treats practices as more or less meaningful (as more or less contributing to Dasein's ability-to-be) paves the way for a much more successful explanation of a change in the practical background. Possibilities coexist within a given practical frame because they productively limit and disclose each other, contributing to our ability-to-be. Hypothetically, we can always imagine another configuration within a given practical frame, which will include new possibilities or alter current ones. For the most part, however, this remains a mere thought experiment. As Haugeland has argued, the functioning of everyday practice is based on the rule of non-contradiction and double-checking: I can imagine myself using the hammer differently, but I will fail to hammer a nail.²⁴³ This rule defines how one should behave in order to reach its goals. In this sense, any re-configuration would only decrease its disclosing potential by disrupting the system of interactions. However, sometimes a new configuration can prove to be more efficient and instead increases such potential. Take, for example, the introduction of the substitution rule in sports. Because the price of any serious foul has now grown, defenders tend to play more cautiously, which discloses more attacking possibilities and invites more complex forms of defence. So, although untypical, it isn't unconceivable that the alteration is introduced because practices as such are constructed based on maximizing the disclosing potential. They occur because they make sense and evolve because they make better sense in a different way. It is our historical, dialogically motivated understanding that should be held chiefly responsible for such occurrence and evolvment, not some abstract, objectivized principle that influences our understanding.

Those two points at the same time preserve Dreyfus's critique of the cognitivist approach to the background practices and avoid their rigidification. As we have seen, Dreyfus himself was trying to avoid intellectualism that he has identified in 'theoretical holism' of Gadamer and Davidson by stressing that the "background of practice cannot be spelled out in a theory" since it is composed of non-cognitive skills, norms and habits that (unlike the discussed example of the football rules) "cannot and shouldn't be explicated or justified." "We just do what we have been trained to do," says Dreyfus;²⁴⁴ we have been simply "brought up" in particular practices without "forming beliefs and learning rules." For him, the only way of defending skills, habits and customs from their transformation into tacit validity claims is to stress their status as a condition of possibility of beliefs and rules: "all our knowledge, even our attempt to know the background, is always already shaped by ... ways of behaving towards things and people, not in our minds as background assumptions which we happen to be taking for granted."²⁴⁵ So, Dreyfus's defensive position forces him to defend skills against intellectualization by postulating

²⁴³ Haugeland, "Truth and Finitude," p. 200

²⁴⁴ Dreyfus, "Holism and Hermeneutics," p. 8

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11

them as a ground of intellect. By doing so, however, Dreyfus overemphasizes their role and explanatory status sometimes talking about skills and habits as if mastering them were itself a sufficient explanation of why we participate in certain practices (e.g., our skill of keeping distance from other people); by and large, he omits the discussion of how skills themselves are measured by openness they presuppose, of how Dasein *treats* skills as more or less appropriate depending on its particular situation (e.g., how particular practices of communication, indwelling, the density of our community explain the appropriateness of the skill of keeping distance). To claim, along with Dreyfus and other like-minded pragmatists, that our existential possibilities are explained based on what set of skills that we acquire throughout our socialization means to substitute cognition for practices but retain the relation of grounding, which results in the lack of flexibility and changeability of everyday practices.

But as we have seen, this cognitive thematization, problematization and explication of skills into validity claims is not the only and not even the main source of their flexibility and dynamism. Skills and habits can be changed even without intellectualistic reconstruction. Some skills might well be so all-pervasive that they cannot be explicated, but new possibilities can make them irrelevant by making irrelevant possibilities that disclose them and were disclosed by them; these decreases and increases in their disclosing potential is not something that presupposes such a rational interpretation. This line of thinking makes it possible to confirm the skills and practices not as grounds of intelligibility but as *means* of rooting oneself in the world, means that can deal with this task better or worse and be more or less appropriate. Their meaningfulness, in other words, is under question every bit as much as the meaningfulness of possibilities they disclose: even despite their inexplicability, such elements are still involved in meaningful patterns of life without being placed in a position of an “unmoved mover.” In other words, both the possibilities that skills enable and the skills themselves are dependent upon their disclosive potential: they are worth being followed as long as they are linked to other possibilities. If possibilities that skills disclose become somehow less relevant, so do these skills. So, Dreyfus’s favourite example, a skill that helps us to keep personal distance enables a number of possibilities (to hear what other person says and to be heard by him, the possibility of not being clingy and disdainful at the same time) presupposes a certain range of interconnected possibilities where this skill is intelligible as it is. If any of these possibilities vanish (like when the density or/and the cultural background of the population changes or when we are stuck in the overcrowded metro), it makes lesser sense to hold to this skill; and this making less sense has nothing to do with the necessary problematization and explication of the skill in question, which Dreyfus has tried to avoid as an intellectualistic derivation, which is opposed to a more fundamental explanatory level of absorbed coping.

II. Cover-up-ness and Disclosure

One thing that needs to be stressed right away is that the claim “disclosure is an existential achievement” has a crucial implication that so far has been omitted: it also sets up a central role for what Heidegger calls ‘cover-up-ness’ (verdecktheit), which is a “counter concept of a phenomenon.”²⁴⁶ Partly, this already follows from the preceding analysis of the ecstatic being of Dasein. It is Dasein’s attempt to find itself in the world that forces things to step out of their concealment and holds them into their unconcealment. Things glide out of absence and concealment and reveal their visible side for me; but this givenness for me rests on things’ transcendence, i.e., their absolute and irrespective muteness that precedes any kind of disclosure. Since every unconcealment is an effort that always retains, at least implicitly, recognition of its own effort-like character, givenness of things still presupposes the more primordial state of muteness or lack of givenness (not simply because concealment is “procedurally” prior to unconcealment, as Withy has recently suggested).²⁴⁷ As Marion puts it, “the phenomenon manifests only inasmuch as it manifests that which remained nonmanifest before that very manifestation, and which still obscurely governs its brilliance;”²⁴⁸ disclosure is “always a robbery.”²⁴⁹

This is only half of it, however. What Heidegger seems to be saying in addition is that disclosure is *not* simply a counter-force of concealment that is caught up in a never-ending and doomed attempt to fight off the concealment. The relation between disclosure and covered-up-ness is not a clash between two conflicting and mutually exclusive elemental forces; disclosing the world does not amount to the triumphant procession of disclosure in its struggle against concealment. Covered-up-ness is rather the opposite side of any disclosure that lets us see just as equiprimordially as it prevents us from seeing. As Marion further adds aptly, “Gegenbegriff does not signify the contrary or the contradictory so much as the counterplay, the fire-back, the buttress that inscribes manifestation in the very orbit of concealment.”²⁵⁰ Consider, for example, the following passage,

What is it that by its very essence is necessarily the theme whenever we exhibit something explicitly? Manifestly, it is something that proximally and for the most part does not show itself at all: it is something that lies hidden, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and ground.²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 31 translation modified (original “Verdecktheit ist der Gegenbegriff zu »Phänomen« ”)

²⁴⁷ Withy, “Concealment and Unconcealment in Heidegger,” p.2

²⁴⁸ Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 69

²⁴⁹ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 204

²⁵⁰ Marion, *Reduction and Givenness*, p. 69

²⁵¹ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 31

The very reason why phenomenology is not a tautological enterprise is that phenomena do not necessarily give themselves. Some phenomena lay “hidden” and do not show themselves being overshadowed by what shows itself “for the most part.” So, disclosure is linked to covered-up-ness not only because disclosure necessarily releases something out of such covered-up-ness and, thus, remains bound to it, but also because disclosure itself forecloses and overshadows; disclosing phenomena also necessarily means foreclosing other ones. There is an endless and never fading struggle *and* adhesion between disclosure and foreclosure. Phenomenology, in such a way, is not only a science of disclosure of phenomena but also that of their foreclosure; investigation of disclosure must be balanced out by a concept of foreclosure; it must account for its straining by foreclosure, which would clarify us the *dynamics* of disclosure. In this section, we will investigate this dynamics starting with Heidegger’s early and later accounts; after discussing their insufficient and problematic character, we will propose an alternative, pragmatic account of the dynamics of disclosure.

a. Heidegger’s Early Analysis of Disclosure/Foreclosure

Let’s first take a closer look at *Being and Time* where such dynamics seems to parallel closely the dynamics between resolute Dasein and *Das Man*. First and foremost, says Heidegger, disclosedness of the world is entrusted into the hands of *Das Man*, *what one does*. My ability to orient in a certain situation and to disclose things and events as belonging to such a situation (for example, my ability to cook a meal and a corresponding capacity to disclose things as pens, knives, forks and food) is based upon my tacit understanding of how things are done. *Das Man* is this ‘always already’ accepted corpus of normative expectations that exhaustively outline how things are done in every possible circumstance. The passive voice here is crucial (and it is implicated strongly by Heidegger’s choice of the term) because it demonstrates how such a disclosure works: it is not *my* understanding in a strong sense; it is not *me* who based on my own initiative has decided upon what things are and how do I take them to be. I don’t take things like pens and forks because I want so: on the contrary, we can disclose shared situations and the shared world because there are self-obvious ways of doing and saying things. No one is responsible for the way we hold forks and spoons, it just is the way one holds them. Everyday disclosure (and again this means disclosure *per se*, disclosure for the most part) revels in and feeds on such self-obviousness of things since it can function only insofar as it is deprived of any kind of individual responsibility. How ‘things are done’ suppresses the very need to ask ‘by whom:’ endless deferral of responsibility, an explanation based on the general commonality of habits and traditions creates an illusion of the self-obvious and, thus, the self-standing character of our ways of disclosing and treating things. This is why we can disclose the shared world and this is why it is possible to form a

community out of Daseins.²⁵² Of course, there might be some reasons and some responsibility in our everyday dealing with the world, but sooner or later there must be a point where the Wittgensteinian spade gets turned²⁵³ and one slips into this seemingly self-standing ground²⁵⁴ of how ‘things are done’ saying something like: ‘I don’t know, this is just something people say,’ ‘this is just the way we do it.’

The point Heidegger wants to make is that this all-pervasive normative power does not invade the private being of Dasein from somewhere outside; rather, it constitutes the very foundation of my own being. How things are done, what one does is a shared but faceless foundation of who we are, which makes it possible for me to have my ‘own’ personality, a personality that is nonetheless defined in terms of *Das Man*. *Das Man* first introduces me into being-in-the-world: through the constant social training I become a member of society; I can do what I am expected to do, I understand the way I am expected to understand. But by doing that, I am firstly really taught how to be *someone* as such and what is at stake for this someone. So, “one belongs to the others oneself, and entrenches their power.”²⁵⁵ I can be myself only because I am just another other, that is, because I do not differentiate myself from others for the most part but tacitly accept the relentless dictate of the one. With his trademark irony, Heidegger concludes, “we read, see, and judge literature and art the way the one sees and judges. But we also withdraw from the ‘great mass’ the way the one withdraws, we find ‘shocking’ what the one finds shocking. The one, which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness.”²⁵⁶

In order to understand this ‘ground’ into which all everyday understanding eventually falls we need to stress the *averageness* of *Das Man*. By the term average, Heidegger doesn’t mean statistically average. He is saying rather that there is a point toward which all human actions and ways of thinking are gravitating, a sort of average or basic understanding upon which everyone can uncontroversially agree. There is something self-obvious about almost anything in the world; such self-obviousness does not imply anyone in particular but appeals to the average basis accepted by everyone, thus, excusing us from the need to be responsible personally. This average basis is so basic and so enclosed in the banality that it creates an illusion of a self-standing ground, i.e. an illusion that things are thus and so not because Dasein discloses them, but simply because this is ‘how things are’ and this is ‘how they are done.’ Human beings, in other words, are essentially conformist creatures: everyone seeks to give up

²⁵² See, for example, Haugeland’s *Dasein Disclosed* or Dreyfus’s *Being-in-the-World*

²⁵³ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, § 217

²⁵⁴ It needs to be stressed at this point that Heidegger himself uses the term “Bodenlosigkeit,” “groundlessness” in order to describe that *inauthentic* understanding obscures the fact that Dasein’s being is the ground of any kind of understanding; in this sense, groundlessness is, for Heidegger, an implicitly critical description of inauthenticity (of course, Heidegger himself denies his own critical standpoint). For reasons that will be soon clarified, I think that this search for the ground still represents a traditional, metaphysical element in Heidegger’s thought, which I have criticized before in chapters 2 and 3.i.

²⁵⁵ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 118

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119

their own initiative and rely instead on the average, grounded in the banality of 'how things are done and said;' everyone tends to substitute 'I think so' with 'this is how it is thought about.' Everyday disclosure is, in such a way, a sort of universally levelling horizon that drags in and grinds every pinch of responsibility through the gravitational power of averageness. Anything at all can become a part of everyday disclosedness; for *Das Man*, there is nothing new under the sun: it knows and controls everything. But this absolute knowledge comes at the price of its banalization by means of which Dasein's genuine responsibility and its active role in bringing things out of the concealment are obscured. *Das Man* transforms everything it touches into a bleak copy of authentic experience: it is this copy that would wander around as an idle talk from one public place into another without any visible resistance – simply because it is something we all can agree upon without any further ado.

What does such a disclosure foreclose? As should be obvious by now, everyday disclosure obscures and overshadows the very nature of disclosure. For Heidegger, such a situation gives rise to *the* phenomenological problem, the problem, which pretty much constitutes the backbone of *Being and Time*. *everyday* disclosedness covers up the very "cover-up-ness." By giving to us familiar phenomena of our shared, everyday life, such *everyday* disclosedness obscures the phenomenon of disclosure itself, i.e., the phenomenon of bringing into unconcealment. In other words, everyday phenomena foreclose their own phenomenal nature; their tie to concealment along with their status as an existential achievement that has brought them out of muteness are overshadowed, *forgotten*. While there might be "accidental concealments," says Heidegger, there also are "necessary ones," that is, those that follow from the very type of situation (*Bestandsart*). The foreclosure that follows from everyday intelligibility is such a necessary foreclosure, foreclosure *per se* and phenomenology, in its first Heideggerian edition, is meant to fix this problem by bringing the phenomena that are foreclosed for the most part into the light.

So, average understanding gives us things, events, properties and particular identities at the cost of obscuring their status as a disclosure or, to put it differently, as an achievement. Inauthentic Dasein forecloses the very activity of bringing things out of concealment; it is trapped into an illusory but comforting picture of things given as they are as if Dasein weren't responsible for the fact of their givenness. Inauthentic Dasein can only bear platitudes and commonalities of everyday life because this is the only way Dasein can foreclose its own sense of self, its self-understanding as Dasein and its responsibility for bringing things out of concealment. It identifies itself in terms of self-obviousness of the world succumbing to the temptation to think of itself as something intra-worldly, as something that is just as self-obvious as norms and platitudes of *Das Man*. Inauthentic disclosure is a result of Dasein's inability to face the truth about one's own being. This necessary foreclosure also brings a number of accidental ones: the very possibility of saying or doing anything genuinely new, creative or thoughtful is

foreclosed because it would awaken Dasein's sense of responsibility for bringing things out of the concealment. Inauthenticity necessarily closes off what Heidegger calls "Situation:"²⁵⁷ for inauthentic Dasein, there is no way of recognizing the uniqueness of its own situation, it is left with general and insipid situations where anyone could settle smoothly. To say something new and to think by yourself is something that necessarily implies *more* than what is generally said and what is generally done. This 'more' necessarily requires Dasein's recognition of its own role in the disclosure of things; it also convincingly tells us that we are not just another other after all.

Why does Dasein try to pass for an intraworldly being? To tell the long story short, the unifying motive behind all terms Heidegger deploys to describe authenticity – anxiety, guilt, death, conscience, freedom – is to show that Dasein is nothing but Being-possible and to teach us how to live based on recognition of this truth. Essentially this means the revelation of our "nullity:"²⁵⁸ we are nothing that can be explained in terms of the world, we are not an intraworldly being and the possibilities that such beings offer are not ours. Dasein is "a being which is determined by a *not*,"²⁵⁹ says Heidegger and later adds, "it itself is a nullity of itself. Nullity by no means signifies not being objectively present or not subsisting, but means a not that constitutes this being of Da-sein, its thrownness."²⁶⁰ We are nothing but being-possible and we cannot become anything more than this being-possible. That's why I can care for things I am not in the first place: I am a 'null' relation to the world whose being consists of *relating* and finding of its own being on the outside and not of something that I happened to be factually *related* to; "this nullity belongs to the being-free of Da-sein for its existentiell possibilities."²⁶¹ The only possibility that I really own is to stop being possible and, thus, to finally blend with nothingness, which I have been carrying around throughout my whole existence. So, Heideggerian authenticity is not about understanding the extremely high likelihood of me leaving this mortal coil; it is about accepting that while living on it I am still married to nothingness; I am stuck somewhere in between this nothingness and positivity of the world and its intraworldly things. This is a terrifying fact to acknowledge, so Dasein tends to avoid it at all costs; it tries to get rid of the understanding that it acts according to its own Being-possible and tends to pass over its responsibility to others in order to find refuge in the conformism and naïve complacency of social roles.

By contrast, authentic Dasein proves to be capable of accepting its essential nullity and corresponding freedom to pursue its existential possibilities. The important thing here (I will return to this with some critical remarks shortly) is that such a self-recognition has nothing to do with something

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 276

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 261

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 262

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 263

intraworldly. Authentic Dasein can have the same possibilities inauthentic Dasein has:²⁶² it is not about the content, about *what* we are doing, it is about *how* we do it, its form. Authentic or ‘owned’ Dasein is characterized by taking over, says Heidegger, or appropriation. What is appropriated is not this or that particular possibility but my own being as a ground for any possibility: I finally realize that while pursuing possibilities that the world offers to me, I am doing nothing more than realizing the possibility that I myself am, that it is me who is at stake every time. Possibilities, in such a way, are revealed as grounded: they are now recognized as a dependent realization of Dasein’s freedom and manifest their true ontological status that was earlier concealed by inauthentic Dasein, which endows possibilities with pseudo-objective density and tries to objectify its own way of being in the same way. In this sense, Heidegger’s play with the concepts constancy (*Ständigkeit*; etymologically, the term constancy (from lat. standing firm) matches Heidegger’s *Ständigkeit* quite precisely but I will still occasionally use the term ‘standing’ in order to make my point), self-constancy (*Selbst-Ständigkeit*), unself-constancy (*Unselbst-Ständigkeit*) and grounded constancy (*Bodenständigkeit*) is very illustrative. In §25 Heidegger first describes constancy as an ontic determination of Dasein: ontically speaking, the constancy expresses the fact that “an I is always this being, and not others;” as a being that is always “this and not others,” I “maintain” my identity throughout my “modes of behaviour and experiences.”²⁶³ Heidegger, however, warns us that such a constancy does not clarify the question of “who” of Dasein and its way of being. Only in the course of Division II Heidegger explains how this description can be promoted to the description of the ontological structure of Dasein. Ultimately, what authentic Dasein reveals is simply that nothing else can be said about its being; Dasein is nothing but this “formal and empty” constancy. But this means that what ontically seemed as the constancy of Dasein (of course, I have decided to do it; who else would?) turns out to be an ontological self-constancy of Dasein: the constancy is possible only insofar there is a being that *exists through being-free for constancy* (It is *me* who have decided to be a plumber). Ontic, self-obvious constancy, in such a way, becomes *owned*, ontologically clarified and grounded (*Bodenständigkeit*); *it is removed into the possession of a being that constitutes the source of such a constancy*, i.e., self-constancy gives ground (*Boden*) for the possibility of constancy in the face of changing circumstances. At the same time, authentic Dasein reveals that what has seemed as self-obvious constancy of inauthentic Dasein is nothing but an unself-constancy,²⁶⁴ which tries to obscure its “ontological constitution” but which nonetheless presupposes such a constitution while attempting to get rid of it.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 274

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 108

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 264

For Heidegger, this means that by revealing the truth of its existence, authentic Dasein becomes “in charge of the being of this being.”²⁶⁵ From now on, Dasein has nothing external properly speaking: whatever is going on in its life belongs to itself as owned. The contingent nature of things and events in the world is exactly what is *inessential for Dasein*; what is essential is that Dasein relates to the world (not that it relates to something in particular). Dasein, in such a way, transforms the contingencies and circumstances that belong to its facticity into “fate” by taking such contingencies over as mine; “existing fatefully in resoluteness handing itself down, Da-sein is disclosed as being-in-the-world for the “coming” of “fortunate” circumstances and for the cruelty of chance.”²⁶⁶ Both cruelty and generosity of fate belong to the same extent to Dasein’s being-free for existential possibilities. In such a way, Dasein’s freedom for its existential possibilities is revealed as a ground – but this ground is not something outside Dasein: it is not something objective (neither is a sense of objective things nor objective processes) it is Dasein itself, the nullity and freedom. Only insofar as grounded in nullity and freedom and recognizing this groundness we can become authentic.

This means that a switch to authenticity is not simply a recognition of the hidden truth that could be added to the stockpile of banalities that has been accumulated by *Das Man*. It is a switch into a new type or “*existentiell modality*”²⁶⁷ of disclosure, which undermines everyday disclosure and is principally incompatible with it. Anxiety discloses our being-possible but only at the cost of foreclosing any chance of hiding from oneself; anxiety manifests our essential “nullity” by suppressing defence mechanisms of inauthentic Dasein. It does not matter, for the current aims, whether one state of affairs is “true,” “genuine,” “primordial” or “false”, “inauthentic” and “derivate” (although Heidegger’s ambition was clearly to demonstrate the impoverished and privative nature of inauthentic disclosure). What matters is that we cannot have it both ways: authenticity forecloses inauthenticity and otherwise; everyday complacency and dissolution in the world are incompatible with authentic self-understanding as Dasein. For inauthentic Dasein there are no such things as nullity, Situation, being-towards-death and so on; similarly, engulfed in anxiety and being confronted with our own being, there simply is no such option as hiding behind things and taking cover under the wing of *Das Man*. One can be *given* only to the detriment of another.

Apparently, we cannot accept such conclusions along with the binary opposition between authentic/inauthentic disclosures. Even at a superficial glance, we can sense a contradiction between Heidegger’s concept of disclosure and the pragmatic orientation of the present work. Heidegger’s rigid preference for heroic resolute Dasein over faceless *Das Man* can tell very few things with regard to the

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 287

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 351

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 282

pragmatic conception of meaning and flexibility of everyday practices that we have been trying to defend. To situate the dynamics between disclosure and foreclosure on the level of Dasein's relation to itself means to jump over and ignore the burgeoning character of everyday life relegating it into something that is not worthy of phenomenological investigation. The only thing that matters about *Das Man* for Heidegger is how it conceals. The productive aspect of *Das Man*, the way it discloses and gives, on the contrary, remains largely underdeveloped and we have required the genius of Dreyfus (and a fair amount of 'original misreading') to recognize how much Heidegger could have said if he was interested in such a topic. A closer investigation, however, demonstrates this disagreement points to the tacitly retained subjectivistic traits of Heidegger's own approach, which threaten to undermine some of Heidegger's most important achievements.

We have been told so far that authentic disclosure results from Dasein's liberation from the fall into the world: it starts understanding itself on its own terms. One important implication that I have already briefly stressed is that the counter-play between disclosure and foreclosure does not concern anything intraworldly but is entirely a problem of Dasein's relation to itself. If inauthentic Dasein flees toward the world and hides from itself behind things in the world, authentic Dasein is capable of accepting the truth about its being-in-the-world. In both cases, the importance of the world is preserved; both authentic and inauthentic Daseins are being-in-the-world, the only difference is that authentic Dasein recognizes itself as one. Authentic disclosure simply tells us that Dasein's being is not describable in terms of the world; it is the relatedness to the world that is essential. But this can only mean that the world is *excluded* from the dialogue between disclosure and foreclosure: it is left unaffected by the switch from inauthenticity into authenticity; as Heidegger himself puts it, "authentic disclosedness then modifies equiprimordially the discoveredness of "world"... The "world" which is available does not become another one "in its content"..."²⁶⁸ (Of course, resolute Dasein becomes capable of responding to Situation, but this can happen only *after* Dasein recognizes its own truth; it is accidental).

Such a move misbalances the relation between Dasein and the world. According to the original formulation, the relation is essentially mutual: neither part of the *relata* does make sense without the other; nothing about Dasein makes sense without the world. But now it seems that Heidegger takes this claim back: Dasein's self-recognition has nothing to do with the world and is not paralleled by anything in the world in the first place; speaking in Heidegger's words, we might say that "the ownmost possibility is nonrelational."²⁶⁹ When it comes to the content, the world is the same, says Heidegger, it

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 274

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 243

is me who relates to it differently. This means that Dasein retains at least some sort of *innerness*: its self-recognition is a matter of its *inner decision* and its *inner truth* (hence, the problem spotted by Dreyfus consisting of Heidegger's inability to answer what exactly constitutes a motive for being authentic/inauthentic.)²⁷⁰ *Being and Time*, no doubt, hides this inner character well and systematically repudiates inner/outer distinction. But at the very heart it is still retained; more than this, it plays quite a crucial role.

This is obvious from the way Dasein's taking-over of worldly possibilities *neutralizes* the contingency of the world. By understanding the simple fact that the only thing essential about my being is my relation to the world and becoming equally open both to the "fortunate circumstances and for the cruelty of chance," Dasein dissolves the contingency of the world into its resoluteness and readiness to accept everything as belonging to its being as own. The contingent *what* of something that happens to Dasein is no longer of any relevance and Dasein's thrownness is reduced to the essence of thrownness, to the merely formal fact of being referred to the world. Again, the relation between notions of 'constancy' and 'self-constancy' proves to be illustrative if investigated from a closer perspective. The constancy of Dasein already implies freedom: in its being it relates to beings that it is not, thus, retaining its sense of identity through the difference from what it is related to. The consequent addition of the prefix 'self,' in fact, gives us much more than the explication of this implicit freedom: 'self' transforms the implicit freedom into a higher-order, absolute freedom that is no longer faced with any sort of external constraint and knows no limitations other than that of its own. Freedom becomes densified up to an extent it can appear as a 'self-grounding' ground of our relations to the world; the 'self' of constancy is no longer conceived as a being-in-the-world but rather the self *of* being-in-the-world. What Heidegger is after, paradoxically, is an investigation of being (i.e., *Selbst-Ständigkeit*) of the being-in-the-world (*Ständigkeit*). The complicated and tightly linked passages of *Being and Time* seem to arrive at postulating a sort of double bottom of Dasein: a freedom to relate to the world turns out to be a façade of freedom to relate to itself *through* the world and constancy turns out to be self-constancy. This densification of freedom is not paralleled by the densification of our relatedness to the world; on the contrary, such densification ends up 'swallowing' the world and wrapping it up in Dasein's freedom for its existential possibilities. So, such freedom must be *in* Dasein, i.e., it must *be* Dasein but not as being-in-the-world but as a being that can *own* its being-in-the-world.

In other words, Heidegger's investigation of authentic Dasein ends up granting to it absolute freedom to the subject that becomes capable of establishing itself based on an existential decision, not

²⁷⁰ See, Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 334-335

on something in the world; as Heidegger puts it some years later, “the ground that springs forth in transcending folds back upon freedom itself, and freedom as origin itself becomes “ground.” Freedom is ground of ground.”²⁷¹ Such freedom *is* something inner: while being completely transparent and empty non-ground, “abyss of ground” (Ab-grund) in terms of ontic content, it still looks, smells and quacks like one; as Levinas puts it: “[Dasein’s] freedom writes his history which is one; his projects delineate a fate of which he is master and slave.”²⁷² The freedom *recapsulates* Dasein assimilating everything into its being-free-for-existential-possibilities: everything becomes *mine* in a strong sense, a sense that abolishes the very meaning of possession – in a strict sense of the word, possibilities are no longer *mine* but become *me*. It is the ability to recognize the truth of its own existence and re-disclose the world based on such a truth that gives to Dasein the inner resource to appropriate the implied heteronomy of ‘always mine’ by reducing Dasein’s thrownness to the essence of the thrownness and stressing that, for an authentic Dasein, the only essential thing about the world is that it is related to it. We can see, in such a way, that already in 40§ Heidegger starts laying the groundwork for this prospect: by establishing the “character of complete insignificance [of the world],”²⁷³ Heidegger introduces a minimal distance between Dasein and the world, a distance, which is nonetheless big enough to introduce later this second-order possibility to own one’s own freedom and reveal the self-grounded nature of Dasein’s relation to the world. All of this, of course, is nothing but a last-minute attempt to re-establish the possibility of autonomy of the subject, thus, giving a curtsey for the tradition (especially for Nietzsche) that Heidegger once wanted to deconstruct: authentic freedom conquers and assimilates the contingency of the world transforming it into a fate and, thus, endangering the very heteronomy of Dasein’s existence; the project of overcoming our fallenness in the world runs against Heidegger’s own basic intentions and downplays his own originality.

Heidegger’s attempt to describe the dynamics between disclosure and foreclosure, in such a way, consists of granting the subject absolute control over disclosure along with explanatory priority. As a self-recognized ground of disclosure, Dasein loses a fair share of the mutuality of its relations with the world and becomes its transcendental condition: authentic disclosure reveals that has seemed as a generative influence of the world was just an obscured self-manifestedness of Dasein. Being placed in control of disclosure, Dasein loses its possibility to be formed by the world in any genuine sense (or, to be more precise, it realizes that it has never had such a possibility): it is Dasein, which makes it possible for things to show up and it is Dasein’s being-possible that is relevant when it comes for disclosure of things. The world can no longer surprise Dasein, it cannot *move* it, it cannot really learn it anything

²⁷¹ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 174/134

²⁷² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 275

²⁷³ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 174

because the only thing that is relevant about the world is that the world, so to say, hands the ammunition for Dasein's absolute freedom. But then Romano is absolutely right in saying that such a project remains empty and ultimately unfulfillable: how could one take over one's own birth?²⁷⁴ How is it possible to take over the death of loved ones? How can anything unforeseeable ever happen to anybody? In short, how conditioning element can be conditioned itself? These questions can receive an intelligible answer only within something as hopelessly metaphysical as Nietzsche's eternal recurrence. We do not and cannot take over *everything* in our lives. Instead, the world shapes and forms us making us dependent upon its essential contingency and rendering any kind of existential project a risky business, which cannot be compensated by a reflexive "taking over."

b. Heidegger's Later Analysis of Disclosure/Foreclosure

It would seem that this was recognized as a problem by Heidegger himself. After the *Kehre* Heidegger offers a very different perspective: now it is what Heidegger calls *Ereignis*, the event of appropriation (as Stambaugh decides to translate the term), is what is responsible for such an interplay that opens up and closes off the space where Dasein can dwell and make sense of itself. Let's look at this notion closer in order to see if Heidegger resolves in an acceptable way the tacit subjectivism of *Being and Time* has turned out to be incapable to resolve.

First, it should be stressed that at a certain point Heidegger changes his vocabulary. Originally, Heidegger used a great variety of terms to describe disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*): such terms as *Welt*, *Weite*, *Offene*, *Lichtung* and even such terms as *Zeit*, and *Temporalität* all were mobilized to describe the same openness constitutive of Dasein. It might be an oversimplification to say that those terms are freely interchangeable, but it is safe to suggest that they at least overlap in some important ways. Approaching the later stages of his career, Heidegger has started to prefer the term *Lichtung*, clearing, over all other ones. There isn't much to say about such a term, which hasn't been said already: clearing is essentially opening up a space of intelligibility. Because our understanding is essentially holistic (as constituted both by significance (*Bedeutbarkeit*) and for-the-sake-of-which (*Worumwillen*)), it never gives us some isolated thing in itself but a certain liveable space filled with possibilities to be. It is within this space of possibilities things can show up and be encountered. Clearing is "that from which and through which being comes to pass at all;"²⁷⁵ it "grants first of all the possibility of the path to presence, and grants the possible presencing of that presence itself."²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Romano, *Event and World*, see esp. § 13

²⁷⁵ GA 73, p. 137; in this section, I will be mostly referring to original Heideggerian texts, so I will quote them based on *Gesamtausgabe* numbering

²⁷⁶ GA 14, p. 84

On first sight, the new term *Ereignis* also appears quite familiar. Dasein never finds itself outside of openness and then decides to enter this or that particular space based on a “free-floating” decision; as Da-sein, it is always already thrown in openness or clearing. The term *Ereignis* is meant to emphasize that this thrownness is not a fact that might or might not happen as something inessential for Dasein’s being. Thrownness is *proper* (*Eigen*) to Dasein: in order to be itself, Dasein must appropriate the thrownness, meaning that thrownness must be rendered owned, constitutive to the very way Dasein understand itself. *Ereignis* is such “taking over”²⁷⁷ of thrownness, i.e. appropriating, making proper of something that was there before Dasein. Only because the thrownness is appropriated, it can open up and sustain a clearing for Dasein, thus, disclosing for Dasein its own possibilities of being; *Da* of *Sein* must be *brought* into clearing disclosing a meaningful field of *Sein* and letting Dasein to be itself. *Ereignis* means precisely that we are always already “released into our ownness” and *freed to be ourselves*. That is why *Ereignis* it is not a fact but *the most primordial fact* (*Urfaktum*) of our being; it makes possible all the other facts and events that we encounter in our being. *Ereignis* “is already operative ... even before we were.” So, it is no accident that this new term can be frequently found right after more familiar expressions like “thrown projection” (*der geworfene Entwurf*) and “thrownness” (*Geworfenheit*):²⁷⁸ *Ereignis* means nothing but the simple fact that we find ourselves on the outside by disclosing a field of intelligibility that becomes mine and tells me what possibilities of being I have.

Heidegger’s later thought no doubt reserves for Dasein a crucial role. *Ereignis* opens up meaningful space and lets things to show up as they are²⁷⁹ only for appropriating Dasein. Being can be given only because there is an essential relation between being and Dasein; being and thinking ‘belong together’ in an essential cohesion.²⁸⁰ “Every philosophical – that is, thoughtful – doctrine of man’s essential nature is in itself alone a doctrine of the Being of beings.”²⁸¹ But there also isn’t any doubt that Dasein’s role is different from what we have seen in his earlier thought. If in *Being and Time* Dasein was held as a responsible persona (exemplary being, *Beispiel*) for the disclosure and foreclosure, now Heidegger seems to argue that Dasein itself is put in midst of the interplay (*Bei-spiel*)²⁸² between disclosure and foreclosure. Starting from *Contributions*, Heidegger no longer wants to clarify being by grounding it in Dasein’s being-free for existential possibilities; he wants to make a further step and investigate the source of meaningfulness and the relation between being and beings that makes it possible for Dasein to pursue its possibilities in the first place. Investigation of *Ereignis* and the relation between clearing and Dasein, in this sense, become simply more fundamental than the existential

²⁷⁷ GA 65, p. 322

²⁷⁸ See, for example, GA 65, p. 304

²⁷⁹ See, for example, GA 65, §§ 56, 100

²⁸⁰ See, for example, GA 7, p. 141

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79

²⁸² Romano, *Event and World*, p. 13

analytics of Dasein. “Appropriation of being” is considered as a “precondition of the arrival of beings”²⁸³ and Dasein is now considered to be a “site” of the arrival of being not its source. What follows from such a methodological shift? For one thing, Dasein can no longer set any sort of control over appropriation of clearing since it itself becomes possible based on appropriation: the site of occurrence of being, properly speaking, is appropriating just as much as it is appropriated. Heidegger seems to restore the balance between Dasein and Being saying that a “human being... is needed” for the clearing and, at the same time, this need to realize clearing “claims” Dasein.²⁸⁴ As he puts it, “Man has a presentiment of being ... because being appropriates him to itself.”²⁸⁵ Dasein appropriates openness as thrown but while doing this it finds itself appropriated by such an openness; by letting things be it, it lets be itself. *Ereignis*, in such a way, precedes the division between activity and passivity: it is always appropriating and being appropriated at the same time simply because it discloses to us *what can be done and thought in our lives*: we are active (appropriating) while being constituted (appropriated) and we can be constituted only by being active. So, we can see plainly that the notion of *Ereignis* leaves no trace of the false subjectivation and the consequent assimilation of heteronomy of Dasein’s existence, which has hindered Heidegger’s earlier approach; having started as a foundation of being, Dasein finds itself relegated to a witness.

Since Dasein is no longer placed in control over disclosure and foreclosure, their dynamics follows from clearing as such: it is the clearing itself that unconceals and withdraws; “the clearing, in which beings are, is not simply bounded and delimited by something hidden but by something *self-concealing*”²⁸⁶ There is an important continuity in Heidegger’s thought in this regard: just like earlier in his career, he thinks that there is an *essential* foreclosure, foreclosure *per se* consisting of foreclosure of clearing itself *as appropriated clearing* (something Heidegger would later start describing with the term forgetfulness of Being). The difference, as we can see, is that now Heidegger thinks that the essential foreclosure does not follow from Dasein’s inability to face the truth about one’s own existence but from the very nature of appropriated clearing, which Heidegger defines as “a self-concealing sheltering.” In order to explain this point, Heidegger frequently resorts to the metaphor of gift saying, for example, that clearing of things is concealed “in favour of the gift”²⁸⁷ consisting of giving us meaningful things and events in the world. Givenness of the gift overpowers givenness of the gifting; to receive the gift in this sense means that “gifting withdraws from the gift given.” In other words, gifting forecloses itself

²⁸³ GA 15, p. 363

²⁸⁴ GA 12, p. 118

²⁸⁵ GA 65, p. 245

²⁸⁶ GA 45, p. 210, emphasis mine

²⁸⁷ GA 66, p. 200

“for the sake of gifting:”²⁸⁸ the process or act of gifting draws attention away from itself as an act and leaves us with the gift given. In the same way, clearing gives us things and events but by giving us such things and events clearing conceals itself as giving; clearing “hides itself as refusal:” it can give only insofar it refuses to be given itself. Appropriation of thrownness, in such a way, means essentially forgetting about oneself as throwing and forgetting that there might be other possibilities of throwing oneself into the open. So, Heidegger says that “presencing is *luminous* self-concealing:”²⁸⁹ it illuminates through being invisible and only insofar as being invisible. “Self-revealing not only never dispenses with concealing, but actually needs it, in order to occur essentially in the way it occurs as dis-closing.”²⁹⁰ Consequently, the connection between necessary and accidental foreclosure is also different from his early account. As we remember, in *Being and Time*, essential foreclosure concerned the inability to face the truth about one’s own being and accidental foreclosure followed by parity of reasoning: no “Situation,” no unique, genuine thinking is open for inauthentic Dasein. Now, since the later account no longer sees foreclosure as something external to clearing, we can see how such self-concealing *also* conceals all the alternative ways of making sense of things. Clearing gives Dasein a space of open possibilities while other possibilities that are incompatible with the current ones are foreclosed.²⁹¹ They are foreclosed exactly because clearing itself is foreclosed; foreclosure of the fact that things are given only because of clearing goes hand in hand with our understanding that things can be given differently.

But if clearing conceals itself as clearing, then, Heidegger asks, how we can ever know anything about it? How can we even talk about it? The answer is: even though clearing refuses to manifest itself as it is, i.e., as something essentially appropriated, it is far from being nothing. The self-concealing nature of clearing does not signalize any kind of deficiency or lack; instead, it shows us that withdrawal or foreclosure is what constitutes Dasein as an ecstatic being. This follows from the very meaning of ecstasy, if it is taken seriously enough: what is essential about a being that exists ecstatically is that it finds itself outside amongst beings that it is not. Because of the essential negativity of its being that is drawn-forward into the positivity of beings, Dasein sees and feels things in the world and understands itself in terms of the world instead of seeing and feeling itself as a negative being; Dasein’s being consists of surpassing itself. In other words, Dasein is thrown into an open space and it knows itself out of this thrownness instead of knowing itself as throwing. In this sense, “concealing is appropriation” (Entzug ist Ereignis), and to conceal means to exist as a Dasein (Der Entzug aber ist des Da-seins);²⁹² concealing is a way of existing that ecstatic beings have. Man’s essence “as the abode of being’s arrival”,

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ GA 72, p. 71, emphasis mine

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 279

²⁹¹ This second aspect of Heidegger’s account of foreclosure was investigated in greater details by such authors as M. Wrathall and K. Whithy

²⁹² GA 65, p. 293

says Heidegger, *is claimed by* the relatedness, which is why the relatedness itself “withdraws.”²⁹³ To claim that such seeing and feeling of things in the world must be somehow accompanied by an understanding that it is Dasein who has disclosed them means to downplay the very meaning of ecstasy and to substitute an ecstatic being with a being that *can* be ecstatic. Again, this demonstrates to us perfectly how exactly Heidegger’s later approach is different from the earlier one: there can be no talk about authenticity that could own thrownness by recognizing itself as thrown. Consequently, Dasein is no longer seen as a ground; now Heidegger talks about what he calls *Gegenschwung*, the way Dasein and clearing are related where subjectivity does no longer have explanatory priority.

The question now is why do certain clearings prevail while others are withheld. Since it is not Dasein’s relations with itself who explains the dynamics of disclosure and foreclosure, existential analytics is substituted with something Heidegger calls history of being. Heidegger argues that there has been a number of attempts to understand what being is, attempts that have resulted in different clearings with different possibilities filling the open space where Dasein lives, which Heidegger describes as historical epochs. Such clearings are what makes up a foundation of history, history in its essential sense: not as a set of particular historical events but as something that makes these events possible and lets entities show themselves in different ways. Epochal clearing, says Heidegger, sends “the destiny of being:” things become themselves (“they are delivered over what is their own”) because clearing discloses being as the meaningful presence of things that belong to the “realm of the open” out of which presence can show up as meaningful.²⁹⁴ So, for Greeks, it was The Good/Unmoved Mover that has send such a destiny letting things to be encountered as belonging to the meaningfully organized universe, for Christianity it was God who has created the world and later on the enlightened Europeans have placed Man himself at the centre of intelligibility. Each time, different “destiny” embraced beings disclosing them differently and disclosing Dasein as a different ability-to-be.

What Heidegger wants to stress, however, is that it was *Ereignis*, “sending as appropriation” that has made each clearing possible. The crucial thing that Heidegger wants to stress is that *Ereignis* itself is nonetheless “unhistorical or more precisely without destiny.”²⁹⁵ As sending destiny, *Ereignis* itself is not sent by anything: as this ultimate condition of possibility, it cannot be conditioned by anything in the first place. The implications of such a claim are crucial: there is no way *Ereignis* can be described as having a certain logic and saying in advance how exactly *Ereignis* functions. *Ereignis* itself does not occur for a reason, so there is no way of asking why this or that particular understanding has prevailed. This is because from Heidegger’s perspective, an attempt to investigate the destiny of

²⁹³ *GA* 6.2, p. 332

²⁹⁴ *GA* 14, p. 24

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50/41

Ereignis, i.e., its specific logic, would mean that *Ereignis* would become a part of what is enabled by *Ereignis* and, thus, lose its explanatory status. This would undermine the whole point of ontological difference distorting the very meaning of destiny into a sort of vulgar determinism. The attempt to answer why *Ereignis* takes place is a metaphysical kind of question; instead of thinking about the possibility of metaphysics, we would once again fall into doing one. We need to accept, in such a way, that we don't know why clearing (as appropriated) is given to us and that we cannot theorize or reflect upon this: clearing is a *gift*, a gift that is the most valuable for it gives a possibility to be oneself. It shouldn't come as a surprise that Heidegger arrives at such a position: his strive to think being itself, what gives itself and the consequent attempts to maintain the purity of ontological difference cannot result in anything but claims of this sort where the condition is ultimately unconceivable as anything else but the condition of possibility. To ascribe to it any kind of content would contaminate this pure relation between being and beings; it would undermine the undistorted character of the origin that Heidegger has tried to outline so tirelessly.

It is obvious, I think, that Heidegger's later thought makes a significant advance in many ways. It is no longer committed to latent subjectivism and it does not place Dasein in control of disclosure. Instead, Heidegger removes being from Dasein's control and views Dasein as something that is formed through its inhabiting being. Can we be satisfied with these improvements? The answer, I think, is still no. The reason for this is that Heidegger has never reconsidered the main source of the problems that *Being and Time* has been confronted with but simply transposed it into a different domain.

The most immediate concern comes with regard to the logical consistency of Heidegger's later account. If *Ereignis* is the ultimate condition of the very possibility of meaningfulness, how does *Ereignis* itself come into the light? Is Heidegger's theory about *Ereignis* itself enabled by a particular *Ereignis*? If so, can it be trusted to describe something universal? How can we arrive at anything universally valid based on an approach that claims that intelligibility is based upon contingent and mutually exclusive clearings? So, isn't the very idea of *Ereignis* just a contingent idea that is valid only in the context of a particular clearing? Why should we listen to it then? Furthermore, how can Heidegger predict a new clearing, a new sending of destiny? How can he even realize that he faces two different and incommensurable clearings if his intelligibility is conditioned by only one of them? Since a particular clearing, let's say, a technological one shapes me so fundamentally, how I can even understand that there are different ways of making sense of things? Why don't other clearings simply appear as plainly wrong and meaningless? So, it seems that even though Heidegger's account refuses to tell us about the destiny of *Ereignis*, it surely presupposes one; he needs to explain *how* and *why* we appropriate clearing, otherwise Heidegger's own description claims for itself a status that Heidegger

himself does not allow, thus, becoming a typical case of performative self-contradiction. As I have anticipated earlier, Heidegger finds himself in a position similar to Rorty: *Ereignis* fulfils precisely the same role pragmatic goals fulfil in Rorty. Both terms explain the possibility of different systems of intelligibility while themselves staying above any kind of explanation; they are conditions of possibilities that are not themselves conditioned. Both Rorty and Heidegger hold this strong transcendental position trying to describe the condition of possibility without specifying the precise nature of this condition; both fail simply because their own methodological decisions preclude them from saying anything of substance about such a condition at all. But if Rorty at least tries to cover the flagrant emptiness and illegitimacy of his transcendental explanation by appealing to the seemingly empirical nature of such concepts as goals and vocabularies, Heidegger chooses another strategy. Sensing the logical difficulty with his approach, Heidegger recedes into “poetry of thought” making a presumptuous conclusion that the problem must be with philosophy and not with his account; since his views cannot even be expressed without contradiction they don’t need to be expressed but rather should be hinted or communicated in some other ways. That is hardly a satisfactory conclusion.

Furthermore, even if we set this massive logical problem aside, I think there still would be a fair number of concerns left regarding the nature of Heidegger’s intended contribution. Of course, Heidegger has gotten rid of the subjectivistic self-enclosure and from putting of Dasein at the centre of the universe. While doing this, however, he has thrown Dasein into possession of Being and its epochal understanding, which is a move that seems to leave no substantial place for human agency. The relation between *Ereignis* and human initiative is resolved in favour of *Ereignis* since the latter is what enables the former in the first place. Sheehan has recently argued that Heidegger avoids any kind of hypostatization of being²⁹⁶ and he might be right: Heidegger systematically repudiates any kind of objectification/hypostatization, which would indeed be detrimental for his aims. But his way of defending *Ereignis* from hypostatization consists of saying that, as a source of intelligibility, *Ereignis* is unintelligible in itself: it enables without being enabled and resists any kind of attempt to analyse it, i.e. to attribute to it some sort of destiny. So, the problem is that *we are not in a position to tell whether Ereignis is hypostasised or not* since Heidegger’s way of defending *Ereignis* from hypostatization consists of prohibiting us to talk about it at all; an attempt to do so would necessarily mean to remove its status as a condition of possibility and distort it as such. At the same time, we are left in a situation where human existence is thoroughly defined by a factor that is not intelligible for it and that requires no actual cooperation, but which retains essential control over it. So, even though *Ereignis* is not hypostatized *conceptually* (and can never be), it is hypostatized *de facto* with regard to the role it plays

²⁹⁶ See Sheehan, *Making sense of Heidegger*, “What if Heidegger was a Phenomenologist?”

in the life of factual individuals. Heidegger suggests simply that Dasein must be subjected to being and it must go wherever being takes Dasein; but since such shepherding is deprived of any kind of humanity, it becomes unclear precisely how it can *lead* Dasein without *dragging* it by the hair. The role of the human initiative is substituted by Heidegger with some sort of eschatological openness towards the future that brings unforeseeable: we owe our being to *Ereignis* and we must simply wait until the sky breaks and a new understanding of being will reveal itself. Being, says Heidegger “is inherently eschatological.”²⁹⁷ That is why, for example, Heidegger is stressing that we must wait for a new God that would help us to overcome our current technological understanding of Being.²⁹⁸ Otherwise, any kind of conscious attempt and free initiative aimed at overcoming the current technological thinking would simply reinforce it since such an initiative would be based on the same kind of thinking. So, the question we should be asking ourselves is why do we need an account that undermines human agency so radically and that leaves the driving force of history in pure unintelligibility of absolute condition?

The reason why Heidegger sticks a picture this implausible, I think, consists of the fact that for Heidegger the only way of resolving the problems with his earlier approach is to reverse them. At the core Heideggerian approach lies a transcendental assumption that Heidegger has never questioned: the source of intelligibility, i.e., its ground, is something that is placed outside intelligibility and cannot be influenced back by what it enables. Both early and later Heidegger wants to reveal this undistorted source of intelligibility by distilling all sorts of contamination by the contingent intelligibility of the world and grants this formalization the explanatory priority. From this perspective, there is simply no other way of avoiding subjectivistic implications of his early approach: Dasein in control can only be substituted with Da-sein under control; either it controls or it is controlled by something else. If *Being and Time* sees Dasein as the ultimate ground of disclosure and foreclosure, *Ereignis* seems to perform exactly the same kind of grounding but this time it is Dasein who finds itself in a subordinate position. In both cases, we see that Heidegger tries to locate and identify this ultimate condition of possibility of intelligibility: the empty resoluteness of Dasein is simply substituted with appropriation of clearing, which isn't the least bit less empty but which is far more obscure. This limited number of options that Heidegger had only gives away the limitations and inherent rigidity of transcendental philosophy (broadly conceived), which must hold a strict division between *explanans* and *explanandum*. In this sense, Habermas's objection seems to arrive right on target: “so little does Heidegger free himself from the pregiven problematic of transcendental consciousness that he can burst the conceptual cage of the philosophy of consciousness in no other way than by abstract negation.”²⁹⁹ The proposed line of

²⁹⁷ GA 5, p. 327

²⁹⁸ See, for example, Heidegger's Spiegel interview.

²⁹⁹ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 138

critique (which as we have seen includes Habermas himself) further radicalizes this objection: the problem is not that Heidegger remains bound to the transcendental philosophy of *consciousness* simply because it is not important where the ground is located – whether it is the subject, the background practices, the formal-pragmatic presuppositions or whether it is Being itself – but the transcendently motivated style of thinking that forces us to search for the enabling ground wherever it is hidden.

Heidegger's failures, in this sense, are particularly instructive: we can see how his two attempts to analyse the foreclosure and the dynamics of disclosure push the transcendental approach to the limit. Heidegger's decision to abandon the subjectivistic position of *Being and Time* that treats disclosure and foreclosure as a result of Dasein's relations with itself is correct, and so is the consequent attempt to work out a theory of appropriation that would hold that disclosure and foreclosure are no longer in Dasein's power but that would give them prefix "self;" it is neither Dasein nor the objective world but the event of appropriation that discloses being. The truth is that Heidegger, I think, freezes one step away from recognizing the essential limitation of such an approach: he fails to recognize that after he abandons the search for autonomy of his early position, the very need for grounding dissolves. Consequently, he fails to understand that *Ereignis* might be well explained by what it enables as something that has *enabling value* or *enabling potential* without losing its explanatory status completely; it would only lose its status as a ground, a condition that enables Dasein's rooting in the world and obtain instead the status of the outcome of an *actual* rooting. Being can be given because there is a mutual dependence between Dasein that strives to find itself in the world and the world that actually offers possibilities of being to Dasein: *Ereignis* is *an outcome* of the fact that there *is* an ecstatic being and there *is* the world where this ecstatic movement can be realized; *explanans/explanandum* correlation, in such a way, is substituted with this mutual dependence of Dasein and the world, which results in appropriation. We, thus, can retain both the essential contingency of Dasein's world and Dasein's spontaneity and responsibility (or, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, both centripetal and centrifugal elements of human existence³⁰⁰) but only if we abandon the transcendental search for the ground that enables without being enabled back.

c. Pragmatic Conception of Foreclosure

I think that a satisfactory account of foreclosure (and along with it a satisfactory account of the dynamics of disclosure) can be achieved based on combining Heidegger's early and later approaches with conclusions drawn in section 3.i. Such a combination mostly means that Heidegger's insights must be placed – and this time with much more insistence – within the space outlined by the central claim of

³⁰⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 473

existential phenomenology according to which the relation between Dasein and the world is essentially mutual.

As we have seen in chapter 3.i, understanding seeks to disclose a set of interconnected possibilities (a room-for-manoevre) that enable and enrich each other. This interconnection maximizes available possibilities, which maximizes Dasein's ability-to-be and roots it in a particular situation. The price of such a rooting, however, consists of isolation from other possible situations: to indwell in a situation means that nothing else shows up unless it can interact with the currently available possibilities. We could say, at least preliminary, that possibilities from different practices *tend* to mutual foreclosure: being in one situation presupposes not being in many other situations and pursuing one particular set of possibilities necessarily means foreclosing many other sets (of course, this line of thinking presupposes the wider question of how and why practices interact among one another but we would like to postpone this question until chapter 5 methodologically emphasizing this *tendency* to exclusion over the fact that this tendency is compensated and downplayed in the context of the same cultural space). For imagine that amidst the interaction disclosed by some room-for-manoevre another possibility shows up, a possibility, which is not interactive at all. The immediate result of such an introduction consists of disrupting the system of interactions in the given room-for-manoevre and its consequent collapse: there is no *room* left since there are no interactions anymore; possibilities are given as a mere sum, not as a coherent whole. Since the meaningfulness of a given possibility follows from a set of interactions it receives being placed in a certain room-for-manoevre, the introduction of some alien possibility that disrupts the system of interactions also undermines the meaningful character of the possibility in question transforming it into a logical one. This means that possibilities that follow from different practices cannot be given meaningfully at the same time: meaningful possibilities can show up as an organized whole only insofar incompatible possibilities do not *appear* at all. Possibilities become interactive and meaningful if all alien non-interactive possibilities are *foreclosed*, that is, *not given* in the current situation. It is important here to avoid the confusion between what we know *about* things and how things *are*. Of course, we *know* that two incompatible possibilities are meaningful, but the point is exactly that they cannot be *given* as meaningful simultaneously unless they are interactive. The simplest example here would be the way a sudden phone call breaks down our absorption over work: although both possibilities are clearly meaningful and familiar, we need to make an effort to ignore the ring in order to continue our meaningful activity. If the ring actually appears in the midst of our work, the latter falls apart; it leaves only a prospect of a meaningful whole but is no longer given as one.

Such withholding alternative possibilities is nothing but the reverse side of maximization of our ability-to-be. Since non-interactive possibilities undermine the existential character of possibilities,

maximization of our ability-to-be also requires foreclosure of possibilities that disrupt the current room-for-manoevr: being absorbed in a situation, I tend to simply foreclose, ignore everything that is not interconnected to the situation. To be Dasein, an ecstatic movement to the world means disclosing certain possibilities while withholding other ones. If not for the foreclosure – a sort of Nietzschean ‘active forgetting’³⁰¹ – instead of *sets* of existential possibilities, I would be left with a bunch of logical ones, which would impoverish my existence. Dasein’s existential strive, in this sense, does not consist of an attempt to disclose all situations at once but to develop a *strategy* of being in the world that would ensure the most complete participation in practices making it possible to navigate through multiple disclosures and foreclosures and maximize its ability-to-be. It tries to surround itself by a bundle of situations that can be *gathered together*: Dasein must be capable of keeping practices apart and precluding possibilities of one practice from intervening and undermining the possibilities of another practice but, at the same time, it must also hold practical situations sufficiently close in order to ensure the smooth transition or even certain forms of interaction among them. What is essential about Dasein, in other words, is the *opening* of the world, not the world *that has already been opened*; only through the constant opening and foreclosing of the world can Dasein maximize its being without being reduced to only one set of possibilities and without acquiring too many of them, which would either ruin the balance and finally collapse incompatible possibilities together or simply preclude from settling in different situations extensively enough. Learning how to master these various dense interconnections of possibilities, Dasein must also learn how to manoeuvre *among* such interconnections in order to ensure a vital balance of its existence. The interplay between disclosure and foreclosure retains a constant presence in our everyday life and the ability to orient in such interplay constitutes an essential part of every socialised individual.

Such a pragmatic approach can deploy the advantages of both early and later Heidegger’s approaches. On the one side, possibilities are disclosed and foreclosed not because Dasein is inauthentic and fails to recognize the truth of its own existence, but because possibilities following from a contingent practice require foreclosure of different ones. Foreclosure of possibilities does not follow from Dasein’s relation to itself but from practices themselves. Possibilities make their own sense demonstrating their own compatibility/incompatibility tendencies and Dasein’s ‘will’ doesn’t have anything to do with the fact that certain possibilities are or are not interactive. As an ecstatic being that lacks any inner content, Dasein searches for this content constantly questioning the contingent world regarding to what possibilities of being are available to it. As a result of such questioning, the contingency of the world is encompassed with our ability-to-be: our understanding discloses to us what

³⁰¹ See Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Second Essay, I

Merleau-Ponty has called “possibility of situations”³⁰² – open spaces consisting of what is perceivable, doable, sayable or thinkable. But it is this contingency of the world that sets the direction of the vector of compatibility and incompatibility forcing Dasein to try to elaborate ways of acting and thinking under a particular contingent constraint of the world; Dasein doesn’t constitute possibilities as compatible/incompatible but simply discloses them as such.³⁰³ If the world were different, then Dasein would have to elaborate different ways of being in order to be in such a world. Dasein, in such a way, remains essentially dependent upon the contingency of the world and the consequent compatibility/incompatibility of possibilities.

On another side, this account does not go as far as to say that practices and compatibility/incompatibility relations one-sidedly shape and form Dasein. While not being determined by Dasein, different possibilities can stand in compatibility/incompatibility relations only because Dasein’s being consists of a constant questioning of the world with regard to what possibilities of being the world can offer; possibilities reveal themselves, swell, integrate and disintegrate depending on Dasein’s ability to orient itself in the world. As we have claimed earlier, Dasein can be determined by the contingent world only because its being consists of seeking *for* such a determination. It *seeks* for contingency, which would disclose possibilities giving to its being some content. Only because the world is the subject of such *active* questioning it can reveal any kind of answers. Combining Dasein’s initiative and the ecstatic character of such an initiative, we can go beyond the dilemma between activity and passivity (a task that is crucial for the whole tradition of existential phenomenology) and take seriously the existential claim that it is the relation between Dasein and the world that is explanatory prior to any ground that enables such a relation. This *Bodenlosigkeit*, loss of ground, is neither a self-deceptive cover-up nor an epochal forgetfulness of a ground but a testament to the pre-reflective life of practical meaning which can only be *burdened* and get bogged down with an extra-practical foundation; *first and foremost*, practices and compatibility and incompatibility of their possibilities exist exactly without a ground being reducible neither to the world nor to Dasein but presupposing their mutually enriching interplay (more on this in section 5.i)

This line of thought remains in many ways indebted to Dreyfus’s description of absorbed coping³⁰⁴ and his attack on inner/outer distinction that has been taken up by his students and colleagues.³⁰⁵ We can agree with Dreyfus that the state of absorption implies precisely the fact that

³⁰² Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 473

³⁰³ In *Body and World*, Todes makes a similar point stressing the dependence of horizontal field upon vertical one.

³⁰⁴ See, for example, Dreyfus “What Could Be More Intelligible Than Everyday Intelligibility?”

³⁰⁵ See, for example, Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*; Taylor, “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture;” Wrathall, “Motives, Reasons and Causes.”

nothing like the ‘outside,’ the “independent world”³⁰⁶ as opposed to the ‘mind’ or a ‘detached subject’ can be given without breaking the absorption and wrenching me away from my situation. What we cannot accept, however, is Dreyfus’s tendency to oppose absorbed coping and propositional thinking, self-reflection and mindedness in general. Absorption doesn’t only mean that I stop treating myself as a subject that makes a judgement about the world consisting of discrete and inert objects (as Dreyfus sometimes seems to imply):³⁰⁷ the dissolution in the situation, a state where no distinction between inside and outside can be realized because *all* possibilities that can somehow be outside the situation are silenced out and foreclosed; *and this includes not only mindful contemplation but literally any other non-relevant possibility*. A thetic awareness of oneself might be excluded or not depending on how relevant such awareness is for the type of practice we are currently engaged in – it would be quite odd if introspective practices such as confession or psychoanalysis did not include something like ‘mindedness’ broadly conceived. Dreyfus mistakenly identifies mindedness with detachment and breakdown and misses a wide variety of cases where this mindedness is crucial for absorbed coping, which is a point that has been widely discussed in the secondary literature.³⁰⁸ Such an alteration to Dreyfus’s analysis makes it possible to move beyond the tired old opposition between conceptual thinking and absorbed coping and account for a number of situations that are at the same time absorbed and clearly propositionally structured (like, for example, Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of making a speech or any other linguistic improvisation).³⁰⁹ More importantly, the neglect of such a binary opposition would also force us to reconsider practices’ status as a *source* of meaningfulness: if we start with discontinuous absorptions in different situations (in the next section, I will also try to demonstrate how disengaged contemplation is just one situation among others), then we would have to acknowledge Dasein’s ability to *orient* among different practices that is not reducible to any concrete practice (or any particular *Lichtung*) but stems instead from Dasein’s practical being.

This brings us to another important correction that must be made to Dreyfus’s account. Just like disclosure, foreclosure is not static: not only there are different foreclosures following from different situations, there also are different *degrees* of foreclosure: possibilities are disclosed and foreclosed with different intensity. Some possibilities are foreclosed only partly and, under certain circumstances, they can be rendered interactive. A tactical foul here gives us a good example: originally, the possibility of foul lies outside the room-for-manoevre of a given game. However, an experienced player quickly realizes that in a dangerous situation, the foul will bring desirable intra-practical results at

³⁰⁶ Dreyfus, “The Myth of the Detached Mind”

³⁰⁷ See, for example, Dreyfus, “Merleau-Ponty and Recent Cognitive Science”

³⁰⁸ See, for example, Romdenh-Romluc “Thought in Action,” McDowell’s and Searle’s criticisms of Dreyfus etc.

³⁰⁹ See Merleau-Ponty’s chapter “Body as Expression and Speech” in PP.

an acceptable cost, so it is disclosed as an existential possibility within the game and restructures its room-for-manoevre. Disclosure of foreclosed possibilities in this case does not break the practical flow but instead further discloses the situation. In other cases, alternative possibilities are foreclosed with much more insistence because they follow from other, non-related practices that cannot be rendered interactable. To disclose such an alternative possibility would mean to completely disrupt the current practical flow and re-disclose the situation, thus, introducing a completely new set of possibilities. Finally, there are also possibilities that are foreclosed because they do not interact with the accepted corpus of practices at all: this includes both absurd logical possibilities like Dreyfus's "eating rocks" and marginal possibilities like worshipping Zeus. Radically foreclosed possibilities are hardly deployable within the whole context of current practices, which is why it requires a serious effort (perhaps, a philosophical argument or a work of art) to render them at least vaguely meaningful and to construct the room-for-manoevre where they could fit.

The relation between disclosure and foreclosure, in such a way, is essentially fluid: the three mentioned degrees of foreclosure in this sense are ideal types, which shouldn't be rigidified into stable levels or "planks" in the way Wrathall³¹⁰ and Withy³¹¹ rigidify them while trying to reconstruct Heidegger's thinking on the matter. An attempt to propose a fixated system, where the highest plank, *Lichtung* (in terms of Heidegger's pragmatic readers, background practices), would be treated as disclosure/foreclosure *per se* and the lower planks would be placed in a dependent position, would undermine the essentially interactive basis of disclosure and foreclosure and transform this basis into a transcendental ground. According to such an approach, particular possibilities become disclosed and foreclosed because a particular *Lichtung* has constituted them as interactive, which is a move that, as we have seen, would eventually leave us clueless with regard to how *Lichtung* itself was constituted in the first place. More than this, such an account would obscure the simple fact that foreclosure plays a constant pragmatic role in our everyday dealings with the world. The life of any socialized individual consists of a vast number of situations that are mutually incompatible and an individual must be capable of orienting in such situations by 'leaving the work at work,' treating people interchangeably as professionals/friends/opponents, thus, disclosing and foreclosing the world differently with regard to their current situation. On closer inspection, the 'open space' disclosed by *Lichtung* turns out to be mottled with many further shadings and open spaces, which can no longer be explained by the transcendental approach and require pro-active Dasein that enters and leaves such particular spaces based on its own decisions. (Here we can recall Wittgensteinian comparison between forms of life and

³¹⁰ See Wrathall, *Heidegger and Unconcealment*

³¹¹ See Withy, "Concealing and Concealment in Heidegger"

an ancient city with “old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods.³¹²) The fluidity and discontinuity of everyday intelligibility with its constant switches from practice to practice and never fading prospect of re-disclosing the current situation would be irrevocably misconstrued if it is interpreted only as a logical consequence of *Lichtung* that in advance constitutes the open space of a given culture.³¹³

Instead of such a transcendental, top-bottom explanation of intelligibility, we should retain the interactive approach where there the difference between more radical foreclosure and foreclosure of possibilities in a particular situation will be considered not as a difference in type but as that of a degree. Of course, there is no denial about the fact that particular cultures have their specific styles and fundamental self-understandings, which profoundly affect many further cultural practices. These styles and self-understandings, however, should not be considered as a transcendental ground but rather as a *final outcome* of countless interactions among different practices. Cultural style and self-understanding are so profound, influential and persistent exactly because they have a greater disclosing potential telling us more about what can we do and who can we be in our lives constituting so to say an *axis* of a given culture and demonstrating us the most interactive possibilities placed in the very midst of the cultural life.³¹⁴ *Lichtung*, in this sense, does not explain why some possibilities are given and others are foreclosed because it enables just as much as it itself is enabled; it can become influential only because there is some interactive space for it to influence. In other words, we should argue that foreclosure does not follow from a transcendental ground that enables certain possibilities and withholds others but from the simple fact that possibilities are rendered visible and meaningful because they turn out to be interactive with other possibilities; the less interactive they are the less likely they will occur, and the more effort will be required to render them intelligible. This “turning out” has no explanation other than the essential pro-activity of Dasein’s ability-to-be, which strives for maximization in its attempt to settle in the world.

³¹² Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, §18.

³¹³ This objection cannot be parried by a resort to the much used distinction between “disclosure” and “discovery” where discovery corresponds to the fact that we in principle can uncover certain entities and disclosure corresponds to the condition of possibility of such a discovery (i.e. to the fact that the entity is placed within certain practice and is related to other entities and events.) For what happens after the football match is over is that I re-disclose opponents as friends and foreclose them as opponents; in Heidegger’s terms their very being is changed.

³¹⁴ See section 5.ii for a more detailed discussion of cultural *Lichtung* and a disclosive axis

4. Cognitive Disclosure and the Meaning of Truth

Following the most basic pragmatic maxima, we have walked the well-trodden path of de-intellectualizing understanding arguing that the latter is not a matter of “mirroring” the world, obtaining adequate representations but a matter of *doing* (whether this ‘doing’ is conceived in terms of participation in language-games or ontological self-realization in the world, *or both*): as a result, *knowing-that* finds itself grounded in *knowing-how*, theory becomes reconciled with praxis and proactive nature of our relation to the world reserves for itself a crucial explanatory role. This path, however, has an equally well-trodden obstacle: what about adequate representations? What about the prospect of objectivity and knowledge? In a word, what about *truth*? Having de-intellectualized understanding, is there a way of preserving the very possibility of something like an *intellego*, cognition?

For the family of neo-pragmatic approaches, some of which we have discussed in chapter I, this is a question of prime necessity. This is because a turn to language games, linguistic praxis and interaction among concrete individuals here is inscribed into a more general orbit of clarifying the condition of possibility of *knowledge*; trying to avoid foundationalism, they stress the proactive role that our practices play in our ability to secure reliable knowledge. Denying foundationalism as a source of justification, they at the same time embark on the road of re-conceptualization of the very possibility of justification and truth (i.e., accounting for “realist intuitions”³¹⁵); they seek to answer the question of how and why our propositions turn out to be convincing and correct if the world doesn’t make them so. This methodological overlap, as we have argued in chapter I, faces us with a choice between the cognitivation of understanding (Habermas), instrumentalization of cognition (Rorty) or just leaves the question regarding the source of understanding unresolved (Brandom).

Existential phenomenology, however, arrives at the question of truth from a different angle. Since it starts with the primacy of being over cognition, phenomenology first addresses the pre-reflective experience of openness to the world *jumping over* no doubt important methodological considerations regarding the possibility of knowledge (the possibility that it, nonetheless, presupposes since it attempts to arrive at a *valid account* of the essential structures of such an experience). Phenomenology, in other words, starts with investigating the being of an individual without clarifying how our knowledge about this particular ontology becomes possible. This means that the question of epistemology is neither *neglected* nor *resolved* from the very beginning – *it is methodologically deferred*. Existential phenomenology retains the assumption that epistemology and ontological mutually

³¹⁵ Bernstein, *The Pragmatic Turn*, p. 123

presuppose each other while being concentrated predominantly on being at expense of cognition. In the context of comparison with the neo-pragmatism, the ontological starting point along with our analysis of the being of the subject remains a *gambit*: it can be deemed successful and satisfactory only insofar as it resolves both sides of the equation and, along with an explanation of being of the subject, it also explains the possibility of *knowing* anything about such a being.

In this chapter, we will pursue *two basic goals* or rather a *twofold goal*: first, we will seek to demonstrate how the pragmatic being-in-the-world that seeks to maximize its own possibilities and root itself in the world also becomes capable of reaching something like *universal validity* or *context-transcendence*; second, by doing this, we will also resolve *a related methodological problem* that concerns the status of our own investigation that clearly *has a cognitive ambition to be true* and not just to maximize its own being (as we about to see, a more precise formulation would be: it tries to maximize its own being through an ambition to be true). Reaching those two goals will be broken down to three sections. In the first section, we will try to preserve and develop Heidegger's claim that cognition is a situation-specific enterprise demonstrating how cognitive situations are different from non-cognitive ones, which would help us to avoid intellectualization of non-cognitive practices and instrumentalization of cognitive ones. In section two, we will offer a genealogy of cognition analysing how the formal rules of cognitive situations can arise in the course of being-in-the-world and how can those rules be compatible with existential ontology; more specifically, we will demonstrate how cognition discloses a particular *way of being* of things. Finally, in section three, we will demonstrate that cognition is also a form of maximization of our ability-to-be and that cognitive situation just like other situations forecloses incompatible possibilities – first of all, it forecloses the productivity of human understanding.

I. Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Practices

Before investigating the possibility and genesis of cognitive understanding, let's first offer a general outline of its constitutive traits. In the preceding chapter, we have claimed that understanding is guided by the task of maximization of disclosing potential, which presupposes foreclosure of non-interactive possibilities. Conceived this way, understanding, for the most part, lacks *universalistic ambitions*: it is guided by the need to disclose a situation where it becomes possible to settle, to realize itself as an ability-to-be. The activity of understanding rather resembles here something Wittgenstein describes as “seeing connexions”³¹⁶ or maximizing those connexions than justification under ‘ideal circumstances.’³¹⁷ Thus, it does not and cannot prove other perspectives *wrong* but *forecloses* them as irrelevant stressing the intensity of a given situation. Cognitive understanding, on the contrary, operates differently: from the very beginning, it displays universalistic ambitions, thus, refusing to foreclose alternative possibilities as irrelevant and trying to prove them wrong instead. It would be meaningless, for example, to propose a coherent, disclosively rich explanation of the chemical structure of water, while foreclosing cases that do not fit this explanation; the meaningfulness of such an explanation is dependent upon the possibility of arriving at a universally shared conclusion where no strong evidence against such a conclusion would be present. Cognitive understanding, in other words, searches for *truth*.

This orientation on truth seems to bind our understanding in a sense of ‘seeing connexions’ with a number of further commitments. Following Habermas, we can preliminarily narrow these commitments down to three aspects. First of all, we would have to assume automatically that there is such a thing as an ‘objective’ referent of our understanding (which might be the objective world or an ‘objectively’ acceptable for participants norm of behaviour), i.e., a referent that is independent of this or that subjective perspective and operate as a condition of formulation of truthful claims about such a referent. Second, we would have to interpret our own understanding as nothing but a take on objectivity; the very meaning of our claims consists of their ability to reach universal validity. As Habermas stresses, an analysis of meaning of our claims amounts to the evaluation of how successful they are with regard to grasping this objectivity;³¹⁸ accessing them requires taking seriously their claim on validity.³¹⁹ Finally, since the ‘objective’ referent is independent of my perspective, other perspectives and contradictive claims cannot be simply discarded as irrelevant: other opinions have the same weight and the same entitlement to objectivity, so we are obliged to hear other parties being prepared to test

³¹⁶ L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §122.

³¹⁷ A similar emphasis upon the non-universalistic nature of this everyday ‘seeing connexions’ was made by Bourdieu in *Logic of Practice*, p. 10

³¹⁸ See, for example, Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol I, pp. 8-43

³¹⁹ See, Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol I, chapter I.4, esp. pp. 132-140

our claims against every possible standpoint. If it turns out that they have a better claim on truth, I am obliged to drop my own opinion as wrong and adopt other's as right. In other words, while trying to be right, we are trying to arrive at a *universally valid, truthful result*, which presupposes submitting oneself to the demand to elaborate all evidence, all objections and all perspectives. We can loosely label this type of understanding aimed at universality and truth as *cognitive*.

So, the hypothesis we will make in this chapter and in this section in particular is that what makes understanding cognitive is a particular *demand* or, again, speaking in Habermasian terms, a formal-pragmatic presupposition that it *takes over*, namely, a demand to incorporate all possible evidence and to hear all possible parties in order to arrive at the truth that is independent of this or that particular perspective. Using Haugeland's expression we could say that cognitive agents (Haugeland is convinced that those are, in the first place, scientists, and that science is a cognitive enterprise *per se*; we will get to this point later) are cognitive agents "by virtue of their commitments;"³²⁰ this commitment for arriving at truth and not settling with anything less is something we *adopt* under specific circumstances. Accepting this demand means that we *become* cognitive agents and our understanding *becomes* cognitive committing ourselves to corresponding rules and principles and aiming at corresponding goals. This means mainly that this cognitive demand is not an *a priori* condition of our understanding, and neither it is an unfulfillable dream that we should forget as a residue of the old metaphysical tradition. It rather is something that *makes sense* for us to do: cognition is a meaningful project of being-in-the-world, not a *condition* of meaningfulness as such.

The reason why it makes sense for us to accept this demand is that it enables our participation in a number of specific practices such as science, philosophy, the modern theory of argumentation and political and juridical discourses for which this demand is constitutive. We could loosely describe such practices as cognitive outlining them in opposition to non-cognitive practices (for which such a demand is not constitutive.) Naturally, when it comes to the everyday usage of those terms, the demarcation line is in many ways nominal: practices that we would naturally describe as non-cognitive often include typically cognitive elements and otherwise. For example, such practices as medicine or sports often rely heavily upon scientific results and methods of gathering information; frequently, those non-cognitive domains have a more consistent rationally organized make-up than academic disciplines. Reversely, typically cognitive fields often include important elements that are far from any kind of cognition. What we want to stress, however, is that finding cognitive results relevant to a given field (that is, interacting with a scientific practice) does not automatically render this field cognitive. What makes it so is

³²⁰ Haugeland, *Having Thought*, p. 259

the *constitutive status* of the cognitive demand: unless the demand of incorporating all the possible evidence is *constitutive for the intelligibility of a certain field*, it cannot be considered cognitive in a strong sense. The very organization of the room-for-manoeuvre of a given cognitive practice presupposes accepting the cognitive demand.

So, it is imaginable, for example, that certain techniques in medicine might not yet have a solid cognitive justification or might even contradict current scientific data; so long as those are successful in treating patients, they will be applied without threatening to undermine the intelligibility of a medical field. But the presence of such techniques does threaten the field of cognition that is *obliged* to investigate those techniques and seek to explain them with other cognitive results way; if science renounces an ambition to explain those in a consistent fashion, it renounces itself at the same time. Unlike non-cognitive ones, cognitive practices disintegrate without this ambition to reach universal validity. Thus, taking up those possibilities automatically means ascribing oneself to the cognitive demand since the intelligibility of those possibilities presupposes their universalistic ambitions. Under such circumstances, neglecting it would demand amount to what Habermas describes as performative self-contradiction: it is impossible to deny cognitive ambitions while being located in a cognitive domain because the argument that denies those ambitions itself has them. So, a more or less expansive failure to comply with the demand (this could be expressed in drawing upon meanings that have no cognitive substantiation, not reacting upon obvious counter-arguments, not following the accepted protocols of a cognitive debate etc.) eventually leads to losing intelligibility of one's own cognitive activity *as* cognitive and consequent disqualification from cognitive practices. The demand is, in such a way, *situational*: accepting it is meaningful only in specific circumstances that require orientation on universal validity, while accepting it in circumstances that make no such requirement would be, on the contrary, *meaningless*.

To clarify the idea that cognitive rules are based upon a *situational demand* and do not represent the inner structure of meaningfulness, we could recall Brandom's somewhat obscure treatment of the problem of irrationality he offers in *Making It Explicit*. Here, Brandom claims that "irrational actions" just like irrational, "incompatible beliefs" are "perfectly intelligible within the deontic framework... as commitments lacking the corresponding entitlements."³²¹ People sometimes hold beliefs without any reasons to hold them – or even with reasons *not* to hold them; in the same way, they sometimes act upon "impulses rather than according to what one has reason to do" or upon reasons that are "overridden" by other reasons. The key to understanding here is the fact that irrationality is conceived by Brandom as a *logical* presence of incompatible beliefs in the structure of one's own

³²¹ Brandom, *MIE*, p. 245

commitment system. An irrational agent doesn't have to explicitly "avow" incompatible claims – it is obvious that no one would hold directly incompatible beliefs (e.g., there is a table here; there is no table here) – he just has to remain committed to the consequences of the avowed beliefs that are incompatible with beliefs he had acknowledged explicitly; the agent, in principle, *should have known a better reason* than the one he is currently relying on. From this perspective, Brandom refuses to see in irrationality a problem for inferentialism saying that "there is nothing incoherent or unintelligible about the idea of undertaking incompatible commitments – incompatible or inconsistent beliefs just go into a box with incompatible or inconsistent promises."³²²

This solution is based on the assumption that the entire domain of meaningfulness can be adequately covered in terms that inferentialism offers to us. As long as irrationality is denied any inner meaningfulness, the phenomenon of irrationality does not threaten the validity of Brandom's paradigm. Irrational beliefs and actions are seen as a sort of external input – psychological or even physiological – that is imposed on meaning-formation; it can only cause this breakdown of intelligibility instead of displaying its own sort of intelligibility. This methodological restriction avoids a number of problems by reducing the area of intelligibility only to the area of validity and the game of giving and asking for reasons. But we have also seen how this restriction results in a threatening reduction of the explanatory scope of Brandom's approach. The criticism, which we have developed in chapter I.i. can be briefly recapitulated based on Brandom's own parallel with promises. We could, of course, agree with Brandom that it is irrelevant for the investigation of the *meaning* of promising that some people fail to keep it. While being acceptable and intuitively convincing up to a certain extent, this move detaches the *meaning* of promising from the *practice* of making them: it precludes us from understanding what motivates people to promise something and, respectively, what motivates them to break such promises, which would result in an overly abstract and partial account. The same argument, eventually, can be raised against Brandom's approach to the rationality of meaning: if everything that is non-rational is reduced to total meaninglessness, if rationality itself is treated as a universal deontic principle of organization of meaningfulness, then the very meaning of rationality, its place in the context of living one's own life becomes truncated. By requalifying rationality from something meaningful into a necessary condition of our experience (and by equating its counter-concept with meaninglessness and unintelligibility), we constrict such questions as 'what kind of praxis rationality *is*?' or "why do people *become* rational or irrational?".

³²² Ibid., p. 196

There is a reason why Brandom holds on to this constraining picture. Like many other prominent pragmatists, he thinks that he faces an either-or situation: either we start with the game of giving and asking for reasons – in a word, with cognitive understanding – understood as a fundamental determinant of meaning, a “downtown”³²³ of language or we are forced to treat universal validity as a sort of power play or just one particular language game among others (two strategies Brandom identifies with Foucault and Derrida respectively,)³²⁴ thus, irrevocably undermining the very possibility of universal validity and saying farewell to our realistic intuitions. The choice, however, doesn’t have to be that constraining; in a context that we develop, we could preserve the validity of Brandom’s analysis at the cost of specifying its regional character. Namely, we could talk about Brandomian cognitive responsibility holding in mind that being responsible is itself something that makes sense for us to do and something we have learned to do *because* it makes sense; it is not a transcendental condition of intelligibility but a condition of participation in a specific, cognitive situation, i.e., a situation, whose organization of possibilities requires accepting cognitive demand as an organizing principle (we will talk more about this specific type of intelligibility in section 4.ii). This reconsideration of the status of cognitive responsibility does not undermine its validity and ambitions but states that such validity has an ontological significance displaying specific relevance for Dasein’s being: the meaningfulness of responsibility is dependent upon the meaningfulness of situation where responsibility finds its place and relevance. And if some situation does not no longer reserve any place for cognitive responsibility, the attempt to introduce such a responsibility nonetheless would be *meaningless*. Accepting this line of thought, we would arrive at a much more subtle and flexible picture where validity and cognition stand for one possible layer of meaning, one possible way of settling in the world instead of the rigid opposition between rational meaningfulness and irrational, meaningless breakdowns.

This line of thought gives rise to two tasks. First of all, we would have to explain how this demand for universality can arise in the context of being-in-the-world and how our practical self-realization in the world retains the possibility of universality. Second, we would also have to explain that this search for universality is itself a type of practical being-in-the-world, that cognitive disclosure opens up *a* new type of situation to inhabit, thus, being *a* form of maximizing the disclosing potential. Those two problems will be tackled in sections ii and iii of the present chapter correspondingly. Before going into it, however, we would like to further specify our distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive understanding. We will do so by appealing to comparably recent polemics between Haugeland

³²³ Brandom, *Articulating Reasons*, p. 14

³²⁴ Brandom, *Reason in Philosophy*, p. 143

(who relies on a similar distinction) and Rouse (who criticises it) hoping to learn both from their strong and weak suits.

We could start this discussion with Haugeland's account that draws a distinction between constitutional and institutional practices³²⁵ (in our terms, this would roughly correspond to cognitive and non-cognitive practices respectively). Institutional practices are based on the "constitutive standards" that are set up by a contingent community. Constitutive standards, says Haugeland, "govern all the phenomena that occur within [a practice], and determine what they are;"³²⁶ those are fundamental regulations that disclose a certain area of intelligibility. These constitutive standards cannot be true or false in themselves since they are what determine intelligibility in the first place. They are not based on anything further but are contingent ways of acting that are simply accepted by a community. Community, in this sense, appears as a final arbiter on what counts as a correct move. As Haugeland puts it, instituted phenomena have "no independent normative standing over against the general skills and customs for producing, recognizing and interacting with them."³²⁷ Chess constitutes a typical example of institutional practices. We are capable of differentiating correct and incorrect moves only because there are accepted sets of rules according to which we can measure this correctness. Here, "conformist norms are the only norms intelligibly in play."³²⁸

At the first sight, it seems that institutional and constitutional practitioners proceed in the same way when they are confronted with an anomaly: first, they identify the "pockets of apparent disorder" (Haugeland borrows this phrase from Kuhn)³²⁹, i.e. phenomena that contradict the currently accepted standards and then they decide "not to tolerate them;" both institutional and constitutional practitioners have "the same alternatives in the face of an apparent breach...: refinement of observational technique, further articulation of the theory, or giving up the game."³³⁰ Haugeland further stresses, however, that this is a seeming surmise: "the artificiality and ultimate inadequacy of chess and all game analogies [if compared with constitutional practices] come most blatantly into the open"³³¹ when we compare games with cognitive practices among which Haugeland particularly stresses sciences. This is because cognitive or "constitutive" practices perform the "articulation" of "constitutive standards" in a different manner from institutional practices: if chess excludes everything that goes contrary to the standards of the institutional practices, the standards of constitutive practices go beyond

³²⁵ Haugeland, *Having Thought*, p. 343

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 320

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 316

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 259

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 343

mere contingent ways of action remaining responsible to “empirical *objects*”³³² and being no longer subordinated to the community in its status of the final arbiter on intelligibility. Here, “the phenomena themselves might confound the experts (or anybody)” (instead of some ‘experts’ or other authoritative figures such as elderlies, priests etc.) defining the standards that determine the rules of intelligibility. If our skills reveal incompatible descriptions of objects, if our particular capacity to provide descriptions of the object for some reason fails and becomes systematically inconsistent, it is time to repair the very standards according to which we perform descriptions. Constitutive practices “delegate” authority to the objects making it possible for them to “stand as criteria for the correctness”³³³ In other words, constitutive practices are bound to truth rather than to a mere consensus, which is why such practices remain constantly ‘under the question’ being ready to re-elaborate themselves all the time in order to keep in touch with phenomena; “[i]n science, unlike in any game, the repair and improvement not only of mundane but also of constitutive skills is often potentially (and often in fact) an issue.”³³⁴ Scientific paradigms, in this sense, are “both invented and empirical” – as opposed to institutional practices that simply are invented and sustained by the community, thus, remaining the only standard against which we can measure instituted phenomena. Cognitive practices, on the contrary, are “constituted” because objective correctness/incorrectness gives us a fulcrum, an “external” standard that makes us accountable to the way things are objectively, which is what enables reconsideration of the practices themselves.

By drawing this distinction, Haugeland is trying to do justice to our basic and fairly self-obvious intuition that there is a difference between cognitive and non-cognitive understanding. He is seeking “honest objectivity”³³⁵ that would go beyond internal consistency and function as a standard for this consistency; something we could classify as an “external constraint.”³³⁶ This is the reason why Haugeland declares himself an anti-pragmatist (he considers Heidegger to be making a similar statement): he is convinced that science is “more than a social institution” and that “there must be two fundamentally distinct sorts of normative constraint: social propriety and objective correctness (truth).”³³⁷ While we can see that Haugeland’s distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive practices overlaps with what we have sketched so far, it is also true that Haugeland has an inverted motivation when making such a distinction. If the current work is trying to stress the difference between cognitive and non-cognitive understanding in order to emphasize the pragmatic nature of being-in-the-world (see 3.i and 3.ii) while preserving the possibility of realistic intuitions in order to escape performative self-contradiction (the task of the current chapter), for Haugeland the task of preservation

³³² Ibid., p. 337

³³³ Ibid., p. 343

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Ibid., p. 345

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid., p. 317

of the realistic intuitions is the basic goal; the analysis of other practices of being-in-the-world and distinguishing them from sciences is a mean of achieving of such a goal. For Haugeland, the analysis of non-cognitive practices is a set-up for the further analysis of truth and cognition; as a result, this analysis remains insufficiently developed and based upon questionable assumptions, which renders his account exposed to a number of serious objections, which eventually undermine his account of truth as well.

First of all, it seems that Haugeland's account of institutional practices is influenced by Dreyfus's readings of Heidegger and Wittgenstein: just like Dreyfus, Haugeland views community as the final judge on the intelligibility of institutional practices, which is a move that brings a number of undesired consequences that have been discussed in 2.iii. In a nutshell, the problem is that this approach offers no explanation of why and how we accept some practice other than an insufficient reference to conformism and the transcendental, constituting status of community. (For example, the only time Haugeland stresses this possibility of altering the "constitutive rules" of institutional practices is when such a practice becomes a cognitive object of investigation for a sort of a 'radical interpret.'³³⁸) This is an obviously inadequate picture of how our non-cognitive practices function: they do develop quite dynamically even on their 'everyday level' always retaining the possibility of reconsidering their own constitutive rules instead of being unequivocally determined by such rules. Games, again, constitute a good example. Strategic and tactical development is an essential part of any game; the meaningfulness of the game is in many ways dependent upon the possibility of novel strategies and alternative moves. If those are no longer possible, the game collapses into a series of pre-determined winning patterns losing its meaningfulness and interest. The rules are meant to sustain the productivity or disclosing potential of the game, and if this productivity is obstructed, the rules must be changed. The development of strategies of pressing in football, for example, has led to changes in rules that made passing easier. If this didn't happen, the balance of the game would be disrupted impoverishing every possibility that is located within the particular room-for-manoeuvre: because of pressing, it would be harder to pass, harder to communicate with teammates, harder to score etc.; so, it makes perfect sense to make pressing harder in order to retain the *disclosive balance* of the game. In the same way, it is perfectly intelligible to imagine that somebody has decided to grant pawns the possibility of moving two squares instead of one in order to facilitate chess openings, thus, *improving* the game by disclosing new strategies of playing and making it more dynamic and tactically rich. The rules are meant to keep up with the logic of a game not one-sidedly constitute it. Of course, some games are less static, and we see a lot of changes in rules (like football), some games are more static, and we rarely see any changes (like chess); but one way or

³³⁸ See Davidson, "Radical Interpretation"

another, changes in rules are understandable and even desirable under corresponding circumstances. Games demonstrate convincingly that the institutional norms are just as “empirically vulnerable” as constitutional ones: they are dependent upon their actual success, and they are being evaluated accordingly, a point that was also made by Fischer.³³⁹

Haugeland’s failure to provide an adequate account of non-cognitive practices also seriously truncates his analysis of cognitive practices. The limitation of Haugeland’s approach is well explicated by Rouse. Rouse, of course, agrees with the claim that the commitment to objectivity and demand to neglect incompatibilities are constitutive of scientific practices. What is also constitutive, however, is that this objective correctness must be *interesting enough*: the scientific project is by no means reducible to a set of correct sentences but includes complex fields of reality that are meant to be encompassed by the scientific description. Such fields are seen as scientifically interesting: it *makes sense* to offer truthful descriptions of them, while it won’t be interesting and meaningful to offer a scientific description of any entity that we meet on our way to work. What Haugeland fails to recognize is that “the constitutive standards of the sciences are themselves rich and complex, focused by what makes the practice and its outcomes *significant*,”³⁴⁰ he fails to explicate the motivating power behind our participation in scientific practices, which explains the formations of areas of interests in our investigation of objectivity. Rouse further adds, “objectivity is not one generic virtue, but a contested, historically specific field, in which scientific practitioners are accountable to what has shown itself to be at stake in their reflexive engagements with the world and their own practices, and thus to the ways in which objects matter to the practice.”³⁴¹ Haugeland’s inability to account for the specific significance that motivates and structures the scientific research follows from the inability to account for the dynamics of understanding, which can be spotted already on the level of his analysis of institutional practices. A claim that the conformist attitude simply defines what counts as significant for understanding, (instead of attaining a more obvious position according to which conforming to accepted ways of action and thinking is defined by their significance for me) rigidifies our understanding and deprives it of its ability to *search for* significance. Consequently, the attempt to introduce cognitive practices that go beyond mere conformity is crippled from the very beginning since we have no tools of explaining how and why the search for truth becomes significant for me and how this significance guides the scientific enterprise. In other words, Haugeland’s distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive practices is too rigid and radical; he is unable to see that constitutional, cognitive practices are just a special form of institution,

³³⁹ Fischer and Lipson, *Thinking about Science*

³⁴⁰ Rouse, *How Scientific Practices Matter*, p. 246 (emphasis mine)

³⁴¹ Ibid.

i.e., a special form of being-in-the-world that settles in a significant, meaningful situation and that this fact does not necessarily take away their “honest objectivity.”

What should be noted here is that this difficulty gives us a direction where we should develop Haugeland’s distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive practices; for us, it does not constitute a reason to abandon such a distinction. One way to illustrate its importance is to investigate Rouse’s own account for whom Haugeland’s difficulties constitute an argument against this distinction. Rouse attempts to demonstrate how linguistic articulation, meaningful speech arises out of the goal-oriented responsiveness of organisms to their practical situation of self-preservation. The distinctive nature of language consists of the fact that “speech patterns” are responsive to “other speech patterns;” in this sense, language becomes “partially autonomous” from practical situations in the world since it is organized by internal, linguistic rules. At the same time, the linguistic practice occurs and develops in the context of dealing with the practical situations in the world and, thus, it is not completely “disconnected from the accountability to the environmental circumstances.”³⁴² Rouse’s account is based on what he describes as “two-dimensional objectivity:” the linguistic performance has the self-standing meaning that is outlined by norms of language (“what it *says*”) and the directedness of language at the world (“what it is *about*”); the linguistic performance, in such a way, is at the same evaluated both with regard to how it is “responsive to other elements of [linguistic] practice” and with regard to “the overall behavioural economy of an organismic way of life.”³⁴³

Rouse “inverse[s] the theoretical holism:”³⁴⁴ according to this perspective, there is no need to dissolve the world in the language just like there is no need to postulate extra-linguistic reality as a final referee on our linguistic theories. What we should do is to demonstrate how the linguistic expertise, propositions and theories are inextricably bound to the practical situations “that are no longer understood on the model of a language or a theory.”³⁴⁵ Language and our praxis of coping with our environment are mutually inextricable, unintelligible apart from one another but still irreducible to one another both retaining a significant role in the explanation of our cognitive capacities. Ultimately, claims Rouse, language is nothing more but a practical tool – similar to a map – that makes it possible for us to deal with the world and that remains responsible to the world. “Instead of assimilating experimentation and observation within networks of implicitly presupposed theoretical sentences” his approach “treats discursive articulation as extension of other practical capacities and norms they are accountable.” From this follows that we can hold that our claims, theories and hypothesis are still

³⁴² Rouse, *Articulating the world*, p. 145

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 173

³⁴⁴ Rouse, *How Scientific Practice Matter*, p. 268

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

accountable to things without falling into the Myth of the Given: Rouse manages to preserve both irreducible normativity of our access to the world and such accountability to the world that goes beyond mere coherence among utterances.

Cognition and science, in this sense, are a continuation of this process of linguistic articulation of the lived world; they “sustain and expand a characteristic feature of human life.”³⁴⁶ Disclosure of certain configurations of the world as relevant to an organism – a process Rouse describes with the term “niche construction” – is a dialectical process: an organism discloses features of the environment as relevant and then acts upon it; by doing this, however, the organism also changes the environment and potentially affects his own evolutionary trajectory. The new spiral of the organism’s development, in turn, can redisclose the relevance of the situation, which would bring another evolutionary cycle. The linguistic articulation takes this dialectic “one step further:” what differs linguistic articulation from pre-linguistic niche construction is that the very possibility of having the feedback becomes incorporated into our situation teaching us to problematize our own understanding and develop it when needed; linguistic articulation makes it possible to elaborate “new behaviours, skills (including new patterns of talk)” that would disclose new phenomena and new situations. As Rouse puts it, “[t]hat reciprocal effect is itself part of what we respond to in our environment, such that our own way of life is explicitly at issue in its own reproduction and development.”³⁴⁷ Sciences occur within this “already well-established pattern” of linguistically articulated practical situations and need to be “understood as extensions of this pattern:”³⁴⁸ they render this unique character of linguistic articulation to be a basis of the scientific method committing itself to the constant reconsideration of its own methods and schemes of understanding. This hyper-dialectics between an organism and its environment, which is concentrated in scientific discourses, results in extreme efficiency in disclosing new phenomena, new ways of life and new situations that were previously inaccessible to us.

Cognition, in such a way, is not a body of abstract knowledge but a perfected, essentialized way of linguistic dealing with the environment. For Rouse, scientific theories are also nothing but tools or “models” designed for enabling our orientation in particular situations; they are just much more precise, flexible and reflexive than, let’s say, mythical explanations of the world. The value of a theory does not consist of its ability to represent humanless reality but in its ability to set boundaries among specific regions of entities and to tell the difference among constellations of objects, thus, making it possible for us to orient ourselves in such a region. To rely on a certain theory does not mean to contemplate the world intellectually as inert data; first and foremost it means “a situated attentiveness to aspects of one’s

³⁴⁶ Rouse, *Articulating the World*, p. 207

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 215

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 207

situation that are significant..."³⁴⁹ Exactly because learning a scientific theory amounts to learning one's own way around a situation, scientific training is predominantly based on problem-solving exercise – scientist learns how to apply concepts, how to resolve difficulties, how to find missing variable and solve puzzles; a theory, in this sense, is indeed a map that scientists must learn to apply. Rouse, thus, criticizes Dreyfus for thinking that there are two types of intentionality at play in our dealing with the world where the first type stands for everyday practical coping and the second covers theoretical disengaged contemplation.³⁵⁰ In a similar vein, he criticizes Haugeland for missing the simple fact that our constitutional practices are also practical ways of adaptation to the environment. Science is not a special way of accessing the world but the culmination of such access.

Rouse's approach, as original as it might be, still contains an important and already familiar problem. This problem stems from the decision to place the *adaptive* function of the language and meaning at the forefront, while methodologically subordinating the *productive* function – the ability to disclose new situations and settle in them – to the evolution and objective laws of biological life. Rouse, of course, points out many times that language and science have the capacity to disclose new situations and skills, but this capacity only makes sense if placed in the context of us *responding* to the original situation of coping with our environment. Rouse, thus, never investigates the question of why we enter this or that particular situation on their own terms, just because we find it and its intra-contextual goal meaningful as they are. This is because for him entering or disclosing new situations is something that is always already conceived in the context of a fundamental situation in which we already participate; the dynamics of disclosure of the world, in this sense, is ultimately the dynamics of this basic situation of adaption to our environment; a new situation is always a re-calibration and re-disclosure of an old one, a chain in the dialectics between an organism who is trying to preserve itself and an environment that is providing means for doing so. To put it differently, Rouse starts with a situation that is already open instead of investigating the movement of opening up a situation; the latter is unproblematically explained in terms of our biological anchorage. Thus, the productive function of the language remains nothing but an auxiliary tool for the adaptation to the environment being unable to initiate or disclose anything on its own.

But something like this can be claimed only from the standpoint of evolutionary biology, which from the very beginning is defined as an attempt to find an evolution rationale of our linguistic practices; it presupposes a meta-theoretical assumption that would specify in advance what counts as an explanation. If we are to analyse our meaning and language on their own terms, we would realize that

³⁴⁹ Rouse, "Coping and its Contrasts," p.24

³⁵⁰ See Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, esp. chapter "Availableness and Occurrentness"

our meaningful relation to the world does not so much consist of adaptation to the situation but rather of an attempt to find a liveable situation and settle in it. Human beings can be perfectly well ‘adapted’ to life in terms of self-preservation, and they would still seek participation in practices that would be hardly beneficial or even detrimental to their self-preservation. Take, for example, the way we learn to play chess: at no point of learning does a novice feel that his life is threatened; he learns because it is interesting, that is, it offers a disclosively rich field of its own possibilities that maximizes his ability-to-be. There is nothing contradictory in attaining a biological standpoint and arguing that this attempt to anchor oneself in the world and maximize our ability-to-be is *a specific feature of our evolutionary lineage*, i.e., *our way* of self-preservation (and it would be the task of the empirical research to investigate pros and cons of such a strategy of self-preservation). The problems start when we decide to abolish this important boundary between a biological perspective on meaningfulness and an analysis of meaningfulness as such, thus, claiming that self-preservation is *the actual content and driving force of our relation to the world*. This would drag us into a risky reductionist strategy that unavoidably leads to the set of problems we have mentioned in I.i when talking about Peregrine’s naturalization of Brandom: it obscures the genesis of practices, it is increasingly unable to explain the way non-instrumental practices occur and develop and it puts creativity of practical agents and their possibility to change one’s own situation in brackets.

If we decide not to pursue such a strategy, which I think would be a correct choice, then an attempt to demonstrate the naturalistic aspect of meaningfulness (how something that is meaningful is evolutionary beneficial) and analysis of meaningfulness as such (how something is meaningful) would constitute two different goals. Naturally, it is a self-standing achievement to offer a naturalistic account of meaning-relations and meaning-formation, but this achievement does not excuse us from the task of explaining what meaning is, how is it formed, why we find some things more or less meaningful etc. More than this, the analysis of meaningfulness must be prioritized – simply because before we can search for the evolutionary aspect of something, we must first formulate precisely what is it exactly we are going to analyse. This, as we have argued, should divert our attention from the adaptive to the world-disclosive function of language and meaning, a function that presupposes *maximization* of our ability-to-be through *disclosing* what possibilities of being the world can offer.

The same could be said about cognition: before explaining how something like cognition arises in the natural world, we must clarify what kind of practice it is, why people treat it as a meaningful enterprise, how cognitive practices occur and develop in the context of our attempt to find ourselves in the world. Unlike most naturalistically oriented philosophers, Rouse does try to get rid of a view from nowhere so deeply encrypted in our intellectual tradition by demonstrating how science and cognition

are themselves natural phenomena that help us to adapt to the environment. He is trying, in other words, to clarify how a cognitive agent (a biological organism) such as himself becomes capable of formulating scientific claims about cognitive agency and, thus, to account for the condition of his own analysis (i.e., to understand how his own research is carried out by facticity.) What Rouse misses, however, is a simple fact the science (on behalf of which he is talking) is not the science that helps him to preserve himself since nobody had been threatening him when he was writing these lines (arguably, there are much better ways of avoiding starvation than doing philosophy of science); it is science conceived as a meaningful, soliciting way of being in the world, that is, as a field that discloses a great number of complex possibilities and, thus, efficiently situates the ecstatic movement towards the world that Dasein is. So, in order to account for its own condition in a more radical way, he must first account for the cognitive practice that is pursued for the sake of itself and Dasein in a sense of ecstatic self-realization in the world that searches for something that can be done for the sake of itself. Only then we can proceed to outlining the evolutionary meaning of cognitive practices and Dasein itself.

If the process of meaning-formation is no longer explained as a mere continuation of the objective principle of evolution, then the objectivity of cognition once again becomes a problem. Since objectivity of a fundamental principle of self-preservation is no longer *diffused* across all our practices (in this case, since we no longer see all of them as products of adaptation to the 'external' environment), it becomes increasingly hard to deny the obvious difference in commitments that are undertaken by scientists and by a player or an artist. There is a fairly intuitive difference between screaming 'pass the ball to the left!' and stating that 'water consists of two atoms of oxygen and one atom of hydrogen' – the first claim clearly does not expect to go beyond any particular perspective (it is meant to be understood only by a community of players, by anyone who decides to play) while the second cannot exist without this expectation (it does not matter whether we accept the vocabulary of a certain theory or not, water would still consist of H₂O). Consequently, we would need to explain how this objectivity as a commitment to arrive at a universally valid agreement arises in the context of our being-in-the-world.

Thus, we arrive at a conclusion of this section finding both Haugeland's and Rouse's respective accounts unsatisfactory but also instructive at the same time. When criticizing Rouse, we have seen that it is indeed crucial to stress along with Haugeland (and other authors like Dreyfus and early Heidegger) that cognitive practices are different from non-cognitive ones and, in particular, that cognitive practices are characterized by their orientation at and their commitment to truth. At the same time, we should agree with Rouse that the notion and ideal of objectivity can be just postulated as a standard – we must also explain how and why objectivity matters to Dasein, how it is achieved and developed according to

such existential interest. If we want to combine the strong point of both of those accounts, we should acknowledge that the ambition to be universally valid might not be a new type of relation to the world or “a novel mode of intentionality”³⁵¹ (that is, there is no qualitative difference between practical intentionality and theoretical intentionality, which occurs as a result of disengagement and formalization like Dreyfus was implying³⁵²) but an extension of our practical relation to the world, a new type of situation to inhabit. This would leave us with the task of clarifying how cognitive practice can be forged in the course of being-in-the-world and how it becomes significant for Dasein.

³⁵¹ Rouse, *Coping and its Contrasts*, p. 24

³⁵² Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 211

II. Cognition as Being-in-the-World: A Genealogy of the ‘Formal Pragmatic Pre-supposition.’

We will start with the first question investigating how being-in-the-world can produce something like cognitive practices; more precisely, we will investigate in this section how the constitutive for cognitive practices orientation on *context-transcendence*, i.e., on something that would be not merely *given* but *given for everyone* or *universally*, becomes possible in the context of Dasein’s existence. In other words, orienting at Heideggerian guidelines, we will analyse the possibility of context-transcendence or universal validity *in terms of our openness to the world*.

One way of understanding what the cognitive demand (that consists of the need in incorporating other standpoints and remaining responsive to them) is and how it becomes authoritative brings us back to Heidegger who, approaching the ‘*Kehre*’ of his thought, no longer tries to ground the possibility of sciences and cognition in the structure of being-in-the-world transcendently (an attempt that expresses itself most clearly in paragraph 69 of *Being and Time*) and concentrates his attention on the vicissitudes of Greek thought. In particular, let’s look at the lecture “Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” where Heidegger offers his masterful interpretation of Plato’s Mythos of the Cave. The fundamental aim of the Mythos, as Heidegger sees it, is to investigate the relations between uncoveredness (*Unverborgenheit* or *aletheia*) and ideas. According to Plato, things can be uncovered, i.e. given to us meaningfully, – as “as a house, as a tree, as a god”³⁵³ – only because we have an idea or a form of things; ideas lend intelligibility and make visible because they themselves are “pure shining:” they are not an expression, a mere symptom of something else. They announce themselves being “concerned only with the shining of itself.” This “‘visible form’ has ... something of a ‘stepping forth’ whereby a thing ‘presents’ itself.” Plato’s has tried to manifest this role of pure shining and demonstrate how unconcealment is dependent upon the shining of ideas; he wants to demonstrate how they bring into “presencing,” how they “grant” (*gewahrte*) appearance of what is open. So, for Plato uncoveredness means: “the unhidden always as what is accessible thanks to the idea’s ability to shine.”³⁵⁴ What Heidegger takes to be a traditional Greek understanding of truth as unconcealment is now *further* explained as unconcealment of an idea that shines and presents.

What “brings about the shining of everything that can shine” is further described as “that which is most able to shine in its shining,” the idea of good or the idea of ideas. Ideas reveal us ‘propriety’ (“*tauglich*”), ‘goodness-for’ (in a sense of being proper or improper to something) of entities

³⁵³ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 214/*Pathmarks*, p. 164

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 221/173

letting them stand as they are; what makes every idea ‘appropriate’ (“*tauglichmachen*”) for showing its propriety is the highest idea, the idea of ideas or the idea of good. Since the essence of every idea is to realize (*ermöglichen*) visibility, this very essence itself requires realization. This highest idea is “the origin, i.e., the original source [Ur-sache] of all “things” [Sachen] and their thingness [Sachheit];” it is the absolute ground that sustains and explains meaningfulness as such. Because the idea of the good grants and ends visibility, “the being is held within being and thus is ‘saved.’” Bringing into ‘*propriety*’ everything else, the idea of good is also the hardest to see as it is beclouded by what it brings into visibility; but it is also the most pervasive because any kind of being can reveal itself only in the light of this highest idea of good. The crucial part of this story, as Heidegger sees it, is that unconcealment finds itself subordinated to the idea; “idea gains dominance over *aletheia*”³⁵⁵; the idea of good is now “a mistress in that she bestows unhiddenness.”³⁵⁶ The essence of truth, says Heidegger, is no longer understood as unconcealment but “shifts” to ideas; “[t]he essence of truth gives up its fundamental trait of unhiddenness.”

This subordination of uncoveredness to the idea explains to us the logic of Plato’s narrative. He offers us a number of situations each of which is typified by what counts as unconcealed; “[t]he unhidden and its unhiddenness designate at each point what is present and manifest in the region where human beings happen to dwell,”³⁵⁷ as Heidegger describes it. Plato is concentrated on the way those “dwelling places” are dialectically replaced one by one. In the beginning, prisoners fail to recognize the significance of ideas; they don’t understand that if not for ideas, nothing would be visible at all. Instead, individuals “presume to be exclusively and properly the real – what they can immediately see, hear, grasp, compute.”³⁵⁸ Further on, a prisoner finds himself in the open, thus recognizing the truth of things and the role of the sun in his ability to approach things as they are. Plato talks about “elevation:” some disclosures are superior to others, some are “more unhidden”³⁵⁹ and some are “the most unhidden:” being released from the cage, the prisoner performs a more fundamental, more intense disclosure becoming closer to what is. This change of places shows the reader that givenness can be *misleading* and *deceiving* if it is wrongly directed: if we trust givenness unconditionally, we will find ourselves trapped in the realm of shadows being cut off from what really is. Givenness, therefore, cannot be taken as a *standard* but must be subordinated to *orthotis*, “correctness” or “correct vision,” which ensures that we orient ourselves not just to unhidden but to the most unhidden understood as a source of being;

³⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 238/176

³⁵⁶ Plato, *Republic*, (517c:4); quoted by Heidegger

³⁵⁷ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 219/168

³⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 214/164

³⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 221/170

“through this correctness, seeing or knowing becomes something correct so that in the end it looks directly at the highest idea and fixes itself in this ‘direct alignment.’”³⁶⁰

Adapting slightly Plato’s (but mostly Heidegger’s) vocabulary, we can notice the radical changes that understanding has undergone. In the course of the *Mythos*, it attains a new form: if earlier the very fact of a successful uncovering was a criterion of understanding (as it was for the prisoners of the cave), now this meaningful presence in itself does not suffice but becomes a subject of a further evaluation. This further evaluation becomes possible because understanding is itself interpreted on the basis of the idea of good. As something of higher ontological order, the idea functions as a *source* of understanding; eventually, it is the idea that makes possible understanding and guides it by letting things to present themselves as they are. As Heidegger puts it, “[t]he idea is not some foreground that *alethea* puts out there to present things; rather, the idea is the *ground* that makes *alethea* possible.”³⁶¹ So, being constituted by the idea of good that explains to us how understanding becomes capable of revealing anything, understanding also obtains an obligation to correspond, be adequate to such an idea. As an external source of understanding that explains and enables it, such a source also becomes a criterion *for* understanding. From this point on, understanding surpasses itself by submitting itself to a criterion that does not settle with intuitive givenness, with *dokei moi, what seems to me*, but wants to go further and establish a guarantee that what seems is not only given to me but also *true*, adequate to the external source of understanding.

This means that the very process of meaning-formation becomes objectivized. We have seen that the starting point of the phenomenological project epitomized in a call for a return to “the things themselves” stresses that meaning of things belongs to the things themselves. This does not mean, however, that this approach objectivizes meaning-formation: the disclosure of entities as they are retains also the character of *the lived dialogue* between *Dasein* and the world. The *way* we disclose entities, the *way* the meaning of entities is formed and given to us cannot be deduced from entities ‘in’ themselves but requires *Dasein* as an active participant of the process of disclosure. As was described in chapter 3.ii, we retain at least tacit (not necessarily cognitive) responsibility for bringing things out of the concealment; the way they show up as ‘they are’ has a direct relation with my perspective in the world and with a kind of being that I am. Plato’s story, however, goes further than this: since the intelligibility of entities is explained in terms of the objectivized ground of understanding, the idea of good, the *way* of disclosure of things become objectivized as well. Intelligibility of entities, their meaning is seen as yet another entity, that is, as something external to and independent of understanding. Consequently,

³⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 231/177

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 233/179, emphasis mine

understanding is faced with the task of finding this *right* way of disclosing entities and dropping its active, productive role; it sees itself as a *transparent means* of arriving at the correct disclosure that would correspond to its objective ground.

Of course, we cannot accept the metaphysical implications of Platonic thought along with the many different elaborations it has received in the course of the history of philosophy. Plato's particular way of performing such an objectivation of meaning (at least according to his traditional readings and his Heideggerian interpretation, in particular) consists of pointing to an ontological region, ideas, demonstrating how a particular entity dictates meaning-formation; consequently, he has claimed that the essence of understanding can be described in such objectivized terms, in terms of the one-sided influence some (super-)entity has upon us. As we have discussed (see esp. Introduction and chapter 2.i), the integral point of both pragmatic and phenomenological programs is that there is no 'outside' to our experience, or as Davidson puts it, "we can't get outside our skins;"³⁶² ³⁶³ there is no neutral standpoint, no view from nowhere that would 'found' our experience, i.e., that would explain our experience without itself being part of our experience. On closer inspection we realize that the view from nowhere is simply a view that has been forgotten to be accounted for: an appeal to the foundational elements becomes possible only because it is realized from somewhere and by somebody, within a context of a certain practice, thus, remaining embedded and perspectival in nature. Plato's appeal to the idea of good, in particular, is an appeal to an idea that is forged and developed by a concrete individual from a certain standpoint, so it cannot claim for itself any sort of convincing power beyond any points. On the contrary, it becomes convincing only because individuals appeal to it, place it in the midst of their epistemic practices and take it as authoritative. The perspectival character, in such a way, is a necessary constituent of any kind of intelligibility even if it claims for itself absolute, foundational validity.

But instead of rushing into the criticism of this picture, let's for a second *bracket* this metaphysical side, forget about *ideas in a sense of special objects* and think about the *ideal impact* that ideas had upon our understanding. We might have reservations about whether this attempt to arrive at independent, objective disclosure is a meaningful project to pursue; but we still have to admit that this attempt to set the standard for our subjective perspectives or opinions *works*, i.e., that it successfully systematizes and organizes our experience. By introducing such a standard, the Platonic idea of good converges opinions, meaningful propositions in the same conceptual space and establishes the interconnection and hierarchy among them by viewing them as guided by the same quest for truth. So,

³⁶² Davidson, "Coherence Theory," p. 312

³⁶³ This claim has been criticized by authors such as Taylor and Wrathall as a remnant of inner-outer distinction, which I think is a misunderstanding of Davidson's thought. For more on this, see Koloskov "The World of Truth"

the idea of good not only points to a specific ontological domain; as a “working hypothesis”³⁶⁴ it also factually fulfils a *regulatory role* at the same time explaining the *telos* of every meaningful proposition and determining how successful it is with regard to such a *telos*. Even though the idea of good is never given as such it organizes our experiences; even for Plato, the idea of good is not a directly experienceable entity but something that permeates our standpoints. The idea of good, in this sense, also proves itself as a conceptual presupposition that makes possible a certain *form of interaction* among propositions, Wittgensteinian grammar of the new language game that Plato has offered.

To demonstrate this, we could investigate how the Platonic approach has changed the very meaning of the Greek term for a discussion, *dialegesthai*. In pre-Platonic use of the term, *dialegesthai* has covered a wide variety of meanings ranging from the informal “talk” to a more formal “discussion” that was meant to reveal an answer to a concrete question. In both cases, however, *dialegesthai* concerned non-cognitive situations that contained nothing like a universal claim on validity. A discussion was meant to reveal a specific answer to a specific question; it was an exclusively practical matter (understood in a narrow way) that demonstrated no tangible connection with *theoria*. This changes with Plato for whom discussion is no longer seen as a search for mere consensus but is treated instead as a search for truth.³⁶⁵ From a practical matter that was meant to find a solution to a problem based on a free exchange of opinions, the discussion becomes a theoretical enterprise that strives to arrive at a disengaged contemplation that goes beyond particular practical attitudes and becomes unconditional; consensus itself becomes a mean of arriving at truth. This change in the meaning of the term discussion makes it possible for Plato to deploy a number of new arguments and criticisms against more traditional approaches.

Consider, for example, Plato’s criticism of sophists. Only seen from the perspective of this search for the unconditional truth, Plato’s nemesis starts acquiring the familiar folklore traits like that of tricky manipulation, cynicism etc.; before, however, sophistic discourses could hardly be described in such terms since they never meant to arrive at truth concentrating instead on offering possible solutions of specific questions and problems. Their success, consequently, was evaluated not in cognitive (is it truly so?) but in pragmatic terms (does it work? Is it a satisfactory answer?). As Arendt has pointed out, “sophists were satisfied with a passing victory of the argument at the expense of truth,” whereas philosophers starting from Plato „want a more lasting victory at the expense of reality.”³⁶⁶ If we look closely, we can see how some of Plato’s criticisms of sophists are not so much a disagreement about this or that particular point; it rather concerns the *rules* of the discussion as such. This aspect is most

³⁶⁴ Thein, Vynález věcí: O Platónově hypotéze idejí

³⁶⁵ See, Timmerman, “Ancient Greek Origins of Argumentation Theory: Plato's Transformation of *Dialegesthai* to *Dialectic*”

³⁶⁶ Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 9

obvious in *Protagoras*, where Socrates attacks not only Protagoras's claims but the way he leads the discussion: Protagoras's unwillingness to explicate his claims in a brief and concise manner, to answer and pose questions violated the basic rules of what constitutes a discussion in Socrates's perspective. That is why Socrates tried to quit the discussion several times, thus, disqualifying Protagoras instead of proving him wrong. Timmerman sums this point up perfectly saying that Protagoras's behaviour is "so drastic a violation of Socrates' rules for discussion that he calls on Protagoras to either debate or say that he does not want to debate;" "[p]lay the game by the rules, says Socrates, or don't play at all."³⁶⁷

If earlier, the discussion was about a violent struggle among different opinions, about the 'victory' of an argument over other arguments conceived quite in a literal sense, now it is rather seen as a joint search for truth. Since both contested opinions are intercepted in light of the idea of good, they are seen as participants of the same project, thus, exiling competition: if another's opinion turns out to be better than mine, then I will only benefit from accepting it. In the same way, my opponent simply cannot be offended by the power of my argument: if it is valid, he should be glad to accept it since he himself was looking for a true opinion and not a false one. This gives Plato's treatment of discussion an unprecedented dialectical trait. Even failures turn out to be instructive paving the way to the unconditional truth; through a series of failures, anyone can be guided into the light of truth. This new dialectical status is perfectly expressed in *Meno*: "If my questioner were a professor of the eristic and contentious sort, I should say to him: I have made my statement: if it is wrong, your business is to examine and refute it. But if, like you and me on this occasion, we were friends and chose to have a discussion [dialegesthai] together, I should have to reply in some milder tone more suited to dialectic. The more dialectical way, I suppose, is not merely to answer what is true, but also to make use of those points which the questioned person acknowledges he knows" Again, we can see that the aim of the discussion is not arriving at a coincidental consensus by overpowering your opponent with arguments but the gradual search for truth that would guide both me and my partner in dialogue.

In *Parmenides*, Plato has demonstrated more explicitly the argumentative potential of this change saying that anyone who denies "the existence of ideas of things ... will be at quite a loss, since ... in this way he will utterly destroy the power of carrying on discussion."³⁶⁸ This, I think, is nothing but a rudimentary formulation of performative self-contradiction: only assuming that there is this independent criterion for understanding, a way of determining the right kind of uncoveredness, can we make this Platonic type of discussion possible. Unless there is this independent standard for understanding, every opinion and every uncoveredness is just as right as any other; consequently, the

³⁶⁷ Timmerman, "Ancient Greek Origins of Argumentation Theory: Plato's Transformation of Dialegesthai to Dialectic," p. 121

³⁶⁸ Plato, *Parmenides*, 135 c 2

very attempt to deny ideas as such a standard makes it impossible to participate in the game Plato has offered. Without ideas, there is no unconditional truth; and without the unconditional truth, there can be no standard that would measure different opinions and establish dialectical interactions among them – thus, no discussion can take place. Thus, it is not possible to deny Platonic ideas within the context of the game that was offered by Plato under the threat of self-contradiction; the very fact of discussing different matters in the way Plato was promoting already obliges participants to the whole set of regulative assumptions and rules.

Later Heidegger has become convinced that the Western philosophical tradition has followed this path of overshadowing uncoveredness:³⁶⁹ the essence of truth conceived as uncoveredness becomes gradually substituted with truth understood as a property of beings, with ‘essences’ *in* them that can be uncovered in the same way entities are. This substitution has obscured the difference between being, i.e. that which gives, and beings, i.e. that what is given; Western tradition tends to treat ‘giving’ as a property of what is ‘given.’ For Heidegger, these two approaches to uncoveredness are incompatible. With the new understanding of truth entered into force, truth as uncoveredness becomes resolutely beclouded. Heidegger, therefore, abandons his earlier approach according to which truth as correctness was seen as a result of a distinct way of relating to the world, a different way of intentionality that can co-exist with a more primordial, practical uncovering of the world. Now this cognitive disclosure, the disclosure as correctness gradually substitutes and excludes other ways of uncovering the world. The disadvantages of this move have already been discussed (see 3.ii.b); the major problem concerns the fact that Heidegger becomes unable to clarify the status of his own theory of disclosure that clearly has cognitive ambitions.

So, instead of ascribing to Heideggerian *Seinsgeschichte*, i.e., instead of viewing this Platonic story as a beginning of Western metaphysics, we could try to recognize in this new language game the first attempt – as rough, unformal and misleading as it might be – to conceptualize the formal rules of the cognitive praxis. Of course, for Plato the cognitive language game he has described is not a game at all; it is the inner essence of meaning and understanding. If we, on the contrary, concentrate on the *ideal impact* that Platonic ontology has upon our understanding, we will realize how the former *obtains* this ambition to arrive at truth and to be universally valid. The core of this explanation consists of demonstrating how cognitive practices attempt to pass over the process of meaning-formation to independent objects that ‘really are there’ and that Dasein is not responsible for their meaning, for the way they are given in any way; speaking in Haugeland’s terms they “delegate” authority to the objects

³⁶⁹ See, for example, Heidegger’s *The Age of the World Picture*

making it possible for them to “stand as criteria for the correctness.”³⁷⁰ Such an objectivation of meaning-formation makes it possible for objects to become a standard for understanding and meaning; independent objects go beyond every particular understanding becoming *context-transcending*. Plato’s story (at least the traditional readings of Plato), no doubt, includes many aspects that are unacceptable from the pragmatic and phenomenological points of view; but the intuition that stays behind this cognitive project – the intuition of the very possibility of context-transcendence – is strictly speaking undeniable. We do participate in cognitive discourses and we do search for truth, i.e. for something that wouldn’t be simply given to me, but for something objective, independent from my will and my particular perspective. Again, the attempt to deny this intuition quickly finds itself in a self-contradictory position since employing arguments without believing that such arguments at least potentially can arrive at a valid standpoint is a self-contradictory attempt, something Habermas is always keen to remind us of.

What we should realize here, in other words, – contra Heidegger – is that Plato’s subordination of understanding to the idea of good is not a first step towards bringing the technological disclosure but towards Habermasian formal-pragmatic presupposition– a presupposition of the same world that we live in and that operates as a condition of possibility of our particular standpoints. This assumption performs the same regulatory function as the Platonic theory of ideas. The objective world transcends every particular standpoint; it is independent of what we know about it. For their part, our standpoints are interpreted in light of this independent world; they are *nothing more* but perspectives on such an objective world, the world for everyone. Thus, the world becomes a standard for our opinions that makes possible categorization, comparison and interaction among them: since objectivity becomes inbuilt into the very structure of our perspectives, they are interpreted as laying the claim on unconditional truth – at least tacitly – and measured accordingly. This means that our standpoints *start* displaying “context-transcendence:” they expect to be confirmed by *every* other perspective being aimed at what *is* (‘essences’) independently from any standpoint, the objective world. To have an opinion in this cognitive context means to assume that all disagreements and discrepancies must be compensated and harmonized since all opinions are guided by the objective logic set by the same, independent world. Their meaningfulness and intelligibility depend on such a confirmation: if disproved by other perspectives, opinions no longer find a place within the cognitive situation. They are merely subjective and, as merely subjective, they are not intelligible from a cognitive standpoint – they have no being other than that of illusion. The assumption of the objective world, in such a way, functions as a fulcrum that converges our opinions into the same logical space. Consequently, there appears to be a demand to

³⁷⁰ Haugeland, *Having Thought*, p. 343

incorporate all perspectives, to hear all the parties – because they can only help to establish the truth. Silencing, on the contrary, can only damage the truth's cause since wrong opinions will disappear by themselves.

Conceived from this point, this Habermasian formal pragmatic presupposition can be seen as a much more formal, *lightweighted* version of the Platonic metaphysics as it recognizes that the most important aspect of Platonic approach lies in its ability to *offer* an external standard for our understanding, not in specifying what this standard *consists of*. This assumption becomes mature enough to understand that an attempt to prescribe the precise content of objectivity would fall under the scope of the cognitive game instead of explaining its meaning and possibility. As a regulative or, as Habermas puts it, *formal-pragmatic* presupposition, it does not give us any answers, any content to appeal to – whether it is Platonic theory of ideas or some elementary participles – but it makes it possible to start formulating a certain type of questions and search for a certain type of answers, and this *by postulating the possibility of reaching objectivity*. Cognitive disclosure, in such a way, does not present us objectivity as a foundational element of our experience but *aims for* such objectivity; it is this 'aiming for' objectivity, for how things are independently from our will and perspectives, that makes possible a corresponding organization of our experience. 'Objectivity' can only function as this regulative ideal that introduces us into a cognitive situation, not a pointer to an ontological region that one-sidedly forms and shapes our understanding. It is, as Patočka puts it, a hypothesis and always remains one, but a hypothesis of a "very special kind that is constantly verified but stays nonetheless a hypothesis."³⁷¹

But this assumption is ontological nonetheless. What *is* there (in a sense of Heideggerian *anwesen*) – the *independent* world – explains the possibility of our knowledge not otherwise: if I reduce my interest to opinions only, I will never arrive at anything like the objective world.³⁷² But if I start with the independent world, I will necessarily arrive at the truth of opinions. Even though talking about objectivity might factually mean nothing more but talking about the prospect of reconciliation of different perspectives and never about things themselves given from nowhere, this possibility itself is based on disclosing a certain modality of the world - its 'independent' side – through the cognitive praxis. Speaking in Heidegger's words, here we can see how a certain "productive logic ... leaps ahead, so to speak, into a particular region of being..."³⁷³, how this productive logic proves to be successful

³⁷¹ Patočka, *Fenomenologické spisy II*, p. 425

³⁷² This point is well elaborated in the chapter *Cogito* of Merleau-Ponty's *PP*

³⁷³ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 10; of course, it should be stressed that in this particular quote Heidegger does not discuss sciences but genuine thinking; something like "positive sciences" can only investigate what has been already disclosed by philosophy. Later Heidegger, in this sense, would only radicalize this line of thinking. We, however, would like to reconsider this claim saying that disclosure of being happens on the level of individual practices (this including scientific practices). We will get back to this point in more details in the next section

in revealing and orienting itself in a certain modality of the world. The meaningfulness and functionality of this formal-pragmatic presupposition depends upon the responsiveness of the world, its willingness to present itself from a certain perspective lets us speak about itself in a certain way: through objectivation of meaning, cognitive disclosure seeks to find an independent way of being of entities, i.e. the way of being that would not depend upon this or that particular Dasein and, hence, can be confirmed by every Dasein; it introduces us into a situation where independence and universality of things *matter*, become *relevant* exactly because such independence and universality as an operational plot of cognitive practice are successful in disclosing this modality of the world. In other words, the task of objectivation of meaning is a task of making the *objective* world, the world for everyone, to announce itself and lead the process of meaning-formation resulting in a universally valid disclosure.

Independence here is not a shortcut for a view from nowhere but a guide into disclosure, a certain way of bringing into unconcealment; being nothing but a human category designed to investigate a certain side of the world, it cannot be independent of human existence and is not conceivable outside of the context of being-in-the-world. It would be more appropriate, therefore, to talk about *quasi*-independence of the world, about ‘as-if’ independence since ‘independence’ as a category, of course, has a human origin and human motivation; it is not contained “in” things themselves and cannot be itself objectivized. The assumption of the objective, independent world represents an operational plot that animates the cognitive praxis instead of pointing to the layer of reality that is given to us beyond and above of any justification and responsibility. So, instead of being determined one-sidedly by objectivity, the cognitive meaning-formation *determines itself as an emulation of objectivity*, a continuous effort to establish such an objectivity. So, while aiming at the objectivity, the cognitive language game always leaves to us the *performance of the objectivation*; it is always up to our justifications, reasons and discourses to find what objectivity consists of. The postulation of the objective world, therefore, does not commit us to some form of naïve, correspondence-type realism but takes independent reality as a standard that forms and shapes meaning.

This also means that the task of the objectivation of meaning is *progressive*: it is a continuous process that can never be finalized. The objectivity of understanding is achieved through placing different perspectives in the same logical space where it becomes possible for us to filter out what is ‘merely subjective’ or context-dependent and look for what is objective or context-transcending and confirmable from any standpoint. But this exclusion of particular standpoints and minimization of the contextual impact means a steady generalization not abandoning the perspectival character of our experience. The idea of the final success of this project, a point where our understanding would somehow breach towards humanless reality is ultimately unconceivable: to arrive at absolute knowledge

and to realize how things are without being dependent on any perspective at all would mean that cognition itself stops being an activity, a way of practical self-realization in the world. Consequently, it would lose any kind of intelligibility, a point that was stressed relentlessly by Rorty and many other writers from both pragmatic and phenomenological traditions. Thus, the factual result of the cognitive enterprise is always something valid for a certain group of cognitive agents; being dependent upon a community and its practices, it can always be disconfirmed by a new participant or by a new event. But part of this factuality is the *acquired ambition* to extend this range of consensus endlessly. As Habermas puts it, “it is the goal of justifications to discover a truth that exceeds all justifications.”³⁷⁴ The objective world, in other words, is not a world that is seen independently from any kind of human comportment but a world that is disclosed through a practice that has the ambition to arrive at such a world, willingness to accept new and new perspectives endlessly in order to emulate objectivity more successfully. Contrary to Rorty, therefore, we should side with Habermas stressing the regulative importance of the objective world:³⁷⁵ mind, of course, *is* not a “mirror of nature,”³⁷⁶ but if mind *tries* to become one, we shouldn’t deny it such a possibility.

So far, we have established the difference between cognitive and non-cognitive situations and explained how cognition can be rendered compatible with an overall existential ontology that holds the perspectival nature of experience indispensable. In the rest of this chapter, I will try to further explicate how cognition can also be a pragmatic enterprise, i.e., how cognition offers us a way of settling in the world that maximizes our possibilities of being.

³⁷⁴ Habermas *Truth and Justification*, p. 39

³⁷⁵ See, for example Habermas’s *Truth and Justification*, p. 144

³⁷⁶ Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, pp. 125-127

III. Productivity of Cognition

In sections one and two of this chapter, we have seen that cognition refers to us *a particular kind of situation* for which the *quasi-independence of the world* becomes constitutive. Having analysed the distinction between cognitive and non-cognitive situations along with the formal constitutive traits that are typical of cognitive situations, we are now left with the task of analysing *the praxis of realization* of such constitutive traits demonstrating also the consistency of this account with the conclusions we have drawn so far. This means, in the first place, that in order to understand this *existential praxis* of disclosing truth, we need to analyse how the cognitive demand affects the process of meaning-formation and how this affectation results in a disclosively rich, meaningful situation. The task shifts our focus from the formal rules of cognition to the praxis of realization of such rules, that is, to a community of practitioners that are trying to apply the rules and actually produce something based on such rules. Proceeding this way, we move also away from such authors like Brandom, Habermas, Haugeland who are mostly occupied with the attempt to ensure the possibility of objectivity and truth answering and find ourselves closer to such people as Planck, Kuhn and Feyerabend who start with the praxis of grasping the truth and, in a sense, take its possibility *more* for granted.

We could start this discussion with Kuhn's account of science and cognition. This is for two reasons. The first is that Kuhn's account displays continuity with our preceding analysis of the formal rules of cognition. In many ways, he shares this minimalistic ontological claim which functions as a regulative ideal of the scientific research: something like a cognitive disclosure necessarily involves making a presupposition according to which all disagreements are reconcilable and something like objectivity or truth is reachable. In a similar fashion, Kuhn claims that the ultimate aim of any scientific paradigm is to incorporate all evidence based on the assumption "that nature can be shoved into the box the paradigm provides."³⁷⁷ Every paradigm simply *must* have the ambition to account for every piece of evidence and the success of a paradigm is measured against the success of this ambition. This assumption moves Kuhnian account of science beyond multiple charges in relativism: different paradigms can be more and less successful, thus, being better or worse *objectively* (in Kuhn's terms, they might have the better or worse puzzle-solving ability,³⁷⁸ i.e. more or less encompassing ways of 'shoving' the nature into the box of a given paradigm). And since the very prospect of incorporating all phenomena by a single paradigm is retained every time as this normative demand, the continuity of a scientific enterprise as such is preserved.

³⁷⁷ Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 152

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205

The second reason follows from Kuhn's expertise in the history of science. Having an enormous historical background, he manages to emphasize the discontinuity of the praxis of science: while he recognizes the constitutive nature of the cognitive ambition to 'shove' the nature within a single paradigm, he also notices *the positive significance* of the fact that there was no scientific approach or paradigm in human history that has actually succeeded in realization of this ontological 'shoving.' At any point in the history of science there have always been anomalies (i.e. phenomena that the current paradigm cannot account for), criticisms, contradictive evidence, alternative interpretations etc. If we look at the level of praxis, in such a way, we realize that the regulative idea of objectivity is much less of a guideline than it seems from the formal rules of such a praxis. What makes a given paradigm acceptable, thus, is not its undeniable validity but the ability to offer the best available *promise* to reach such a validity, i.e. to account for problematic evidence and to resolve all the problems *eventually*. The most important things about a scientific paradigm, in this sense, are the extent of the promise it makes, the likelihood, persuasiveness and often intuitive appeal³⁷⁹ that it has upon scientists. Even though the motivating power behind accepting and neglecting promises is a prospect of no longer relying on promise at all, the praxis of doing science is, in fact, unconceivable without the latter.

Consequently, the change of paradigm is not something that can be resolved on the basis of argumentation alone³⁸⁰ – otherwise, says Kuhn, approaches would have been neglected on a daily basis. There always will be arguments pro and against any paradigm, but even a number of solid arguments allied with more general limitations of the explanatory scope of a given paradigm *is generally not enough* on their own to explain the change of paradigms. At the moment when the change between paradigms is needed, both paradigms are usually flexible enough to deal with each objection one by one and offer some sort of explanations, deferrals, hypotheses or constructing special cases when faced with criticism. The criticism can only make paradigms somewhat less inspiring, which nonetheless does not constitute a sufficient reason to part ways with them. By stressing this aspect, Kuhn is trying to demonstrate that scientific development conceived as a gradual accumulation of data is nothing but a retrospective illusion that misconstrues the scientific praxis; as he puts it, "the act of judgment that leads scientists to reject a previously accepted theory is always based upon more than a comparison of that theory with the world."³⁸¹ Abandoning a certain paradigm always goes hand in hand with accepting another strategy, which appears to be more optimal way of explaining the world. Kuhn demonstrates based on a great variety of examples that this optimality does not mean that the new paradigm has to be

³⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 152-153

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 148

³⁸¹ Ibid., p. 77

argumentatively better than the current paradigm;³⁸² neither does it have to be more successful in accounting for the phenomena.³⁸³ The criterion for a choice among competing paradigms is not always explicable in clear-cut cognitive terms, at least at the very moment of choice. Sometimes, a paradigm might indeed account for something others cannot (while not being able to account for many further things); sometimes it demonstrates a greater interconnectedness with other paradigms; sometimes it displays a more ergonomic approach. In other words, at first, a promising paradigm does not have to give anything more but an intuition that it could potentially account for more phenomena one way or another.

This approach makes it possible for Kuhn to analyse scientific praxis in such terms as “attack” or “defence” and describe scientists as “adepts.” This change of vocabulary has an important methodological role to play – it, again, emphasizes the level of description where Kuhn’s analysis is located. Science here is not a disembodied corpus of knowledge that organizes itself in an impeccable, machinelike fashion. It is a practical and existential dimension where individuals dwell: they make sense of the world in terms of a given paradigm, while at the same making sense of themselves as adepts of this paradigm. At this level, the cognitive demand is not something that cognitive agents must do in a strong sense of the world; rather, it is a general guideline that presupposes all sorts of exceptions and concessions. Scientists accept a paradigm that makes sense for them, that offers them a greater promise of explanation. Only after this do they try to support this paradigm with arguments and criticize other, incompatible paradigms, thus, affirming its universal validity. So, the question here is not “can a paradigm be defended” but “is it worth defending?”, “is it exciting enough?” An exciting paradigm makes us *want* to defend it, to argue against its critics, to make up arguments that would defend its consistency and not because it is right but because *it would make sense for us if it were*. Kuhn, in such a way, demonstrates to us the dynamics of meaning, a complex and unstable balance that is dependent upon concrete subjects and the creativity of their understanding; instead of merely reflecting reality, individuals are concerned with the scope and depth of their understanding.

This description is *not* placed at the level of discussing the ‘ideal conditions’ of truth. It rather takes the possibility of reaching truth for granted: it is a *fact* that different agents believe that truth is achievable and indeed try to achieve it. At this factual level, the commitment to this possibility only manifests itself directly when individuals are forced to accept a paradigm that has *already proven* its promising character under the threat of exclusion from the scientific community. As we remember, the demand to incorporate all evidence and criticisms itself is not a factual one; it is a formal-pragmatic

³⁸² Ibid., p. 154

³⁸³ Ibid.

presupposition that functions as a driving force of cognitive development, not a factual description of how this cognitive development is realized. In this sense, Kuhn can appeal to the same line of defence like Habermas. Just like Habermas who responded to his critics that *factual impossibility* of his ‘ideal speech situations’ is not an argument but a misunderstanding of his approach, Kuhn could say that charges in relativism misfire because he is not discussing any ideal rules of the cognitive language game but only observe how agents *factually* trying to coordinate their cognitive activities. We can see, in such a way, that both levels – ideal and factual – presuppose and complement one another and it would be a mistake to ask one for something that can only be given by another.

Concentrating on this factual level makes it possible for us to investigate the specifics of production of meaning (and not just the necessary rules to which this production must be subordinated) in cognitive practices. We have claimed that understanding is guided by the need to maximize the disclosing potential revealing us existential possibilities that establish the room-for-manoevre where each involved possibility is enriched (see 3.i). The introduction of non-interactive possibilities would disrupt this leeway, thus, transforming the existential possibilities into disconnected logical ones; consequently, non-interactive possibilities are foreclosed (see 3.ii; for example, we foreclose the possibility of playing football by different rules or the fact that football tools can be also re-contextualized in different contexts). At the first sight, this principle seems to be inverted in cognitive situations: understanding here ought to account for *all* perspectives even if they disrupt the room-for-manoevre. Cognition cannot simply foreclose everything that is non-relevant for the understanding without losing its cognitive status. We cannot, for example, simply ignore all situations where water appears as H₃O without losing our entitlement to defines it as H₂O, whereas in games we can and should simply forget about alternative rules. On a closer inspection, however, it becomes obvious that this oughtness is also guided by the same aim of maximizing the disclosing potential. This is because the cognitive understanding is based on the regulative assumption that *there must be* an understanding that is in principle capable of incorporating all perspectives; there always is a promise that a richer understanding *can be* achieved in principle. Cognitive understanding, in such a way, agrees to take a *temporarily* damage and willingly decreases its own intensity by introducing non-interactive, contradicting possibilities and openly admitting that it ‘no longer understands.’ This happens, however, only because this damage must be potentially recoverable and recoupable: being constantly irritated by refuting evidence, cognitive understanding grows stronger and more intense reconsidering itself on a constant basis and finding new, more ergonomic and expansive ways of understanding the world, thus, increasing its disclosing potential.

That this cognitive movement of understanding has a saccadic, non-linear nature that Kuhn has been stressing could be spotted from the way we elaborate contradicting evidence and arrive at a new paradigm of understanding. In the beginning, anomalies do not make sense; their occurrence undermines the current intelligibility. After all “double-checking”³⁸⁴ is done, the discrepancy becomes the source of disappointment: it takes away our intelligibility without offering anything in return; it disrupts our understanding and leaves us disoriented. Here, the promise of a richer understanding that would elaborate all evidence is nothing more than a promise: it is not yet given. Undermining of a current understanding leads, in such a way, to a crisis, an experience of which was, for example, acutely expressed by Einstein in his autobiography “[i]t was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with no firm foundation to be seen anywhere, upon which one could have built.”³⁸⁵ Cognitive understanding, which is guided by the need to maximize the disclosing potential and the ability-to-be, is very rarely prepared to give itself up in exchange for nothing, thus, drastically decreasing such a potential. When faced with contradicting evidence or anomalies, it prefers to defer the explanation believing that problems can be solved *eventually*; some intelligibility is better than no intelligibility at all. Thus, Kuhn has demonstrated in great details that giving up a paradigm is acceptable only if we are on the edge of finding a new, richer understanding that can cover this gaping hole left by the disruption of the previous one; criticisms and anomalies become sufficient reasons for abandoning a paradigm only insofar there is another paradigm that makes better sense and that would save our understanding and ability-to-be from the decrease and disorientation. So, for a cognitive disclosure to retain a cognitive status, it is not necessary to follow the *letter* of the cognitive laws; it is enough to be committed to its *spirit* retaining the intention to answer criticisms and believing that eventually all contradictions will be resolved. Again, we can see that the cognitive demand needs to be accepted as a regulative principle, not a factual one. The need to react upon criticisms and account for all the evidence turns out to be much less strict than it would seem from the formal rules of the cognitive language game and this is exactly because cognition is a way of anchoring in the world, not a mere accumulation of data.

But if cognition is to be considered as an existential praxis that offers a particular disclosure of the world, it would follow from chapter 3.ii that it must also imply a corresponding foreclosure. What does cognition foreclose? It would seem, at the first sight, that cognitive disclosure does not foreclose anything as it is constituted by the need to consider every possible perspective. But, as we are about to see, this is nothing but a paradoxical illusion. What cognitive disclosure forecloses is *productive self-awareness* of human understanding and all possibilities that presuppose such self-awareness. We

³⁸⁴ Haugeland, *Having Thought*, p. 253

³⁸⁵ Einstein, “Autobiographical Note,” p. 45. (quoted by Kuhn)

remember from Heidegger that understanding is co-disclosed by significance and for-the-sake-of-which: things are disclosed in their 'ownmost' possibilities and, yet, possibilities of things themselves are also given as relevant for me, as given for my own sake.³⁸⁶ In a cognitive situation, however, this pairing *seems* to acquire an asymmetrical character with significance stepping in the forefront and for-the-sake-of-which side-lining into the undifferentiated background. This is because cognitive understanding seeks to disclose the quasi-independent being of things based on the ontological assumption of the objective, independent world. This quasi-independence of things serves as a principle of meaning-formation: things become relevant to me in their quasi-independent status; they matter to me in the way they are without me, a paradoxical disposition of understanding that downplays and obscures the very structures of *for-me-ness* and beclouds the very *disclosing role* of understanding. While in non-cognitive practices, understanding retains creative, productive self-awareness (of responsibility for disclosure), in cognitive practices this productive self-awareness is substituted with the self-awareness of a transparent tool of grasping things that cannot 'add' anything to things under the threat of becoming non-intelligible to itself as a cognitive understanding. Cognitive understanding must be potentially confirmable by any other cognitive agents; my particular, context-immanent perspective is of no interest here. If this condition is not fulfilled and understanding retains the significance of its productive elements, which it is not prepared to abandon in the name of the search for universality, the task of objectivation and cognitivation of meaning-formation collapses before it starts.

We can further clarify this point by contrasting it with Rorty's account. According to the latter, the idea of truth never refers us to the world that somehow 'makes' our proposition true in a sense of adequate correspondence (so, he approvingly quotes Davidson "[n]othing, however, no thing, makes sentences or theories true: not experience, not surface irritations, not the world, can make a sentence true.") Something like a true proposition only refer us to other propositions: a predicate 'true' always means 'true according to a particular vocabulary' (and corresponding goals that we have that incline us towards using this or that particular vocabulary). So, in this sense, Rorty describes his idea of truth as "*trivial*:" it amounts to the internal consistency of a vocabulary and allows no place for an overarching standard that would measure vocabularies as such; it is always 'we,' the community of solidary language-users, that operate as a bedrock, *Non-grund* of truth. For Rorty, as we have seen, there can be no distinction drawn between our everyday non-cognitive practices and cognitive practices such as a science: both "the whole of culture" and "the whole of science"³⁸⁷ are true exactly to the same extent – that is, trivially.

³⁸⁶ see § 31 of *BT* and chapter 2.ii of the present work

³⁸⁷ Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, p. 26

Rorty's idea of the triviality of truth, while containing no-doubt crucial insights that seek to account for the "coefficient of facticity" with which our idea of truth is "burdened,"³⁸⁸ overlooks the distinctive feature of cognitive understanding without which it wouldn't be possible as such. *By itself*, the appearance of things as something that goes beyond this or that particular perspective, that is, as quasi-independent from perspectives, is not a bad Platonic heritage that we must get rid of. Instead, it should be seen as a constitutive part of *cognitive phenomenality*: things *appear* to me as if they are independent of me and my particular perspective. A true claim such as, for example, 'water is H₂O,' necessarily involves the assumption that this claim goes beyond *what we merely say and think* about the world and grasps the objective, quasi-independent reality. This aspect of cognitive phenomena refers us to the operative unity of the cognitive understanding that only manages to *disclose* something only under condition it downplays its own productivity, its own impact on what is disclosed and thus, obtains the ambition to be context-transcendent, given to everyone. Rorty overlooks this aspect because he omits the phenomenological layer of investigation being satisfied with the logical analysis of the facticity of our understanding. As a result, he starts his investigation being already placed in a cognitive practice that he takes for granted and overlooks exactly the fact that it is the assumption about the independent world that makes the cognitive form of interaction between propositions possible.

Returning to investigating the existential praxis of cognition, we must also keep in mind that something like intelligibility or meaning refers us to a particular, contingent being – Dasein – that tries to make sense of itself by making sense of the world (and otherwise). The meaning of being of this particular entity cannot be itself objectified, that is, given as independent from our particular standpoints. This is because Dasein is not a being that we know but a being 'that we in each case *are*,' as we have seen, a radical reflection upon the condition of human existence seeks to include this particular, factual individual in its status of *a foundation of any objectivation* as someone who is *performing* it. Recognizing the constitutive significance of contingency that strikes at the very core of being-in-the-world, we recognize that nothing we do and say would ever go beyond and above this facticity of human existence; as such a contingent being, Dasein is not searching for universality and objectivity, but for *something* to do. Taken in themselves, our practices are neither true nor false, neither correct nor incorrect but just this 'something we do,' i.e., contingent ways of actions and judgements that anchor us in the world. There is nothing 'objective,' human-independent about this settling in the world because it itself is a performative attempt, an effort to reveal what possibilities of being can this transcendent world can offer to me; a movement of settling in the world does not correspond to anything in the world.

³⁸⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *L'institution dans l'histoire personnelle et publique*

This concerns cognition itself. For cognition is also a manifestation of spontaneous human attempt to settle in the world; in and of itself the cognitive praxis is neither true nor wrong, neither correct nor incorrect – it just is something we do, one particular way of asking the world about the possibilities it can offer to us. The attempt to arrive at universal truth that wouldn't be dependent upon the productivity of my understanding, therefore, remains itself an instantiation of this productivity. Thus, we can see a *paradox* hidden at the very core of the practice of cognition. On the one hand, this gradual minimization of productivity, a constant attempt to distinguish what is given only to me or my community and what could be potentially confirmed by everyone is nothing but a different form of its maximization. Disclosing a situation that could be given to anyone (this means: for a definite number of factual beings such as myself) remains every bit as productive and particular as any other disclosure; it merely enlarges the scope of this particularity without changing its particularistic nature. On another hand, cognitive understanding must constantly *foreclose* its productivity in order to be functional; it must downplay every time the sense of an effort that is irrevocably linked with bringing things out of concealment and forget about the privative indebtedness of the cognitive unconcealment to this effort. The fulcrum of the cognitive phenomenality, as we have earlier claimed, is not the consensus among a number of factual individuals but *the objective way of being of the world*; consequently, understanding *must* see itself as a transparent medium of reaching objectivity that does not add anything to its *explanandum until it is proven otherwise*. Speaking in Wittgensteinian terms, the very “grammar” of the cognitive language game does not allow us to stop making this assumption even if we *know* that it would be eventually impossible to match the standards set by it. Cognition, in other words, *systematically obscures* its own origin as a human activity while itself presupposing such an origin.

This paradox does not mean that cognition is impossible; it means only that it can never be final. It can never become absolute cognition, an all-inclusive perspective, the impossibility of which is most easily illustrated by Gödel's incompleteness theorem: a formal system (in our case, a system based on the axiom of the independent world) cannot demonstrate its own consistency but requires an external foundation. The cognitive disclosure has to pose itself as an absolute disclosure – but this only to find each time how this positioning fails; how what seemed to be the truth turns out to be a mere justified opinion, how the unconditional, independent reality is constantly substituted with a conditioned perspective on reality and how absolute disclosure is nothing more but one situation among many others, which just like others remains dependent upon Dasein and its disclosive abilities. Understood this way, the cognitive enterprise is a Sisyphian task, which cannot exist without aiming for the impossible. So, instead of uprooting the very possibility of a cognitive enterprise, this paradox stresses the indispensable character of the existential, non-absolutistic foundation of cognition. Eventually, justifications cannot justify the very need for justification and cognitive practice cannot

justify its own existence but require this “existential commitment:”³⁸⁹ cognitive agents commit themselves to hold a particular disclosure into open and settle in it because they have an ontological motivation to be someone, not just an epistemological one to be right. Being unable to account for its own origin and, therefore, being impossible as a formal, self-enclosed system of intelligibility, cognition is factually possible as a way of life – as a continuous possible effort to anchor oneself in a disclosively rich situation, a situation that at the same time discloses the world and forgets about this disclosure finding itself in the objective, quasi-independent world. As Heidegger puts it, “the non-essence of ground is “overcome” only in factual existing, but never eliminated.”³⁹⁰

In this sense, an attempt to cognitively analyse human understanding *thematizes* this paradox of cognition. In order to speak about human understanding in a cognitive context we have to assume that there is a truth about such an understanding. Even when discussing this unavoidable generic productivity of human understanding, we still *have to assume* that the claim itself (i.e., ‘cognition is productive’) is objective and universally valid, thus, foreclosing the productivity of *this particular act of cognition*. This claim, in other words, is *explanandum*, not *explanans*: cognitive understanding as *explanans* here is mobilized in order to explain understanding as such as *explanandum*. Productivity of human understanding, in other words, must be foreclosed only on the level of *explanans*; at the cost of the paradoxical transformation that forecloses its own productivity, it can be perfectly well analysed on the level of *explanandum* being subjected to the rules of cognitive praxis. Thus, acknowledging both productivity and validity-based orientation of our understanding brings us to the paradox but never to a contradiction. This is because they – productivity and objectivity – occupy places on different functional levels and can never encounter one another.

Having clarified this aspect, we can once again return to Heidegger’s late treatment of the notion of foreclosure. We could agree that there might be something like an ‘essential foreclosure,’ a foreclosure in a more profound sense because it does not concern this or that practical field of possibilities but rather a disclosure itself, something Heidegger describes with his “forgetfulness of being,”³⁹¹ i.e. forgetfulness of the fact that things are given to us in virtue of our understanding of their being. Foreclosing the disclosive and foreclosive constituents of understanding, cognitive disclosure deepens the foreclosure, obscures its own origin and obtains absolutistic ambitions seeking to discover and include everything that is disclosable. It obtains this indefatigable thrive for expanding into different contexts of human existence: cognition yields us knowledge about the world, ourselves, games, music etc. Where we cannot follow Heidegger, however, is his conviction that such a foreclosure of

³⁸⁹ Haugeland, *Having Thought*, p. 340

³⁹⁰ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. /Pathmarks, p. 134

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. /44

disclosure somehow constitutes a generic trait of modern understanding, an original sin of Western culture that cannot be shaken off without a complete re-orientation in the world and finding a “New God.”³⁹² We have seen that this claim, eventually, undermines Heidegger’s own position, a position that is rooted and cultivated in the very cognitive paradigm Heidegger wants to uproot. But the analysis above makes it possible for us to attain a much more modest claim that this forgetfulness, however radical it is, is only a necessary demand of one particular field of cognition. Thus, the forgetfulness can never be a complete forgetfulness: the moment we leave the cognitive domain when making a joke, enjoying poetry, or playing a game is a moment when productive self-awareness of our understanding is re-established. This transformation does not require changes in our epochal understanding, revelations of new gods or anything of this sort – it is a common feature of our everyday being-in-the-world that settles in a great variety of situations. For the most part, we retain the implicit awareness of the fact that things announce themselves to *us*, for the sake of our being and that there would be no jokes, no goalposts and no chairs if not for Dasein.

Forgetfulness of being becomes a problem only in connection to the intellectualistic self-interpretation of understanding. When we decide to investigate understanding itself, understanding occurs at the same time as an *explanandum* and as an *explanans*; *explanandum* here is understanding *as such*, understanding as it functions across the whole scope of human existence, while *explanans*, what performs the investigation, is cognitive understanding. Cognitive disclosure with its absolutistic ambitions of becoming the complete, final disclosure has a natural tendency to equate those two levels, thus, excluding what it can never fully digest; it is inclined to get rid of a reminder of its particularistic nature that paradoxically strains the cognitive project and identifies itself entirely in terms of its cognitive capacity. Submitting to this temptation, cognition equates *explanans* and *explanandum*, stresses the inherent epistemic orientation of understanding and blocks the very possibility of explication of the sense of productivity that understanding has. This equation has far-reaching consequences some of which we have discussed in chapter I. Since understanding interprets itself as a transparent tool for grasping things and leaves no space for inherent productivity, any kind of analysis of non-cognitive meaning becomes heavily obstructed: it takes the shape of what Habermas describes as “rational reconstruction”³⁹³ that postulates retrospectively some “deep-seated”³⁹⁴ rationality that actors do not live through pre-reflectively but that they *must* have so their behaviour would match the standards set by the theory; the non-rationalizable residue is further explained as “parasitical,”³⁹⁵

³⁹² See Heidegger’s Spiegel interview, 1966

³⁹³ Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. I, p. 192

³⁹⁴ Habermas, *Truth and Justification*, p. 11

³⁹⁵ Habermas, “A Reply to my Critics,” p. 250

“irrational” or is written it off to psychological or physiological side-effects. This artificial reconstruction of our non-cognitive practices only alienates our cognitive self-understanding from our existential self-understanding driving a wedge between things as they appear to us and things as we know them, thus, eventually revealing its incapacity of dealing with the breadth of our pre-reflective life.

So, forgetfulness of being on the level of *explanandum*, forgetfulness in this absolutistic sense is a mistake. It is an easy one to make; it also is the one that is incredibly difficult to spot (only the phenomenological method with its methodological turn to the pre-reflective experience has proven to be capable of recognizing the systematic character of the mistake that consists of conflating between the reflective and non-reflective levels of description). But it is a mistake nonetheless and, as with any cognitive mistake, it is perfectly resolvable on the level of argumentation. It was up to us to provide arguments against the intellectualization of understanding (as it was up to Heidegger to give us reasons why we need to escape the current technological world-disclosure). The same couldn't be said about the forgetfulness of being understood as an *operative plot* of cognitive praxis: this kind of forgetfulness is implied by any philosophical argument and there is no way we can get rid of it without inflicting upon ourselves the charge in performative self-contradiction. The analysis of the existential foundation of cognitive practices and investigation of disclosive and foreclosive aspects of cognitive understanding were meant, in such a way, to pin this forgetfulness of being restraining it to the level of *explanans* and allowing some space for the productivity of understanding on the level of *explanandum*, not to deny its constitutive role as such. In other words, we could agree with Sartre that the main source of the problem is a conflation between different “ontological levels,”³⁹⁶ the level of knowing and the level of being, with one important specification: this conflation is, in fact, constitutive for one particular domain – a domain of cognition – at least with regard to the tools it uses.

This means that the proposed approach does not undermine but localize cognitive practices. Cognition is a *local* form that understanding takes in order to disclose a particular room for our ability-to-be. Only cognitive perspectives can be truthful offering us an extensive grip on the objective situations, quasi-independent side of things. But truth and universal validity does not exhaust meaning: in non-cognitive situations, maximization of an ability-to-be takes a different shape that leaves no space for universal validity; more than this, truth and universal validity cannot themselves exhaustively explain *the meaning of truth* and *the meaning of universal validity*, that is, they cannot explain why and for what reason are people trying to reach them other than postulating them as a necessary condition of intelligibility. This means that cognitive disclosure does not have any kind of priority over other forms

³⁹⁶ Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 305

of understanding; it is, again, utterly *meaningless* to employ it in situations where the cognitive constraint rather disrupts and minimizes the disclosing potential. They are different types of disclosure, different ways of maximization of our ability-to-be and the richness of human existence consists of the fact that it can occupy different positions interchangeably. An attempt to demonstrate that all situations are at least tacitly cognitive or, on the contrary, an attempt to deny realistic intuitions of cognition impoverishes our understanding of what human existence is.

5. *Cultural Lichtung*

Heading towards the end of this work, we need to acknowledge that the shift from transcendental questioning of the *conditions of possibility of intelligibility* to the post-transcendental investigation of the *conditions of the improvement of intelligibility* has motivated us to make an important methodological decision. Since we were interested in the undertows that swoop up and feed meaning-formation elevating it to the visible surface of public practices (a movement, which we have identified with the enrichment of meaning) as opposed to the idiosyncratic movement of hiding out of sight, of requiring special circumstances in order to be intelligible (which we have identified with the impoverishment of meaning), we have drawn our attention to disparate practical fields and the *intra-contextual* dynamics of their meaningfulness while bracketing, for the time being, the question of interaction among such fields and their *inter-contextual* dynamics. This approach, of course, is by no means arbitrary but is suggested by the subject of our analysis itself. The very attempt to analyse the pragmatic generation of meaning (which we, again, have described in terms of maximization of our ability-to-be) has referred us to the bonding of the *contextual* relations, which exclude or foreclose non-contextual possibilities as non-relevant and create the discontinuity – the thresholds, gates, enters and exists – among various fields. In other words, if we follow the very logic of the *accumulation* of meaningfulness, we are relocated from the universal conditions of experience (typical for transcendental thinking) to the midst of incommensurable concrete practices, experiences and orientations.

Investigating the pre-reflective life of meaning this way, we have assumed that its pragmatic generation is not a uniform process, something that can be explained in one fell swoop by a reference to evolutionary adaptation, linguistic structures, epochal disclosure, a regime of power or economic disposition, but takes place, first and foremost, across an insurmountable number of mutually foreclosing fields that retain a certain degree of self-independency and autonomy. This emphasis on the “anarchic”³⁹⁷ self-organizing life of meaning that does not presuppose any overarching “principle,” any common generic logic that would determine the logic of the variety of further fields, might be again compared with the famous Wittgensteinian description of language games, which states that 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.”³⁹⁸ This city does not have a proper ‘downtown,’ a central area that would from the very beginning define in advance how, according to what meaning other parts of the

³⁹⁷ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, p. 4

³⁹⁸ Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, §18.

city – industrial areas, bedroom communities, parks and bar streets – are built and maintained. Attempts to inscribe such an overarching logic across all meaningful fields (something that, as we have seen, has been done by such authors as Brandon or Habermas)³⁹⁹ necessarily overlooks the inherent creativity and untamed, “raw” character of the urban growth, thus, failing to account for the scope, diversity and typical inertia of field-formation. First and foremost, the suburbs occur and develop not because they have been planned in advance somewhere in the head office; they have lives and logics of their own. Being “an-archic,” practices of being-in-the-world is a pluralistic bundle of disparate fields; the fact of being placed in the same city cannot overshadow controversies and contradictions that run high among them constantly threatening to tear their connection apart.

Contrary to Wittgenstein, however, we have followed existential phenomenology in investigating the orientational system of such a city – Dasein, the ecstatic human existence, – which permeates its construction and ensures the minimal *co-existability* of various areas. The ecstatic attempt to anchor oneself in the world, which is constitutive of being of Dasein, does not amount to a pre-conceived plan of building a city; it does not ‘know’ in advance what *kind* of place it needs but searches merely for *some* place finding and appropriating the heterogeneity of the world. This ecstasy cannot impose any kind of logic on the world, it cannot prescribe any rules of operational unity to the spaces it would find – it must merely find them as possible ways of communication with the world. In other words, while remaining a productive element of this dialogue, Dasein does not impose any content on what it finds but only ensures that whatever it finds is *usable, sayable, doable* and *thinkable*; it imposes only a certain size and tempo of the unfolding of the worldly possibilities. Every area – every neighbourhood, every industrial area, every bridge and park – has its own meaning. Yet every corner of this ancient city is dwellable, suited for Dasein’s being-in-the-world. By affirming that cities are built for the sake of dwelling we do not undermine their anarchic formation, the disparate process of building different areas but rather make it explainable without imposing any downtowns that would be chiefly responsible for the building. The result of such an anarchic construction might be short-sighted, filled with contradictions, faulty infrastructure and local conflicts of any sort. But those deficiencies and imperfections are a price to pay for the untamed creativity of the pre-reflective understanding that seeks to root itself in the world. The diverse mosaic of heterogenous practices might be a bad cognitive system (up to the extent it would sometimes appear as a good idea to create something like an entirely ‘formal,’ reason-base city) but an efficient way of maximizing Dasein’s ability-to-be.

³⁹⁹ See chapter I of this work

This chapter is an attempt to acknowledge this simple fact that we have so far postponed: however diverse the city could be, it still is *a* city possessing some sort of unity and implying some sort of planning, although this planning might be, first and foremost, limited in scope and *reactive* in its endeavours (that is, it rather reacts to the logic of fields than initiates them as such). Having started with the claim that meaning is generated across a great variety of incommensurable fields, we might defer but not neglect the question of how those fields hang together. We can isolate a specific field in order to analyse meaning-formation only within the context of methodological restriction while admitting that they are, in fact, never completely isolated in reality. The value of our starting point has made it possible for us to escape the claim that some '*structural conditioning*,' i.e., the external for a given practice impact of the general context where it occurs and becomes accepted, can exhaustively explain the specific meaningfulness of concrete practices: no epochal disclosure, linguistic structure, evolutionary logic, regime of power or economic disposition by itself is sufficient for the explanation of why something like a game of football is meaningful. But it does not mean that structural factors are irrelevant as such. Along with their self-standing, *intra-contextual meaning*, practices also have *inter-contextual meaning*; they also mean something for other practices. They have a role to play in the context of what we have described as cultural *Lichtung* or *cultural space* (see section 3.ii.b), which has no doubt a profound impact on the formation of their room-for-manoeuvre. A game of football, for example, is also a platform for economic influences, political conflicts and religious rituals; it relies upon our bodily dispositions, bares a certain evolutionary meaning and remains linguistically structured. All those factors have an impact on what football is and how it is played. In this chapter, we will try to explicate those structural influences in terms that we have been developing so far.

I. Instruments and Grounds

We can start this complementary analysis by acknowledging a fairly self-obvious fact: we don't always participate in practices for their own sake – routine industrial labour, housekeeping and physical exercises are all examples of what we do for the sake of something else. In our everyday usage, this domain can be roughly taken as overlapping with the idea of *instrumentality*: instruments are only good for something beyond them.

To analyse this notion, we could again take Heidegger and, in particular, his discussion of tools (*Zeug*) as a point of departure. As we remember, Heidegger stresses that the everyday world is a world of tools: first and foremost, entities do not occur as present-at-hand isolated objects but as ready-to-hand solicitations, things-to-be-used. The constitutive element of a tool is a reference (*Verweisung*): we only understand a tool by referring it to a context of 'affordances' (*Bewandtnis*) for the sake of which it is used. Here, an entity finds itself situated between the two already familiar to us poles of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) and Dasein's for-the-sake-of-which (*Worumwillen*.) Grasping something as a tool, thus, doesn't mean gazing at a self-sufficient and isolated object; it means letting oneself to be drawn into a practical totality of everyday life. To 'know' what a hammer is does not mean to know the qualities of this particular object (i.e., its weight, the material it is made from etc.); neither does it mean to *know that* it can be used in such and such particular way. To 'know' a hammer means our ability to become introduced into the totality of affordances (*Bewandtnis*.) to become advanced and absorbed into active wielding subordinated to the specific intra-contextual demands of a given practice. It is *know-how*.

This Heideggerian line of thinking is apparently ill-suited for the task of grasping instrumentality as a distinct category of practical engagement. This is because Heidegger's notion of tools, as is often the case with his terminological work, does not coincide with our everyday understanding of tools but rather strains and disfigures the everyday meaning for his own purposes. The purpose here is to clarify the worldliness of the world; "*das Zeug*" is understood as "the entities which we encounter in concern."⁴⁰⁰ manifests the holistic background against which entities show themselves. Heidegger's discussion, in other words, efficiently requalifies tools from a specific region of entities that is familiar to us into a characteristic feature of our access to entities as such. *Zeug* becomes a primordial structure of understanding: a reference (*Verweisung*) is not so much an explanation of what makes an everyday instrument what it is but a demonstration that a certain element of what we generally consider as instru-

⁴⁰⁰ Heidegger, *BT*, p. 96

mentality is constitutive for the structure of meaningfulness as such.⁴⁰¹ Our ability to understand a character in a theatrical performance or treat a toy as a toy relies to the same extent upon referring them to the corresponding 'tool'-whole and revealing their in-order-to in it. Heidegger begins his discussion with what is generally considered as instruments – hammers, pens and pencils – only to demonstrate that the conclusion he arrives at is extrapolatable on the whole domain of things as they are first and foremost. Not only this line of thinking does not help us to access instrumentality as a distinct category of practices; it also creates a natural danger of inadvertently adding to Heidegger's distilled usage of the term 'tool' our everyday intuitions about it, which results in instrumentalization of our everyday practices that is no longer phenomenological in spirit. Confusion of this sort is displayed, for example, by Dreyfus's idyllic world of instrumentality where a community appears as a community of absorbed 'coopers' who only manipulate entities without any kind of deliberation.⁴⁰²

Heidegger's early approach, nonetheless, does give us a hint with regard to where we should start in order to grasp instrumentality as a distinct category. Namely, we could ask ourselves why is it that our everyday usage of the notion of tools offers Heidegger such a convenient platform for grasping the reference-based structure of meaningfulness. Kouba, while critically discussing the pragmatic reception of Heidegger, answers this question by stressing the methodological aspect of *Zeuge*.⁴⁰³ That conventional tools are unintelligible without their referential context might not differentiate them from other types of entities. What differentiates them is that the very context they belong to is also non-intelligible in itself but requires further contexts. If practices like games or theatrical performances do not display on overall (at least as a rule of their practical organization) some in-order-to structure that would subordinate them to the further practical fields but are pursued for the sake of themselves, such practices like hammering only make sense in the context of their subordination to further practices like, for example, building, which is only intelligible in the context of the family of practices that organize our everyday life. So, instrumentality does not manifest itself, first and foremost, on the level of significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) but on the level of for-the-sake-of-which (*Worumwillen*); I am aware that something is *not* done for-the-sake-of-itself. The intuition that a referential whole requires another referential whole in order to become meaningful is constitutive for our intuition of instrumentality. This means that a proper tool demonstrates the role of *reference* (*Verweisung*) not once but twice: the first reference refers us to the intra-contextual dynamics between significant elements and the second refers us to the inter-contextual dynamics between different wholes of significance that are (not) pursued for the sake of themselves.

⁴⁰¹ Heidegger, *BT*, §15

⁴⁰² Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, p. 85

⁴⁰³ Kouba, *Řeč a zjevnost*, p. 9

Heidegger does not draw the difference between instrumental and non-instrumental understanding – between something we do for its own sake and something we do for the sake of something else – for an important reason that later led to the abandonment of his early approach. As we remember, here Heidegger outlines two basic movements of intelligibility in *Being and Time* – the self-deceptive movement away from oneself into the apparent self-obviousness of ways of doing and saying things and the resolute authenticity that owns, overtakes the first movement as mine. Correspondingly, he disbalances the relation between significance and for-the-sake-of-which either subordinating for-the-sake-of-which to the apparent self-obviousness and seemingly self-standing character of significance, which is typical for the inauthentic understanding or subordinating significance to the resolute for-the-sake-of-which, which is typical for the authentic one. This means that the very relation between significance and for-the-sake-of-which presupposes something like instrumentalization: either it is Dasein’s ecstatic being that is self-deceptively grasped as only making sense in the context of saying and doing self-obvious things (thus, it appears to fall into *Bodenlosigkeit*, the loss of ground) or it is saying and doing things that makes sense only in the context of Dasein’s resolute being-toward-death (thus, we have Dasein who realizes and takes over its being-a-ground). To do something just out of self-obviousness means to falsely instrumentalize or subordinate Dasein’s ability-to-be to everydayness; to do something out of one’s own resoluteness means to reveal the non-self-standing, i.e., the instrumental character of everydayness. This effectively makes a difference between segments of everydayness that are pursued for their own sake and those that are pursued for the sake of something else a philosophically irrelevant distinction. What matters for early Heidegger is that both types of these segments are nothing but instruments for Dasein’s resolute ability-to-be.

Abandoning this disbalance between the significance and for-the-sake-of-which that we have been proposing so far means that the philosophical value of this distinction is restored. We could try to offer an account in the terms we have been developing in chapter three. We have claimed earlier that practice is constituted through the intertwining among possibilities that maximizes their disclosing potential and also forecloses all the alternative, non-interactive possibilities. A practice is meaningful and pursuable for its own sake, if the intertwining among possibilities has a sufficient disclosing potential, i.e., if the interaction among possibilities launches an interplay that results in the disclosure of a sufficient number of further possibilities. A meaningful practice “can and must exist without a why,”⁴⁰⁴ *ungrounded*, that is, unexplained by anything further. With instrumental practice, however, the situation seems to be the opposite. Here, intra-practical possibilities by default do not organize a sufficiently disclosive complex; the interaction among possibilities is not productive enough to disclose a sufficient

⁴⁰⁴ Heidegger *GA 10*, pp. 53-56; see also Schürmann’s commentary on this passage in *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, § 43

number of further possibilities and make a practice pursuable for its own sake. But being meaningless for its own sake does not mean, however, meaninglessness as such: it could also be seen as meaningful in terms of contributing to another constellation of possibilities, which is pursuable for its own sake. Again, this intuition that something is done *not* for the sake of itself is constitutive of the idea of instrumentality.

Let's take physical exercise as an example. The complex of involved possibilities can be hardly meaningful if taken by itself: lifting a bell makes it possible to strain the bicep muscle. The productivity of interaction among the movement of a hand, a bell and a muscle is minimal; in general, the practice of exercising consists of routine repetitions of short cycles of possibilities that do not result in the disclosure of a sufficient number of further possibilities. But the results of such a practice seem to go beyond the relative meaninglessness of its intra-practical interconnections for after I have finished the exercise, I have become stronger – no matter how insignificantly. This 'being stronger' is, strictly speaking, does not make sense in terms of the field of the exercise (What is the point of being stronger? That I would be able to lift a heavier bell? Why would I need that?). A result of such logical interconnectedness among certain possibilities can lead to the disclosure of new interactive possibilities in other fields, which would enrich other possibilities that belong to those fields and complicate its 'room-for-manoevre' – its range of possibilities that interact with and enrich one another, thus, outlining the practical space. Continuing the example(s), we can suggest that being stronger matters greatly in the context of football practice: a more developed muscle system would ease the areal duels, which would further disclose possibilities (e.g., long passing) and corresponding strategies. Thus, being strong can be seen as an *excess* of this instrumental field, an intra-practical result that finds itself implemented in further fields and binds together meaningfully the range of instrumental possibilities, which would otherwise be merely logical and meaningless. *Being strong* is a possibility that is placed on the transition between two practices, thus, approximating practices together and establishing the *infusion* of meaningfulness into the instrumental practice.

This means the disclosure/foreclosure dynamic obtains a particular form in this case. First of all, we can observe that this dynamic is still in play here: participation in target practice presupposes the foreclosure of instrumental possibilities while pursuing instrumental possibilities forecloses possibilities of target practice. When I participate in target practice, I should in principle be capable of active forgetting all the training I have gone through and pursuing the corresponding possibilities 'naturally.' This is because the possibilities of one practice do not interact productively, they are not enriched by the possibilities of the target practice; either no or few new possibilities are introduced to its room-for-manoevre. There is little, for example, that lifting a bell discloses about passing: when making a pass, I

am tracing the positions of opponents and movements of teammates, thus, actively forgetting lifting bells, placing work-related calls and everything else that is non-relevant for the current situation. Even when an instrumental practice is specifically designed to mimic some elements of target practice (as training), it is constructed specifically to prevent the interaction between the instrumental possibilities and target possibilities (e.g., a game of football that consists of passing only.)

This line of thinking might appear to be contradictive to our previous argumentation. We raised two claims in chapter three. First, we have said that an increase in meaningfulness is always a matter of *mutual enrichment*. The productivity of interaction, its ability to disclose further context-dependent possibilities that presuppose both of the *interactants*, is what seals the interaction itself and makes it meaningful. Second, we have claimed that when something is foreclosed, it is foreclosed as not interactive; in fact, the only reason why it is foreclosed is that it is not interactive and, hence, irrelevant to the current situation. So, it would seem that according to this perspective instrumental practices cannot at the same time become meaningful because of the target practice and foreclose it. From a closer perspective, however, we can notice there is no contradiction between those claims because the mutual enrichment, which seals the interactions among instrumental possibilities by disclosing further context-dependent possibilities, is simply *delayed* as it takes place in a different field. An instrumental practice discloses new possibilities *in target practice* and ensures their mutual enrichment while itself staying unaffected by this enrichment and preserving its own room-for-manoevre intact; an exercise on strength with its repetitious and merely logical room-for-manoevre discloses further possibilities in another field without changing itself. So, what makes instrumental practice meaningful, the possibilities it discloses, is not implemented in its room-for-manoevre.

The specificity of instrumental intelligibility, in such a way, implies that an instrumental practice becomes intelligible only in light of its potential foreclosure by a different field. The very meaning of those fields begs for foreclosure: they have a tendency to self-overpassing and overflowing into a different field where they would be forgotten. When I participate in an instrumental practice, I participate in an activity that will be meaningful after, when I forget about it; at the moment of participation, the meaningfulness only manifests itself as potential redemption. Instrumental practices are still seen as meaningful – but as meaningful somewhere else and somewhen later. (Thus, there is also an important difference from cognitive foreclosure, which later Heidegger runs together and which consists of foreclosing the productivity of understanding; in the case of the cognitive practice, we are talking about a meaningful, self-standing field that forgets about its own origin, whereas in case of instrumental practices we are talking about a non-self-standing field that is aware both of its own disoptimality and origin.) Based on this claim, we can better formulate this intuition of something that is done *not* for its own

sake. An instrument is something that facilitates and improves the for-the-sake-of-itself nature of meaning-relations while not itself being covered by those relations and remaining *external* to them; it essentially is a disposable ladder that is foreclosed as not belonging to the situation that it is leading to. This externality can also be described with the notion of ‘grounding.’⁴⁰⁵ If a given room-for-manoeuve is non-self-sufficient, it requires an external foundation – a *ground* – that would explain it *but that wouldn’t be explained by it*; something like a ground retains an explanatory priority and externality over what it grounds.

Later Heidegger who has himself realized that his own early instrumentalizing approach remains incorporated into the traditional philosophical narrative became convinced that the western philosophical tradition (that starts with Plato and Aristoteles⁴⁰⁶ and fails to grasp the ontological difference) employs the relation of grounding in order to explain being of entities or, as we have so far argued, their meaning. He describes the project of explaining meaning-formation via grounding as “ontotheology”⁴⁰⁷ (following our guidelines, we could also use the term meaning-theology) and sums it up in *Identity and Difference* in the following way: in a traditional perspective, he says, to ask “[t]he question ‘What is a being?’” is to simultaneously ask “Which being is the highest being, and in what sense is it the highest being? This is the question of God and of the divine.”⁴⁰⁸ Ontotheology comes in different “modes” (Prägung): the “unmoved mover,” uncaused cause, ens realissimum, Kantian subject, Will to Power⁴⁰⁹ all might be taken as this supreme being. What matters is that it presupposes essentially the same *kind* of story: investigation of being of entities, of what makes entities intelligible as what they are – their meaning – postulates an object (or an objective process) that is expected to explain beingness of other entities and processes; ontotheology seeks to “to secure” being “as the most objective of objects, as that which *is* in beings” (es gilt nur, sie als das Objektivste der Objekte, als das Seiende am Seienden, zu sichern.)⁴¹⁰ This generic form of this explanation consists of elevating one particular entity into a supreme being that ‘really is’ and then drawing connections between this supreme entity and other entities that only *are* in a derivative sense. They – ‘other entities’ – are, in other words, only in virtue of their relation to such a source or, to put it more precisely, in virtue of them having something of the supreme entity *in* them (i.e., supreme entity as something “that which is [so to say, ‘does, implements the being’] in beings”). By being restricted to a particular supreme object and objectivized, meaning

⁴⁰⁵ Following Heideggerian guidelines, we interpret grounding as a relation of meaning in the first place; we are aware that in the contemporary literature a more traditional use of the notion of grounding concerns the relation between facts and their existence/dependent existence (see, for example, Quine-Carnap debate or, for a more modern overview, Bliss and Priest “Metaphysical Dependence, East and West” or Takho and Lowe “Ontological Dependence.”)

⁴⁰⁶ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 314; *GA 5*, p. 322

⁴⁰⁷ Heidegger, *GA II*, p. 74

⁴⁰⁸ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 449

⁴⁰⁹ Heidegger, *GA II*, p. 73

⁴¹⁰ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 161/124

loses its dialogical constituent: it becomes arrested to a particular object, deprived of its pre-reflective agility and can be only ‘discovered’ (entdeckt) like all the other objects do but never ‘disclosed’ (erschlossen).⁴¹¹ As Schürmann puts it, “[i]n epochal history, the hypertrophy of one arch-present entity allows being only to be thematized as *chiefly* (literally) that entity’s being.”⁴¹²

Thus, the supreme being becomes a ground for every other being, something beyond *their* intelligibility without which they wouldn’t be what they are. In the terms we have proposed above, we could say that the meaning of most entities and events is instrumentalized. For the most part, entities are not intelligible in and of themselves but require an external foundation; a supreme entity explains other things and events without being explained by them. The methodological basis of the ontotheological project that consists of introducing this grounding element bans such categories of thinking as meaningfulness for its own sake.⁴¹³ Since the explanation of meaning-formation is pre-conceived on the ontotheological model, talking about entities, events or even practices being meaningful for their own sake – *and nothing else*, to rely on words like ‘*just*’ and ‘*merely*’ means nothing but quitting explanatory attempts. As a result of this method that sees grounding as a *principle* of explanation, an expansive exfoliation between the ‘true’ and apparent meaning is introduced: even if some field of intelligibility does not display instrumental subordination, it, in fact, must be discovered (or rather counterfeited) even at the cost of obscuring or ignoring the self-standing intelligibility of such a field. Investigating meaningfulness obtains the traits of the search for the “illusory depth,” i.e., for a deep-lying hidden foundation that stays behind meaningful appearances and explains them. The everyday meaningfulness of things and events becomes only a manifestation of the *true* reason, apparent goals become instruments for the true goal, apparent practices – for the true one, and “*alethea* comes under the yoke of the *idea*.”⁴¹⁴

The link to instrumentalization is also integral to Heidegger’s explanation of the project of ontotheology. The motive behind the subordination of meaning-formation to an objective source was to ‘master’ unconcealment” and “secure” the givenness of the world: if the primordial Greek experience of reality consisted of the sense of being claimed by what presences itself,⁴¹⁵ metaphysics starts with investigating what is ‘permanent’ about this openness, something we could be sure of and tries to subordinate the agile openness to such a permanence. Heidegger is convinced that in the course of the development of ontotheology, this subordination reveals more and more its instrumental nature reaching its culmination in Nietzschean ‘Being is nothing but value’:⁴¹⁶ according to the technological disclosure that speaks

⁴¹¹ See § 7.B of *BT* on the distinction between discovering and disclosure; discovering an entity presupposes a priori disclosure of its being

⁴¹² Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, p. 206

⁴¹³ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 161

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 232/178

⁴¹⁵ Heidegger, *GA 5*, p. 91/131.

⁴¹⁶ Heidegger, *GA 5*, p. 258/102

through the latter, things and events manifest themselves only in the context of a particular life that prescribes the corresponding ‘goods’ and ‘bads.’ Things and events are not meaningful for the sake of themselves – they only mean what they do because they are nothing but means with regard to values and specific goals that I postulate; they do not appear for the sake of themselves but for my sake as tools of my will to power. Here, the security of the givenness of the world finally gives out what it has been all along the way – the attempt to establish control over givenness with regard to the goals and desires of the ‘subject;’ the supreme object that has been staying behind the scenes of our explanation of being turns out to be no one else but *me*, the subject.

Technological disclosure treats entities as reservoirs of mere use-value. Things are nothing but the “supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such”⁴¹⁷ and my ability to make sense of the world is reduced to mean-end thinking. This disclosure challenges (*herausfordern*) entities instead of producing them in a sense of the Greek word *poesis*: the disclosure orders entities to announce themselves as useful, as serving particular goals that I pursue. Heidegger’s terms for this instrumental context of challenging within which entities occur is *Ge-stell*, pro-vision:⁴¹⁸ by ‘challenging,’ aggressively confronting entities, we find ourselves surrounded by nothing but supplies of various sorts; “[r]egulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the revealing that challenges or sets up.”⁴¹⁹ In order to demonstrate this challenge, Heidegger gives multiple examples of how entities are re-disclosed in this new technological context: “... the Rhine, for example, does not simply appear in the manner in which a natural object is regarded, but is set up and re-set (“ungestellt”) to a definite purpose, i.e., challenged in its essence.”

This instrumentalization goes hand in hand with what Heidegger describes as “*the danger*.” Progressive instrumentalization that has been expanding in scope in the course of the history of ontotheology is accompanied by the progression of the “forgetfulness of Being.” As Lowith puts it, Heideggerian ontotheology is a story of a “progressive decline (*Verfall*) on the basis of the original falling (*Verfallen*) into beings.”⁴²⁰ Heidegger observes that progressive instrumentalization proves itself corruptive for the meaningfulness of the open spaces where human beings dwell; he claims that “[m]etaphysics is history’s open space wherein it becomes a destining that the suprasensory world, the Ideas, God, the moral law, the authority of reason, progress, the happiness of the greatest number, culture, civilization, suffer the loss of their constructive force and become void. We name this decay in the

⁴¹⁷ Heidegger, *GA 7*, p. 15/p. 14

⁴¹⁸ The term *Ge-stell* is usually translated with the term framework, which we think is an suboptimal translation; the term pro-vision is a better option since it implies that something is set up as visible (*gestellt*) and at the same time is visible as an object of consumption, supply; in a sense, this term even adds an implication to Heidegger’s original term stressing that a certain instrumental grasp has pervaded our very capacity to perceive objects.

⁴¹⁹ Heidegger, *GA 7*, p. 20/p. 16

⁴²⁰ Lowith, *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism*, p. 78-79

essence of the suprasensory its disessentializing [Verwesung].”⁴²¹ The scope of instrumentalization and its encompassing power has been growing; yet the meaningfulness of open space as such has been declining. In this sense, the technological disclosure signals the complete decay of meaningfulness: our orientation in the world becomes extremely efficient but progressively hollow and unable to anchor itself.

At this point, it is not that difficult to understand where Heidegger is coming from. Plato’s disclosure of the realm of ideas has grounded the realm of appearances in the realm of ideas. Being of appearances in this context only makes sense in the light of something that forecloses them, it requires a ‘change of sight’ that would become capable of grasping something that is higher in ontological order and that would ground the lower realms. As Heidegger claims, however, Plato’s turn to ideas still has the character of “*Bildung*,” formation: the realm of ideas is still an open space that appropriates (*ereigt*) Dasein, draws it into this openness from which Dasein receives itself; Dasein is still “the one who is . . . gathered toward presencing, by that which opens itself.”⁴²² Although the movement of appropriation is not explicated by Plato in its significance and stays in the ‘unthought,’ it *takes place*. The realm of ideas is opened up as a result of an active dialogue between Dasein and Being, which is why it discloses a meaningful open space where Dasein can dwell. The maturation of the project of ontotheology in the course of *Seinsgeschichte* indicates that it becomes more and more successful in instrumentalization and mastering the appropriation – this self-formation that consists of being claimed by what reveals itself, which is typical for the “great age of the Greeks”⁴²³ In such a way, we pass from ideas to the transcendent Cristian God, then to the Cartesian subject until we reach a point where a technological man sees everything as a mere means for his already established, ‘subjective’ goals and Cartesian *Gegenstand*, an object (which despite being impoverished still retains a sense of transcendence and a certain appropriating appeal to Dasein), finds itself substituted with *Bestand*, a stock, ‘standing-reserve’ – an object that no longer requires anything from me but only gives me what I already *want* from it. As Heidegger puts it, summing up the technological culmination of ontotheology, “[i]t seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself:”⁴²⁴ since being no longer recruits and calls for Dasein, Dasein is left to itself.

But this state of being left to itself (to which the term “forgetfulness of Being” points out) is also the most radical form of alienation of Dasein – we are deprived of the most ‘human’ capacity of being claimed by Being. By instrumentalizing we are ‘passing over’ the meaning of the ‘nearest’ into the

⁴²¹ Heidegger, *GA 5*, p. 221/65

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p. 91/131

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ Heidegger, *GA 7*, p. 28/27

direction of something “underlying,” i.e., something beyond a given field. Absolute instrumentalization that manifests itself in the technological disclosure means uprooting or “killing”⁴²⁵ of Being as such since even the underlying element no longer claims Dasein but itself gets passed over; “[i]n its essence ... metaphysics is nihilism.” In the age of the technological forgetfulness of Being nothing – even our values – makes sense anymore. That is because the technological ends or values are not appropriated, they do not ‘*essence*’[verb] in any way: they are given as a *merely logical* fact instead of drawing us into the open space where we could dwell. “More essential than the institution of any rules is that man find the way into the truth of being so as to dwell there,”⁴²⁶ says Heidegger, and the technological disclosure with the plenitude of its rules fails exactly at disclosing the dwellable space where those rules can be situated. Instrumental thinking, which has become completely efficient in establishing means-ends patterns, finds itself armless in the face of the task of explaining any sort of finality. Encompassed by technological disclosure and exhausted meaningfulness of the world, a modern man forgets what he lacks and becomes himself instrumentalized⁴²⁷ being dragged into the devastating machinery of means that inflate and subordinate every possible end.

What does parting our ways with this ontotheological project mean? The most important conclusion would be to stress that the movement of grounding or instrumentalization does not explain meaning-formation and the for-the-sake-of-itself character of meaning but presupposes it. Using an instrumental frame for the analysis of meaning as such only obscures meaning-formation and threatens its gradual disappearance. Thus, “the very search for foundation” is “renounced” by Heidegger;⁴²⁸ the disclosure of meaning “founds nothing,” says Schürmann. But even though instrumentality cannot serve as such a frame, we can hardly deny the existence of the category of instrumentality, i.e., the very fact that we do rely on instruments and instrumental practices every once in a while. So, instead of denying this category, we should see instrumentality as a domain-specific case of meaning-relations: an instrumental practice does not point to the ground of meaningfulness as such but towards *its ground*, i.e., a further constellation of possibilities that itself remains meaningful *just* for its own sake. This constellation is not grounded in anything further (not even self-grounded) but can only exist as *ungrounded*, or, more precisely, as this ‘abyss’⁴²⁹ *without a ground*; it is nothing but a formal ‘something to do’ that is always at the same time ‘it could have been something else.’ This would save us from what Richir has brilliantly described as “diplopy” of the traditional metaphysics where our concentration on the visible surface of practices was methodologically linked with yet another, quasi-visible order of objectivity that

⁴²⁵ Heidegger, *GA 5*, p. 266/111

⁴²⁶ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 191/239

⁴²⁷ Heidegger, *GA 5*, p. 265/110

⁴²⁸ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, p. 81

⁴²⁹ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 174/134

would operate as a ground of the first; the task of the traditional metaphysics is defined by this goal of seeing two things at once.⁴³⁰

Heidegger's claim is neither self-contradictory nor even paradoxical contrary to what some recent commentators have argued.⁴³¹ This is because Dasein, an entity that discloses meaning, is not itself meaningful or meaningless (i.e., "meaning-giving") but *meaning-searching* (thus, it is not even a Heideggerian "*Es Gibt*"⁴³² of meaning but a constant search for such a 'there is'⁴³³). What opens up a world, claims Heidegger, is not an entity (a human or a non-human one) but a "work;"⁴³⁴ what is constitutive for a kind of entities that we are is this ecstatic work on opening up a meaningful world without imposing meaningfulness on it. We no longer lay some specific objective content at the foundation of meaning-formation, but the search for meaning and self-anchoring in the world; understood as a "beginning of positive," the "dynamic identity" between inside and outside finally straightens out the diplopy of traditional philosophy and wins back the binocularity of our sight, i.e., the ability to encounter 'as they are' or 'on their own terms' without grounding them in anything else.⁴³⁵ Thus, this 'ground' of meaning turns out to be a *shift*, a *spasm*, a *swing-like displacement* – a "passenger without a place and a place without a passenger" – that launches meaning-formation saying nothing with regard to what it could consist of exactly. This movement of the search for meaning is indeed spasmodic in nature because it does not foresee what kind of movement it will perform; it knows itself only as this sub-voluntary contraction that covers the distance the moment it grasps some distance as coverable, says things when they are sayable, wants things as long as they are wantable etc. As an ungrounded spasm, it does not involve any pre-conceived 'logic of signification'⁴³⁶ or 'common sense'⁴³⁷ but only its own "desire to be," that is, the *need* to search for signification and sense and their potential *findability*. So, what might seem like the ground at the first sight is really no ground at all but an intertwinement, a dialogical openness where Dasein only poses questions and receives answers from the unpredictable and heterogeneous world. And since this fundamental spasm of meaning-searching is itself deprived of any content, explanation of meaning-formation does no longer take the form of drawing explanatory connections between what is meaningful and what is *truly* meaningful. The place of truly meaningful is now substituted with a structural absence, a zero point of measurement, which by itself opens nothing but renders everything openable. What we investigate, in other words, is not a *transformation of meaning*, the way

⁴³⁰ Richir, "La Défenestration," p. 40

⁴³¹ See, Casati, "Heidegger's Grund: (Para-)Foundationalism," p. 299; Priest, "The Answer to the Question of Being," p. 255

⁴³² See, for example, Heidegger, *GA 10*, p. 102

⁴³³ Here we can see at its clearest how Heidegger's philosophical method necessarily arrests and stops what he wants to investigate by viewing it as a condition of possibility; we will discuss this problem more in what follows

⁴³⁴ Heidegger, *GA 5*, pp. 30, 34/41, 45.

⁴³⁵ Richir, "La Défenestration," p. 42

⁴³⁶ Foucault, *Theatrum Philosophicum*, p. 175

⁴³⁷ Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p. 119

it pours over from one meaningful domain into another, but its *birth*, the way relations between Dasein and the world are built.

Relying on this definition of Dasein as *meaning-searching*, we could clarify the repulsion that Heidegger felt towards “coarse and cheap”⁴³⁸ American Pragmatism despite all their apparent similarities,⁴³⁹ a repulsion that would likely persist had Heidegger lived long enough to get familiar with Rorty’s or Dreyfus’s brands of pragmatism. If Nietzsche was seen by Heidegger as an iconic figure in the development of western metaphysical tradition who has contributed substantially to its “closure,” Dewey has been treated as its mere symptom. American Pragmatism, no doubt, shares a crucial characteristic with Heidegger’s thought as it puts a crucial emphasis on the essential relationality of human existence. So, when Dewey claims, for example, that organic life “is a process of activity that involves an environment. It is a transaction extending beyond the spatial limits of the organism. An organism does not live in an environment; it lives by means of an environment,”⁴⁴⁰ it strikes many commentators to be co-existent with phenomenological insights regarding human existence. This appearance quickly goes away, however, once we explicate the organicist terminology that is employed by Dewey: an organism here means an entity subjected to the laws of evolutionary selection. Our ability to make sense of the world, our ‘logic’ is seen by Dewey in the context of the evolutionary process that has forged the human species; consequently, human capacities of making sense of the world can only be clarified if placed in the context of biological evolution.⁴⁴¹ As we can see meaning-formation here remains grounded in the external principle: evolutionary selection is an objective process that requires no cooperation from Dasein. It does not matter whether Dasein discloses or does not disclose evolutionary selection as meaningful, one way or another he would still be influenced by it. Fully complying with this grounding, Dewey describes his pragmatism as “instrumentalism:”⁴⁴² it instrumentalizes every human activity with regard to the goals of evolutionary selection, which were inscribed into human nature objectively without any dialogical interaction that would explain their acquisition. Thus, it becomes a perfect illustration of Heidegger’s account of technological disclosure. According to this picture, the *foundation* of our goals, in general, is always already clear: the intelligibility of the world is entirely dependent upon this objectivized ground of self-preservation that can’t be fundamentally problematized. We must only investigate how this evolutionary grounded meaning is distributed across various fields – art, cognition, religion, politics etc.

If Dewey has described his pragmatism as instrumentalism, the pragmatism that is built around Heideggerian guidelines should be rather seen as its mirror contrast – as counter-instrumentalism, which

⁴³⁸ Heidegger, *GA 46*, p. 83

⁴³⁹ See Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism: Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics*; Rorty, “Heidegger, Contingency and Pragmatism,”

⁴⁴⁰ Dewey, *The Theory of Inquiry*, p. 25

⁴⁴¹ Ratner, “The Evolutionary Naturalism of John Dewey”

⁴⁴² Dewey, *Essays in Experimental Logic*, p. 23

does not explain how to solve problems but rather how to acquire them.⁴⁴³ Over and over again, Heidegger teaches us how to belong to “essential thinking,”⁴⁴⁴ how to be “called” and taken away by the poetry of Being and, thus, how to find ourselves in the world. This kind of pragmatism emphasizes the search for determination and the contingency of the world where Dasein has managed to situate itself; the ecstatic nature of Dasein’s ability-to-be searches for ‘something to do’ in the world and assimilating, appropriating the contingency of the world as ‘one’s own.’ It is not the *means* that should be of interest to such a pragmatism but the disclosure and acquisition of the spacious extension between means and ends, the room-for-manoeuvre where Dasein can dwell: for the most part – and this is something that becomes most obvious in games and their clearly expressed for-the-sake-of-themselves character – ends don’t mean a thing without means and means without ends because what is constitutive of meaning is not a particular goal but the corrugated environment where Dasein’s ability-to-be can be maximized. First and foremost, this environment, which is mottled by the possibilities up to the extent it becomes possible to manoeuvre in it, is not a place where something “is being produced or acted . . . [b]ut rather something is being endured and supported.” As such, claims Agamben, it “opens the sphere of ethos [in a sense of an accustomed place, habitat] as the more proper sphere of that which is human.”⁴⁴⁵ Thus, conceived, counter-instrumental pragmatism methodologically refuses to subordinate intra-contextual goals to the “fundamental telos” and, by doing this, it wins back the “visibility of means”⁴⁴⁶ by reconnecting them to the self-standing intelligibility of one’s own dwelling place.

In order to be formulated, however, this pragmatism must also dispense with Heidegger in one important point. We should acknowledge that the difficulties that his system has struggled with (we have outlined them in section 3.ii.a-b) haven’t gone anywhere – Heidegger’s position still relies on the methods and techniques of transcendental thinking that eventually entangle it in contradictions. This is because Heidegger can only renounce the tendency to situate intelligibility beyond things themselves and any kind of the ‘search for the foundation’ while still subscribing to the methodological strategy that by default forces him to search for the condition of possibility, a *fundamental explainer* that would explain without being explained. Heidegger is forced, at least on this methodological level, to hold the externality of being with regard to beings; being (Sein) explains beings (Seinende) while itself being severed by this specific version of Heidegger’s phenomenological reduction⁴⁴⁷ that views the former as a condition of possibility of the latter. Consequently, he never manages to uncouple the problematics of

⁴⁴³ Compare this line of thinking with Deleuze’s *Logic of Sense* that proclaims something like problems and conflicts as a constitutive element of meaning (i.e. ‘sense’) rather than a subjective appearance that is fundamentally resolvable; see *Logic of Sense*, p. 122

⁴⁴⁴ Heidegger, *GA 65*, p. 21/15

⁴⁴⁵ Agamben, *Means Without End*, p. 56

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁷ Heidegger, *GA 24*, p. 29/21; see also Schürmann’s commentary on the methodological significance of reduction in later Heidegger and his late notion of *epoch*, pp. 20 and most notably 78-80

ground and the problematics of being at times unambiguously holding their identity (“Being ‘is’ in essence: ground.”)⁴⁴⁸ Instead, he arrives at contradictory notion of ‘being’ that is conceived as a non-foundational foundation or “ungrounded ground:” being, says Heidegger, grounds beings while itself not being grounded in anything further. Heidegger, thus, only escapes instrumentalizing and objectivizing intelligibility of entities by postulating this paradoxical ground-that-is-no-longer-a-ground, ground as *grounding* in a sense of pure relation of explanation, thus, avoiding the traditional explanatory content (i.e., postulating some specific explanatory element at the foundation of intelligibility (e.g., unmoved mover, evolutionary selection etc.)) but not the traditional explanatory form that admits the *need for* the foundational element. As a result, he constantly finds himself tore apart by contradictory impulses: on the one hand, he systematically tries to think things in their radical meaningfulness and self-standing character of their intelligibility; on the other, he was constantly lured into grasping this self-standing intelligibility as *their* condition. At the end of the day, we must acknowledge that Heidegger fails to conceptualize the sense of belonging of intelligibility to what is intelligible, the sense of dependence of being on beings (some interprets even misleadingly try to attribute this claim to Heidegger himself.)⁴⁴⁹ Having recognized this dependence, we will see that the intelligibility of entities, first and foremost, does not appear as *their* ground but indicates a lack of a ground, *being without a ground*.

A more concrete manifestation of this methodological contradiction consists of Heidegger’s inability to fully elaborate the opposition to instrumental disclosure; he is still unable to grasp instrumentality as a distinct type of meaning-relations that might co-exist with other categories. If early Heidegger treats instrumentalization of everyday intelligibility as a necessary constituent of resolute disclosure that manifests truth about Dasein, his later approach requalifies instrumentality into an optional epochal world-disclosure. *De facto*, however, the later approach leaves the instrumental relation to the world just as inescapable as the early one. Since *Ereignis* that brings about the technological disclosure is indeed “unhistorical or more precisely without destiny,”⁴⁵⁰ it stays unclear how we can escape instrumental thinking, what *exactly* are we expected to do in order to think differently and how we can formulate something like counter-instrumental disclosure. With his notion of ontological difference and corresponding criticism of the philosophical tradition, Heidegger might have done enough to renounce instrumentality as a frame for explaining meaning-formation. At the same time, however, neither he offers a consistent account of how to avoid instrumental disclosure, nor specifies sufficiently what such an alternative disclosure would consist of. Thus, we can again agree with Gadamer’s diagnosis claiming that

⁴⁴⁸ Heidegger, *GA 10*, p. 76

⁴⁴⁹ McDaniel, “Heidegger and the “there is” of Being”; Priest, “The Answer to the Question of Being”

⁴⁵⁰ Heidegger, *GA 14*, p. 50/41

Heidegger's "radical deepening of forgetfulness of being in the age of technology ... leads to a sort of "eschatological expectation in thought of a turnabout;"⁴⁵¹ this eschatology is an important sign of conceptual shortage, a dead-end of Heidegger's methodological system.

In this sense, Rorty's criticism of Heidegger proves to be quite apt. Heidegger, claims Rorty, has never managed to shake off the pathos of a philosophy professor who can only see philosophy around him "...he never really looked outside of philosophy books." "[W]hat Heidegger wanted," he continues "— something that was not a calculation of means to ends, not power madness — was under his nose all the time."⁴⁵² Were Heideggerian philosophy less self-righteous, less stiff with regard to the public world and decided to explore something beyond its Black Forest cabin, it could have appreciated the positive significance of practical life and the almost bottomless creative potential of our everydayness. Having done so, his thinking could have realized that the only place where *Seinsvergessenheit* really took place was the cognitive field. *First and foremost*, comedians do not pursue any goals other than *just* getting a few laughs, works of art are created *just* because they are beautiful and games are played *just* because they are fun; each of those situation practices presupposes both the for-the-sake-of-itself character of their meaningfulness and Dasein's creative self-awareness, i.e., a pre-reflective understanding that without the corresponding questioning of the world, nothing would show up as jokes, art or games. These practices are not miraculous exceptions that for some reason survive in the midst of the dominant, all-grinding technological disclosure but a constitutive part of everydayness that peacefully co-exist with cognitive disclosures of all sorts. Our everyday life is filled with practices that are pursued for their own sake and even the darkest days of *Seinsgeschichte* cannot overshadow this fact. It is the intellectualistic interpretation of those practices that has long suffered from the conceptual inability to appreciate their pre-reflective finality and for-the-sake-of-itself character of their meaningfulness (inability that has concerned even the self-interpretation of practical agents themselves). And only because cognitive disclosure is not all-encompassing is it possible to formulate something like the notion of *Seinsvergessenheit*, all the more to escape it. The most astounding paradox of Heideggerian philosophy consists of the fact that this thinking, which has renounced the title of philosophy in order to be a doctrine of openness, has failed to do exactly this — to be open and attentive so it could learn from the world.

A pragmatic Heideggerianism that we are trying to develop in those sections has learned to be attentive to everydayness; as a result, it comes into possession of a new conceptual tool that follows from drawing the ontological difference, which has evaded Heidegger himself. After immersing in the burgeoning life of practices and the density of the intertwining of their possibilities, we could rec-

⁴⁵¹ Gadamer, *Neuere Philosophie I: Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger*, p. 96/109; also, *Wahrheit und Methode*, p. 412/512;

⁴⁵² Rorty, Heidegger, *Contingency, and Pragmatism*, p. 526

ognize that enrichment and productivity constitute the criterion of meaning-formation, thus, substituting Heidegger's eschatological openness to alternative disclosure (see 3.ii.b for a more detailed discussion) with the pragmatic generation of meaning. Meaning-relations are only analysable in terms of the *sheer productivity* of human understanding: only the productivity of interaction can fasten *interactants together* in a meaningful bond. Thus, we can no longer claim that "there must at least be as much reality in the efficient and total cause as in its effect,"⁴⁵³ as Descartes has famously formulated it. (Or one could go even further and recall Aristotle's fundamental claim according to which "where there is no first term, there is no explanation at all"⁴⁵⁴) When it comes to the analysis of meaning-formation every cause becomes inefficient because meaning-relations presuppose the continuous enrichment, the positive irreducibility of each step with regard to the preceding one. Every step thus becomes *ungrounded* existing, indeed, 'without why' and being pursued just for the sake of itself. And since every meaningful interaction includes such irreducibility to the previous step, no meaning-relations can be ignored, explained away or reduced to something else – they can only be relocated or specified but never done away as 'mere manifestations' of something more primal.

⁴⁵³ Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, p. 15

⁴⁵⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics II*, 2, 994 a 19 f., p. 713

II. Integrative Practices

The discussion of instrumental practices, however, remains limited in scope. It only shows us that the question of hanging together of different practices in a context of cultural *Lichtung* should not lure us into searching for the *illusory depth*, a deep-lying ground that would cement practices together. Accounting for the specific unity of this ancient Wittgensteinian city and the structural impact that it has upon its particular streets and areas should acknowledge the ungrounded character of practices and the self-standing nature of their intelligibility. In what follows, we will try to explain this surface unity of disparate fields by appealing to the special type of praxis that we might describe as *integrative*: integrative practices are practices that include possibilities that are placed at the heart of cultural life displaying massive interconnections with other practical fields. Religious, economic, linguistic, political practices (to mention the most obvious examples) never situate us in a single practical field but introduce us to the very density of cultural life making little sense without such interconnectedness.

The plan for the section is relatively straightforward. As a starting point, we will use Sartre's example of a pilot who rebels against racial oppression, which he offers in his book *Search for a Method* and his particular, Marxist-inspired interpretation of it. We will see that Sartre's attempt to account for the fundamental impact of the cultural space (what he describes with the term 'power of circumstances') lands dangerously close to a simple proclamation of one particular, economic practice as fundamental and, thus, falls back into explaining meaning-formation based on prioritizing a particular segment of meaning instead of problematizing meaning-relations as such. After this, we will switch to another extreme that can be found, for example, in Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* that no doubt escapes the problem of confusing disclosed meaning and disclosure of meaning, what is given and what is giving. Later Heidegger is careful enough to distinguish *fundamentality as a relation of meaning* and *particular cases of fundamentality*; his reflections on the fundamental impact of the cultural space, the general context of what we do and think, are based on emphasizing the *aprioristic* aspect⁴⁵⁵ of such an impact, its 'always been there before' any particular, intra-worldly confrontation, and thus, its irreducibility to anything intra-worldly. A by-product of his over-emphasis on the pure relation of enabling (as we have already seen in a different context) consists of placing this fundamental impact beyond any practical influences and treating it as a one-sided enabling force, which is what eventually leaves us clueless with regard to how and why it develops. Trying to avoid both of those extremes – that of falling into treating meaning as an intra-worldly category and viewing it as immune to intra-worldly influences – we will elaborate an account of integratory possibilities that would be irreducible to any particular set of practices and but that would be also exposable to intra-worldly influences and motivations.

⁴⁵⁵ See Heidegger *GA 9/On the Essence of Ground*; also, *GA 24/ The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*

So, let's first return to Sartre. In his *Progressive-Regressive Method*, Sartre describes an incident that took place in London when it was still prohibited for the black population from obtaining a position of a military pilot: a black man steals a fighter plane rebelling against the discrimination, crosses *La Manche* and crashes. While analysing this situation, Sartre breaks it down into two aspects – the “subjective” and “particular refusal” of a pilot who is unable to fulfil his project of being a pilot and an “objective” and “general revolt”⁴⁵⁶ of the black population against oppression. This newly introduced into Sartrean account division between subjective and objective was meant to serve as a remedy for the unconstrained nature of human freedom that can be found in *Being and Nothingness*; by stressing the generality, Sartre is trying to account for the “power of circumstances”⁴⁵⁷ that are no longer irrelevant to our freedom. If his earlier account of facticity (i.e., the power of circumstances) presupposed that facticity obtains its constraining or, on the contrary, enabling meaning only on the basis of one's own original project (e.g., a mountain is too high for me because I do not see myself as a climber,)⁴⁵⁸ now Sartre wants to stress how those general conditions meaning of which we have not chosen influence and shape the individual choice.

Combining this new element with his crucial emphasis on the irreducibly free character of human existence requires a complicated balancing act. Sartre retains the basic claim according to which human existence, which he now describes in terms of praxis rather than consciousness, is, essentially, freedom; it is a “passage from objective to objective through internalization.”⁴⁵⁹ A human being takes up or appropriates (i.e., “internalize”) external circumstances by spontaneously projecting them with regard to his goals; “the extent to which we freely interiorize” values and meanings, says Sartre, is “by transcending them in a free action.”⁴⁶⁰ The raw externality of the world can only impact human freedom if this freedom itself sanctions this impact by using it as a material for the realization of its freedom; at the same time, human freedom itself requires something like the raw externality of the world in order to realize itself. Thus, Sartre defines a human being as a “joint necessity of internalization of the external and externalization of the inner.”⁴⁶¹ On the other side, Sartre also stresses that this joint necessity includes an appeal to “the real and permanent future which the collectivity forever maintains and transforms:”⁴⁶² only because a given society produces and sustains a certain number of possibilities can they serve as a foundation to my project; without this social groundwork, my own possibility turns into impossibility of a certain future. My free projection, in such a way, is only an “enrichment of a social pos-

⁴⁵⁶ Sartre, *Search for a Method*, p. 95 (Henceforth, *SM*)

⁴⁵⁷ Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, p. 33

⁴⁵⁸ For this, see most clearly the chapters on freedom of *Being and Nothingness* (esp. “Being and Doing: Freedom”)

⁴⁵⁹ Sartre, *SM*, p. 97

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 94

sible.”⁴⁶³ That is why human action at the same time “cuts across the social milieu,” transforms the general situation into a personal project and “hold[s] on to its [milieu’s] determinations...;”⁴⁶⁴ a personal project transcends the general situation and affirms it at the same time. In this sense, the embeddedness into a historical situation renders man a “product of history,” a product of the historical development of a given community.

We must also understand, however, that the meaningful situation where I find myself in and which seems to be independent of me and resistant to my attempts of changing it (something Sartre describes with his famous term “practico-inert”) is, in fact, also a product of collective freedom. The general dependency upon my historical situation is not a dependency upon some causal factor but a token of my participation in history, which is “the proper work of all activity and of all men.”⁴⁶⁵ Sartre places at the core of our particular projects the general drama of humankind that consists of the “dialectic in the relation of men with nature, with ‘the starting conditions’ and in the relation of men with one another.”⁴⁶⁶ Not only do particular, subjective projects take place within the frame of the general project; the particular attempts to satisfy our needs are themselves particularizations of the general dialectics of intersubjective praxis of satisfying needs as such. My particular project carries with it the tasks and contradictions of the general one. Equipped with Sartrean “progressive-regressive method,” we can investigate how exactly the general project progresses into a particularized, concrete project and how the concrete project can be regressed back to its general situation – we can investigate how the general struggle for the right to satisfy one’s own needs and gain respect from others is particularized into a rebellion of a pilot.

It would seem, however, that Sartre’s account has never brought his own basic principle to completion and, thus, remains insufficient. Having formulated the classical phenomenological maxima according to which human existence is at the same time interiorization of the external and the externalization of the inner and having started with intertwinement between subject and the world, Sartre nonetheless preserves an objectivized pattern inscribed in the midst of interiorization/exteriorization dynamics, a particular cohesion between subject and object that is considered as fundamental. Namely, by introducing the hopelessly unsustainable differentiation between desires (which can be changed volitionally) and needs (which cannot be changed since they stand for our essential dependency upon the external world (e.g., our dependency on food, oxygen etc.)) and by treating the ‘struggle with the start-

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p. 95

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 91

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 89

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 99

ing conditions,' *our real needs* as a grounding principle of particular projects,⁴⁶⁷ he puts on hold the investigation of the logic of interpenetration between external and internal, the pre-reflexive point of their encounter and settles instead with the common-sensual account of basic needs that fuels his account of 'History.' The factual indispensability of such things as water, oxygen, human companionship (i.e., our struggle with starting conditions) and *their logical status* of the condition of possibility of more 'higher-order' projects (of course, we wouldn't do philosophy unless our needs in oxygen is secured), makes it possible for Sartre to *eschew the question of how and why something like a need is acquired in the first place*. Instead of investigating openness as a precondition of acquiring any need (which is an assumption that is presupposed by the pairing of terms "exteriorization of the inner, interiorization of the external" and in general by the phenomenological method that seeks to exorcise any kind of 'taking for granted' no matter how obvious the granted is), he relies on this factual indispensability of a project that has already been acquired; based on those projects that have been already acquired he further explains accepting other, more particular and volitional projects. In this sense, the whole thematic of acquisition, the very phenomenon of intertwining between the subject and the object, is just as absent as in his earlier account.⁴⁶⁸

For this reason, Sartre can only escape the voluntarism of his early "rationalist philosophy of consciousness"⁴⁶⁹ by means of mechanic mediating of human freedom by what he considers to be the 'objective,' general situation. Instead of investigating how the passive, constraining element of human praxis, which consists of the necessary confrontation with and mediation by the objective "scarcity" of the world, is appropriated by human praxis, he settles with an analysis of how human praxis is realized under the condition of passivity. In other words, Sartre doesn't see this passive element as a constitutive feature of the way Dasein settles in the world – he sees it as a purely negative factor, which is supposed to be dialectically eliminated in the course of history; he ascribes inertia to the human freedom as a sort of a dead weight that only burdens and slows it down. As a result, Sartre is methodologically forced to trace and link (to "regress") every particular project to what is conceived by him as this element of passivity, a particular project of struggling against the nature in which we always already participate. So, although Sartre, of course, is adamant in stressing that particular existential projects are irreducible to their objective conditioning ("not every bourgeois is Flaubert"), he is still convinced that those projects are non-self-sufficient and require a grounding principle in another project that is somehow more fundamental than others. This grounding here is no longer a phenomenological work of describing instrumental fields that require such a grounding according to their own intelligibility, but a logical work of

⁴⁶⁷ Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, p. 80

⁴⁶⁸ See, for example, Wikerson, "Time and Ambiguity: Reassessing Merleau-Ponty on Sartrean Freedom"

⁴⁶⁹ Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, p. 41

complementing fields because they *must* be complemented and sourced back to the general situation one way or another.

Thus, we can see over and over again that Sartre's way of explaining meaning-formation consists of drawing connections between one segment of meaning – a particular project – and another – a general project in which every particular project takes place. The general project of struggling with our starting conditions obtains its status of an objectified ground of meaningfulness: its meaningfulness is not a matter of disclosure, i.e., of Dasein's ability to search for and disclose meaningful situations. On the contrary, it is Dasein's ability to disclose particular projects and practical spaces in the world takes place within the context of our need to struggle with nature and meet its own needs in which we participate one way or another. So, instead of concentrating on how we disclose projects, Sartre violently inscribes us into a specific project which he takes to be more fundamental. We can see the implications of this move in Sartre's own examples. A pilot lives out his particular project as a "personal obsession" without "clear awareness"⁴⁷⁰ of his general situation; this project, however, makes sense only "against the background" of the general dialectics. An actor might imagine himself as Hamlet, whereas 'in reality' he is trying to "earn his living, ... [and] win fame;" it is this "*real* activity defines his position in society."⁴⁷¹ The ambiguousness of Flaubert's writings represents "the struggle of the former landowners against the purchasers of national property and the industrial bourgeoisie."⁴⁷² This occasional rhetoric of 'really' real motives of (or even behind) our actual situation shows us once again Sartre's way of avoiding voluntarism of his early conception consists of at least partial subordination of the disclosure of intelligibility to a particular disclosure of intelligibility ('general situation'), a move that leads Sartre back to the metaphysical tradition and undermines the ontological difference.

This Sartrean backslide can be contrasted with Heidegger's late philosophy of *Ereignis*, which prefers to occupy another extreme when it comes to the explanation of a structural aspect of a particular disclosure. When discussing Heraclitus's aphorism in *Letter on Humanism*, Heidegger writes that one's own dwelling place (*Aufenthalt*) "lets appear" to what "befits" ("zukommt") or touches upon human essence and what stays in proximity as "mattering;"⁴⁷³ "[m]an's dwelling place contains and guards the arrival of that to which man belongs in his essence."⁴⁷⁴ This Heideggerian emphasis aligns with what we have been claiming so far: the ecstatic essence of human *Da-sein* consists of settling in the world. It is our home – understood maximally broadly as 'being-in' – that gives and shelters our possi-

⁴⁷⁰ Sartre, *SM*, p. 96

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 58

⁴⁷³ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 354/256

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

bilities of being; *who* am I, my own ‘essence’ lies in my existential place, the distances that I deploy.⁴⁷⁵ Losing one’s own home, the state of “homelessness,” then, amounts to nothing less than losing ourselves, i.e., to a de-essentialized and deficient way of being that is doomed to live in a shadow of what it has lost. *Letter*, however, says more than just this – it says that such belonging to one’s own habitat also presupposes something that Heidegger describes as “proximity to gods.” Handily narrowing the meaning of “home” from ‘being-in’ down to its everyday use, he places us within four unremarkable walls, near the most ordinary fireplace right before laying out his paradoxical: “here, also, gods are present.” In getting warm near the fireplace, in usual raising the cup “mortals and Gods” are “present.”⁴⁷⁶ Even here, in the midst of everyday routine, sacred, the meaningful retains its presence and illuminates, lights up our being-in-the-world. This presence is what “deploys the essence of Man in living in the truth of Being.”⁴⁷⁷

Now, Heidegger, in a sense, puts forward quite a straightforward claim: understanding spoons as spoons and chairs as chairs always happens in a wider cultural context that always presupposes something like pillars of intelligibility. It is our fundamental understanding of Being – of what *are* things and who *Dasein* *is* and how they intertwine in the event of appropriation of Being that illuminates and enables our everyday being-in-the-world. Only because at the centre of disclosure lies a fundamental understanding of what to do and how to be, of where we are going and what is near and dear to our hearts – in a word, the “sacred” – can everyday “ordinary” entities step out of their concealment as something that can potentially ‘move’ us. To investigate an epochal understanding, in such a way, would amount to opening up “the epochal horizon where a principle reigns and to trace the law that it imposes, from its ascension through its withering away.”⁴⁷⁸ We can approach spoons as spoons only because they belong to the circle of *Ereignis*. Without the latter, spoons are *merely* spoons – they are nothing but an empty logical gesture in a world where nothing really means anything anymore. If we finally manage to ‘kill Being,’ eating with a spoon (or anything else) would mean as much as preying to Zeus or eating rocks. Heideggerian ‘gods,’ mysterious and obscure at the first sight, stand exactly for this fundamental ability to be affected by certain segments of the world,⁴⁷⁹ i.e., to disclose certain segments of the world as profoundly and not merely logically mattering.

The crucial thing to stress here is that this ability to be profoundly affected or appropriated by being is not itself something that can be caused by beings or something that is contained in them – *it is*

⁴⁷⁵ Heidegger, *GA 9*, pp. 137-143/107-112

⁴⁷⁶ Heidegger, *GA 7*, p. 175/170

⁴⁷⁷ Heidegger, *GA 9*, p. 358/260

⁴⁷⁸ Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, p. 79

⁴⁷⁹ Heidegger, *GA 54*, p. 106/157

a gift and can only be realized in a “creative projection,”⁴⁸⁰ (schaffenden Entwurf) a most primordial form of which we find in poetry. Unnecessitated and unexpected, the gift as this creative projection gives a “word” to beings, i.e., shows us what they can mean “for the first time”⁴⁸¹ while itself being nothing like *a* being. The ‘epochal principles’ that are ‘holding sway’ only demonstrate the ontological difference with greater insistency: since meaning-relations are themselves under-determined with regard to what they reveal but operate as a condition of possibility of any revelation, the organization core of such relations must be seen as manifesting this unnecessitated and unpredictable character of the gift. Here, we are dealing with the ontological difference at its purest, a gift that owes no explanation neither with regard to *who* gives nor to *what* is gifted, a pure unexplainable relation of giving (which is a line of thinking, theological implications of which has been developed by Marion).⁴⁸² Realizing this fundamental unexplainability of *Ereignis*, Young speaks aptly about the attitude of the “cosmic gratitude” that hides behind Heidegger’s usage of such terms as ‘gods;’⁴⁸³ the gratitude is the only attitude left to us when no explanation is possible. We can see, in such a way, that Heidegger’s conception represents an important step ahead in comparison to Sartre conception: unlike the former, Heidegger manages to think thoroughly the very idea of fundamentality: fundamentality only appears in the context of disclosure, not otherwise. Fundamentality remains a relation of meaning, not a limitation imposed on meaning-formation.

We must keep in mind, however, that this Heideggerian advance in holding meaning and entities apart comes at a price so great that it sometimes makes Sartrean position look preferable. As we have seen, Heidegger’s search for the purity of ontological difference, for the ultimate condition that gives, in the end, makes it impossible to ascribe any kind of content or criterion to it (or even to formulate it as a problem). Heidegger, so to say, refuses to draw blood vessels to his notion of *Ereignis* and establish a supply system that would feed and animate this notion demonstrating how it occurs and evolves in the course of everydayness. As we have seen above, this move, contrary to Heidegger’s best intention, forces *Ereignis* to operate like a ground of the traditional philosophy in a sense of a fundamental explainer that is not explained back by anything else; by proclaiming this *functional ground* as an “abyss of a ground”⁴⁸⁴ Heidegger’s thought only gets entangled in contradictions. The vocabulary of the divine, in this sense, might be read as Heidegger’s acknowledgment of this problem. For this vocabulary foreshadows exactly this: building our relation to disclosure based on the rhetorical model of our relation to the divine makes the jump over the question of interactivity and human responsibility look

⁴⁸⁰ Heidegger, *GA 5*, p. 58/43

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60/45

⁴⁸² Marion, *Being Given*, Book II, esp. §§ 10-11

⁴⁸³ Young, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Art*, p. 105.

⁴⁸⁴ See 3.ii.b of this work

almost natural. Whereas a more consistent account would call for a criterion of *Ereignis*, Heidegger, so to say, eliminates this need by building rhetorically building an associative array that does not leave any place for any kind of feedback that individuals might have.

The productivity, style and convincing power of his account revolve around *the way* he formulates his claims, the particular *ring* they have, which, indeed, sometimes has more to do with poetical bewitchment rather than with the sobriety of a philosophical argument. Criticizing Heidegger, simplifying his claims cannot but feel like *sacrilege*, like *breaking rules* that Heidegger has masterfully yet inconspicuously implanted exactly because the reference to ‘divine’ is not a mere metaphor: functionally, it acquires the actual status of a ‘supernatural’ force. Heidegger relies on the *magical* status of the sacredness of things without actually saying anything magical; he draws a strict line between the ordinary and the supernatural and then expects the supernatural to explain the ordinary *out of nothing* having preliminarily burned every possible bridge between them in order to maintain its status of the supernatural. The charm and convincing power of Heidegger’s approach is a result of a carefully honed strategy that weaves this religious element into the philosophical daily grind and says exactly as much as it needs in order to stay in the philosophical field without lapsing into a theological one. Leaving aside this tacit theological background of Heidegger’s work, however, we are confronted with the major difficulty that is placed right at the centre of his account.

The inadequacies of those accounts – both Sartre’s and Heidegger’s – outline the two extremes between which a more satisfactory account should fit. When developing our account of integratory practices, which is supposed to supply us with an answer of how and way practices are gathered together in a cultural space, we should be careful enough not to ascribe this status to a particular practice, thus, backsliding into the traditional thinking of grounds. At the same time, however, we should also abstain from going too far in that direction and saying that integratory practices one-sidedly explain further practices being constrained by nothing else but by the power of its own ‘creative projection.’ Proceeding to this analysis, let us first return to Sartre’s example, which we can try to reconceptualise in the terms we have been developing so far. From this standpoint, the above-described rebellion of the pilot does not represent a subjective realization of the objective, general project but rather *a point of intersection* between situations each of which is meaningful for its own sake. The person in question seems to pursue at the same time a military possibility of piloting that is meaningful for its own sake and a political possibility⁴⁸⁵ of emancipation that can hardly be seen as an instrumental possibility of any sort. And as we have claimed in chapter 3.i, possibilities can interact only insofar they enrich each other, i.e., *only*

⁴⁸⁵ It needs to be stressed that an analysis of what political praxis is lies out of the scope of this work; using the reference to this practice only for the sake of an example, we can simply refer to *de facto* existing practice of gaining, exercising and redistribution of power that consists of the diverse range of possibilities ranging from protesting to government meetings

insofar they establish a certain room-for-manoevre disclosing further, context-dependent possibilities that inherently presuppose other possibilities. This means that by interacting with the political praxis, piloting (or, speaking more widely, a family of military practices) becomes *more* meaningful just like the praxis of emancipation becomes *more* meaningful being linked to the practice of piloting. What would such an enrichment consist of?

First, it seems obvious that political possibilities (in our case, the possibility of emancipation) restructure and enrich the military practice. To start with, the introduction of the possibility of political protest makes the possibility of disobedience (more) meaningful: a field that is normally based on the strict hierarchy and obedience now includes a meaningful way of neglecting orders and acting against basic rules and norms if they go against the fundamental principles of political organization. Needless to say, this profoundly restructures the relations between a superordinated and a subordinated: there is no doubt that the system of moves available to the superordinated would be restructured if he recognizes in the subordinated a political agent even if only a potential one. Furthermore, such possibilities as protest, heroism, duty, honour that constitute a crucial part of military practices are all tied to the sense of publicity that is introduced by interaction with the political praxis. Thus, the political possibilities motivate substantial revision and complication of military room-for-manoevre. Conversely, we can ask what would be left of political praxis if the fight for equality among the military is removed from it? Sure, plenty of political possibilities would be left intact but political praxis would still be – even if slightly – impoverished since the existence of oppression, as unfortunate as it is, gives us this ‘something political to do,’ i.e., it supplies a new dimension where political praxis can be realized. It would make *less* sense to participate in political life if such a dimension is missing. (In this sense, people like Agamben receive a certain ground for their suspicion assuming that the political system might artificially ‘stir up’ the problematic situation, “the emergency” in order to make sense of itself.⁴⁸⁶) So, eventually, it is not that important whether a person who is located at this point of intersection among practices is a pilot who has been forced to a political protest or a politician who is generating political capital by fighting injustice and discrimination among the military. What matters is that the interaction between practices, piloting and politics indicates mutual enrichment.

We can easily agree with Sartre that the relative importance of those two practices is different. We should, however, explicate this difference in a way different from Sartre’s way by stressing that military practice might represent a disclosively rich practice, but its full intelligibility is normally accessible only to its participants. Outsiders and non-professionals are likely to have a vague and general image of

⁴⁸⁶ Agamben, *Means Without Ends*, p. 6

this field since military possibilities are foreclosed as non-relevant by the possibilities non-participants are typically pursuing. We can assume that non-participants are not normally motivated to learn how to disclose room-for-manoeuvres that can situate military possibilities; the possibilities they find meaningful do not lead them to a military field. When it comes to political possibilities, however, the situation is different: the most significant political possibilities, by the very definition, tend to retain their meaningfulness for participants of various practical fields even if they are not professional inhabitants of the political field. This is because various practitioners are capable of expressing such possibilities in terms of the fields they participate and viewing them as relevant to their intra-practical possibilities. Take, for example, the discussed possibility of fighting against the ideology of apartheid. It seems obvious that the oppression pours over the political practice in a narrow sense finding itself anchored in artistic practices, on the streets and public places, in medical facilities and banks; oppression is not encountered, first and foremost, by politicians, but by pilots, doctors, patients, loaners and renters. The possibility of resistance finds itself equally anchored in the multitude of situations being enriched by various complexes of possibilities (e.g. fighting oppression as a possibility of being a pilot, as a possibility of receiving professional medical care, as a possibility of getting a cheap loan etc.) So, in this sense, we might agree that the political situation is more “general” than a military one because it obtains a sort of universality across various fields.

Now, Sartre was convinced that this generality is known as particular:⁴⁸⁷ individual actors do not have to be aware of their general situation even though this situation shapes and influences their particular projects. The generality is only accessible through the cognitive reconstruction based on the progressive-regressive method; as such, it is restricted to the cognitive domains such as philosophy and history. Contrary to Sartre’s approach, we might claim that the intelligibility of ‘generality’ conceived as *wider hanging together of different situations*, first and foremost, does not include intellectualistic reconstruction but presupposes a specific type of intelligibility that is given to an individual. Namely, it implies the specific *resonance* across the variety of different practical fields, which we could describe as “saturation,”⁴⁸⁸ borrowing a term from Marion. Because the same political possibilities enrich and are enriched by the multitude of incompatible, incommensurable rooms-for-manoeuvre, thus, becoming a *topos* of multiple zones of influence, integral possibilities offer an “overwhelming”⁴⁸⁹ amount of intuition exactly because their intelligibility cannot be squeezed into the same context. When situated in a specific field, a saturated possibility retains an excess that is not expressible in terms of intra-contextual possibilities; as poly-contextual, it is given exactly as this constant and elusive shift from one situation

⁴⁸⁷ Sartre, *SM*, p. 96

⁴⁸⁸ Marion, *Being Given*, §20

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 90

into the other, an echo that reverberates among them and indicates that it is always more to a given saturated possibility that is currently given. A saturated possibility, in other words, *compresses* the multitude of forms of life in a single saturated spot and overwhelms us by *rippling* from one situation to another instead of being restricted to a single field. So, the political possibility of fighting for one's own dignity, for example, refers us to the dignity of a parent *and* of a citizen *and* of a doctor *and* of a banker *and* of a police officer etc. Conversely, losing dignity signifies structural damage inflicted across a great variety of fields conveying the 'general' sense of worthlessness, which is easily recognizable by any member of a given community.

Another way to grasp this 'general situation' in terms of pre-reflective experience refers us not to Marion but to Merleau-Ponty and his analysis of 'style.' A style, he says, is a "pre-conceptual generality,"⁴⁹⁰ a generality that does not refer us to a general type that would be instantiated, recognized in particulars, but signifies coordination of particulars, which are unified into the same raw row or a sequence. This specific unification is based on a "principle" or "system of equivalences:"⁴⁹¹ it becomes possible for us to recognize two different perceptual fields as members of the same 'family' when they start displaying a certain similarity in their dynamics, in the way those they unfold and maintain themselves, thus, obtaining a certain, yet still non-conceptual overlap. Merleau-Ponty's example here is two different artworks that depict their corresponding objects in a way that involves the same intra-contextual pattern as a 'system of equivalences' – a *possibility* of being expressed through the particular technic of brushstrokes – which is an aspect that makes them recognizable as works of a particular author. This recognition is at first inaccessible as a cognitive generalization of the same generic characteristic, which is present in two particulars; it would require a great amount of intellectual work to explicate what exactly the similarity consists of. But the intuitive recognition of this similarity is given intuitively nonetheless and requires no such work to be done before. So, deploying the system of equivalences within different fields (e.g., picturing two objects using the same technique) means performing a simultaneous shift that restructures them in a similar way and approximates them to one another without transforming them into the same type of something. It would be infinitely impoverishing, for example, to treat Van Gogh's "Starry Night" and "Irises" as mere instantiations of the same type of technique. It is because Van Gogh's bold and rapid brush strokes at the same time gouge into the shining blueness of the night and breathe murmur into the flowers, because they find themselves intimate with two different situations and capable of speaking of two different languages that we obtain the pre-reflective grasp on

⁴⁹⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *The Prose of the World*, footnote to p. 44

⁴⁹¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, p. 55

the tacit similarity between the two paintings even before we manage to seize the common for them generic pattern.

The second term Merleau-Ponty uses to explain the phenomenon of style is even more important: he also talks about a system of “coherent deformations” that unifies different fields. Here, we are not talking about the principle – even less the rule – that would be applicable to different contexts. Rather, Merleau-Ponty indicates that when a style permeates yet another context, it changes itself, i.e., it establishes itself as a *coherent* deviation from the previous version of itself, a deviation that can be recognized exactly as a deviation from something. In this sense, style always presupposes its own development, continuation: every new artwork, for example, enriches the style itself, it signifies a new setting where this style has proven to be efficiently rooted and, by doing this, it adapts and changes the style itself. In Van Gogh’s case, for example, we are talking about different deformations of the meaning of boldness and rapidity depending on whether this boldness expresses the luminosity of the night or the gentle rustle of the irises; something like an abstracted and general ‘technique,’ i.e., the general gesture of a bold and rapid brushstroke, can only be postulated insofar we sever the unity between expressing and expressed elements of the work of art, the smooth passage of ‘how’ into ‘what’ (this would, in turn open up the problem of application for art critics who, after learning the abstracted model of paintings, would be faced with the task of recognizing how this abstracted model is actually realized in the very paintings). Here, thus, we should indeed speak of “homology”⁴⁹² across different fields rather than their homogeneity because fields are unified in their differentiation and not in their unproblematic unity; their unity is a unity of divergence. On this level homology (establishing this system of coherent deformations) cannot be abstracted from the heterogeneity of fields (describing incommensurable fields of experience) as a formal rule because the former is *productively realized* in the latter. Here, meaning and meaning-formation still display their pre-reflective life demonstrating the live-stream genesis in contrast to the rigid and drained level of concept-application guided by fixated rules. We could say, in such a way, that the specific intelligibility of style indicates saturation in the above-described sense: style is given exactly as this rippling poly-contextuality that resists to be obedient to a particular frame containing an excess and overflowing into different fields. It does not display conceptual generality but operates as its pre-condition.

So, the ‘and-conjunction’ – something Heidegger describes as the “neutral ‘and’ in the title *On Time and Being*”⁴⁹³ – that we have used above in order to describe the indeterminate link among different situations does not indicate any kind of insufficiency of explanation. It stresses both the identity

⁴⁹² Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, pp. 10; 250-262

⁴⁹³ Heidegger, *GA 14*, p. 46/43; quoted by Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting*, p. 144

and difference, the identity *in* the difference that makes it possible for something like mutual presence, the *hanging together*. To stress the importance of this ‘*neutral and*,’ we could recall the exchange between Socrates and Hippias that takes place in *Hippias Major*: when Socrates challenges Hippias to explain what beauty is, Hippias offers a series of examples of beauty; beauty, says Hippias, is the beauty of a beautiful girl *and* gold *and* respect.⁴⁹⁴ Socrates, of course, sees this answer as flawed and remains unconvinced. He expects Hippias to explain beauty as such, i.e., what is common to every particular instantiation of beauty. We, on the contrary, should stress the positive significance of Hippias naïveté that functions, in fact, as a much more precise testament to the pre-reflective life of understanding, which, first and foremost, does not search for abstract schemes that would be valid for every conceivable case of ‘x,’ but for enrichment orienting itself according to its ‘sense of contribution’ or field-responsiveness. Pre-reflective understanding ‘knows’ the response of the field without having to know the principle of its own response to it. So, when it comes to the pre-conceptual generality expressed by the formula ‘beauty is a beautiful girl *and* gold *and* respect,’ we are not facing the tacit, universally applicable concept but a series of synchronic enrichments that takes place across a variety of fields. The beauty here represents not the same type but a pattern that is itself continuously enriched and restructured (i.e., ‘coherently deformed’): as time goes on, the beauty *becomes* sexual, *becomes* shiny and moral. At the same time, each of the involved fields becomes more meaningful being illuminated with a new aspect: by situating this new pre-conceptual but still possessing a certain degree of universality possibility of beauty, they restructure their own room-for-manoeuvre.

As any intellectualizing approach, Socrates’s dialectics misses the continuous series of enrichment that takes place on this concrete, example-laden level; it overlooks that Hippias has been, in fact, *producing* meaning all along the way rather than making a confused attempt at cognition. We have seen that this is a typical mistake that is motivated (but not necessitated) by the rules of the cognitive practice itself. Guided by the operative and necessary assumption that there *must* be this quasi-independent overarching principle that would encompass what beauty is (on the level of *explanans*) and foreclosing the productivity of self-understanding (which is necessary according to the rules of cognition on the level of *explanans*), intellectualistic approach confuses this assumption with *explanandum* itself, thus, *overlooking* the productivity of understanding as such (which is an easy-to-make mistake).⁴⁹⁵ Thus, this approach does not recognize its own indebtedness to the pre-reflexive experience as it forgets that before beauty can be cognitivized, it must first be drawn into the open and enriched by the multitude of

⁴⁹⁴ The way we are using this term, however, is different from Heidegger’s since we analyse the relation between practices and their ability to generate meaning (instead of being disclosed as meaningful in light of *Ereignis*); what is similar, however, is a refusal to grant any explanatory priority to any part of the equation stressing the constitutive nature of their hanging together rather than the unequal relation of explanation between them.

⁴⁹⁵ See section 4.iii

various contexts. Without those enrichments and restructurations, the conceptual grip on beauty would be left drained of any life, unable to root itself; the word ‘beauty’ would struggle to communicate anything to us. This lack of reply is illustrated perfectly by Merleau-Ponty’s analysis of aphasia and, in particular, Schneider’s linguistic deficiencies: a concept deprived of its ability to “project” itself “towards the world” and to settle, anchor itself in various contexts is a concept deprived of its “body,”⁴⁹⁶ it is a “passive shell,”⁴⁹⁷ which might be flawlessly defined and even used syntactically correct, but which offers no real communication with the world and, thus, no genuine meaning. In other words, the domain of cognitive, quasi-independent meaning presupposes the domain of produced meaning because cognitive meaning remains merely referred to the result of the productivity so far; cognitive understanding can only grasp a ‘shadow’ that is casted by the production of meaning since the cost of this grasp consists of interruption of this production (on the level of *explanandum*). As such, the cognitive analysis will never keep up for the actual pre-reflexive unity of style and would always be unfinished,⁴⁹⁸ *presumptively* valid waiting until a new context and a new enrichment comes up essentially restructuring what we have considered as beauty so far and launching the Sisyphean task of cognition once again.

Those above-mentioned terms – saturation, overflow, style, ‘neutral and’ – indicate a particular effect of integration or approximation among practices, which eventually points back to the task of maximization of Dasein’s ability-to-be. By incorporating the same pattern of coherent deformations in their rooms-for-manoeuvre, practices start displaying a certain consonance being mottled and pitted with echoes and traces of each other. This is because by doing so, they disclose a sort of a common currency among them: particular areas of incommensurable rooms-for-manoeuvre obtain their *inter-practical significance* as they *overflow* into other rooms-for-manoeuvre and indicate a certain degree of translatability of intra-practical possibilities from one incommensurable field to another. The situated system of coherent deformations *approximates* practices up to a point where their interests intertwine and pronouncing a certain tone in one field reverberates with further tones in other fields; a move in one field here is multiplied like through the tracing paper with further moves in further fields. So, ‘earning’ dignity in a military field, for example, is tacitly accompanied, *echoes with* rendering available other possibilities and improving one’s own position in a set of family practices, in different social settings, in medical facilities etc.; being a good military officer *somehow* finds itself in close proximity with being a good father and otherwise. Again, this ‘somehow’ is not an indication of the insufficiency of our explanation but a description of the pre-reflective life of integrative possibilities. If someone were to ask what exactly those two areas have to do with one another, a quick reflection on the matter will quite likely

⁴⁹⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *PP*, p. 226

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206

⁴⁹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Le primat de la perception et ses conséquences philosophiques*, p. 50; see also *PP*, pp. 381; 514

arrive at something like ‘well, I guess, *strictly speaking*, nothing.’ First and foremost, the militaristic overtones of being a father, just like familial implications of being an officer are too slight and elusive to be fixated by any kind of a ‘strict speech’ – under the ponderous gaze of a cognitive agent, they disappear faster than they let themselves to be arrested into an object. The echo between those two practices, in other words, always happens on the periphery of the practical space. Borrowing a term from Richir, we could speak about a “theatre of shadows”⁴⁹⁹ that can only be given as this subtle and barely noticeable trembling and shimmering (which, in order to be even spotted as a phenomenon, require the immensely complex conceptual tools developed by generations of phenomenological work) that endows us with the vague sense of a *passage* or *indeterminate presence* of other situations.

This homological consonance among practices is not a part of the ‘analytic’ content of practices (which is why, for example, it is not tautological to make ‘programmable statements’ (e.g., ‘diversity statement’) at the entrance to a practical field); it does not follow from the ‘logics’ of their individual development. The motivation to get restructured and deploy this common currency, a style, comes from the ‘outside’ of particular practical spaces, i.e., from the need to obtain their significance in the *context* of other practices. By situating the homological pattern, practices become not *only* meaningful for their own sake, but *also* from the standpoint of other practices; thus, practices both become more meaningful themselves and make more meaningful other practices (so, being a military man, for example, might make more meaningful participation at social gatherings just like participation at social gathering makes military service more meaningful.) In other words, by approximating themselves to one another, various fields do not lose their self-standing intelligibility and do not find themselves crammed into the same room-for-manoeuvre; the consonance does not abolish the boundaries among practices but makes them *thinner*. By disclosing different sides, different enrichments of the same possibilities, practices *nest* and *adhere to one another*, they *rhyme*: even without being interconnected directly, they obtain this illusive and preconceptual complementarity becoming an organic development of one another. While retaining their own independency – each of them means something by itself, – they complement each other as two verses belonging to the same quatrain.

This movement of integration, of reciprocal approximation among practices can be, in such a way, described as *attunement* or *compression* among them and situating a homological pattern across practices is a way this compression is realized. Since it would be impossible for most practices to be interconnected directly (this would again collapse their rooms-for-manoeuvre into a space of merely logical possibilities), the interaction, for the most part, becomes mediated. There are cross-cutting pos-

⁴⁹⁹ Richir, “La refonte de la phénoménologie,” p. 64

sibilities that carve a fractal line among them: particular possibilities start interacting with many further practices influencing them and getting influenced by them, thus, *implanting themselves as a common measure of things* in a continuous act of shuttle diplomacy. Earlier, we have preliminarily described such integrative possibilities as a “disclosive axis” – a range of possibilities and practices that find more interactive spaces than other possibilities and practices, thus, moving themselves to the centre of a given culture. Now we can further clarify this claim by adding something like a ‘centre of a given culture’ is constituted by this *twining* among practices that find a way of becoming relevant to one another by disclosing a common currency among them. The disclosive axis is what binds practices together in this overlapping-homological existential space; it pins practices into an *array* by offering a way of moving across them, i.e., a way of making practices relevant to one another. Folding up into a cultural *Lichtung*, practice set up this ‘theatre of shadows’ – a cross-overlapping play of unobjectifiable echoes, silhouettes, shimmerings, barely recognizable associations and semitones, a play that illustrates the presence of the “*mathesis* of instability.”⁵⁰⁰ Thus, we can see that the centre of a given cultural space that binds practice together is not a ‘depth,’ a deep-hidden foundation that is located beyond practices themselves and brings them into reality as their source. In fact, something like a centre cannot be located at all, ‘strictly speaking,’ as it vanishes every time we direct our gaze at it. The centre of a cultural space refers us to the surface or, rather, to the ultra-surface that gets thinned up up to a point where it can no longer be read off the surfaces of particular practical spaces and only given as this slight phenomenal shimmering.

We must stress once again, however, that the ‘commensuralizing’ logic of integrative possibilities – no matter how influential they are – remains dependent upon practices that they commensurate. Unless there is a sufficient number of fields that is *actually interactive with the particular prospect of integration*, i.e., that can render a substantial part of their room-for-manoeuvre commensurable with a particular integrative logic (*integrationmäßig*, if we put it a Heideggerian way) and enrich the integrative logic without collapsing, the prospect of integration remains meaningless. Different practices have different commensurability-rate, i.e., the different potential of being measured in, for example, money, dignity, piousness etc. Some practices might substantially enrich (and be enriched by) the integratory pattern by situating it in their rooms-for-manoeuvre (we could think of interaction between political and military praxis in the example above); some have a limited potential of interaction and require special circumstances (we can think of Karl Oberhuber’s attempt to transpose the military tactic of blitzkrieg into football⁵⁰¹ or even more general attempt to introduce paramilitary patterns across then-accepted corpus of everyday practices; one could also think about Heidegger’s own awkward attempt at

⁵⁰⁰ Richir, *Fragments phénoménologiques sur le temps et l’espace*, p. 260

⁵⁰¹ Herzog, “German Blitzkrieg Football Against the English ‘Wall Tactic’: The Football System Dispute in the German Empire 1939–1941”

militarization of universities in 1930th) and some could situate the integratory pattern only at the cost of simplifying (sometimes drastically) their room-for-manoeuvre (thus, we can often see attempts to prevent the interaction – e.g., ‘football/university is no place for politics;’ ‘my art is not for sale.’) In other words, various practices must be capable of disclosing the *integrationmäÙig* dimension (*geldmäÙig, würdmäÙig, pietätmäÙig*) – and the more extensive this dimension is, the closer practices nest in the practical array and disclose one another. Every particular increase in integration, every new politicizable or economizable possibility *reinforces the whole network of exchange*, thus, motivating new rounds of integration and inclusion into the practical array. The success of integration is measured by this *ability* to nest practices together; integration is not a ground that one-sidedly influences the everyday practices but a result that *follows* from their *condensation*, an efficient way of gathering them together. To repeat an already raised formulation, integration ‘enables’ *just as much* as it is ‘enabled’ back.

In this sense, we should also stress the factual and contingent nature of the integrative power of cultural *Lichtung* since it cannot integrate all practices. Indeed, some possibilities only make instrumental sense, some are merely logical, and some – like killing a competitor with a sword, worshipping Zeus, performing *epeme* dance etc. – are meaningless not because those possibilities are simply logical, i.e., they have no interactive room-for-manoeuvre as such, but because the very reconstruction and participation in such a room-for-manoeuvre are meaningless from the standpoint of cultural *Lichtung*, which is a situation that Dreyfus and other authors describe with the term “marginal practices.”⁵⁰² Such practices are mostly unable to accommodate the specific integrative routes that bind cultural practices together into the same open space. And since there are no inter-practical passages from those marginal practices to others, patterns of socialization eschew them; it becomes unclear exactly why anyone would participate in such practices. By moving from one practical site to another we continuously foreclose and disclose various sets of possibilities – but when it comes to marginal practices, it simply makes less sense to return to the foreclosed marginal practice. As a result, they swing shut and tail away; they are left on deserted roads where scarcely anyone is still travelling and become dependent upon some idiosyncratic, private trajectories of understanding. If integrative possibilities introduce us into the midst of the culture, marginal practices throw us off to the wayside. But even being removed from the cultural mainstream, marginal practices retain their self-standing meaningfulness. Staying on the periphery of a given culture they are preserved by a few practitioners, transferred by books and archives or re-contextualized into new fields (e.g., through historical sciences, art etc.); as such, marginal practices can always be re-constructed or re-introduced into the open space by a new integrative route that would reassemble cultural practices in a new way.

⁵⁰² Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 197; “Could Anything Be More Intelligible than Everyday Intelligibility?” p. 40

Returning to Sartre's example, we might conclude that participation in a military praxis where something like dignity can be acquired secures a number of inter-practical passages. It turns out to be convertible into possibilities of being accepted into public spaces and social occasions, of demanding respect in hospitals and banks; it unlocks the whole range of possibilities in various fields that were unavailable before. Becoming a pilot, then, is obviously not only about piloting: collaterally, it becomes a way of opposing the *diffused intelligibility* of worthlessness promoted by apartheid. By claiming for itself the possibility that is not *normally* ascribed to a black person, the pilot also claims for itself the whole range of possibilities that he has been denied on the same ground. Participation in military practice that deploys the saturated possibility of (re)claiming dignity becomes a nomadic practical key shimmering and gleaming with possibilities from various practical fields. Just like the Leibnizian monad, it mirrors the whole cultural world. We could say that the political rebellion against apartheid is *crystallized* into the possibility of piloting a plane in which the pilot gropes a point of overtaking the integrative grip on the whole array of human praxis; claiming the respect here, he could claim it anywhere else.

But although we can of course agree with Sartre that this rebellion might – and does – crystallize somewhere else (we can easily imagine how other vocations (a doctor, a businessman) can serve as a platform for the crystallization), we must also acknowledge that this crystallization is not merely an instantiation of a more general drama that can be read off the surface of a particular project, but a *generation* of this drama itself that reaches its saturation and obtains its meaning when it finds its enrichment in a particular field. Just like the pilot does not want to be a pilot *only* for the sake of piloting, neither he wants to be a pilot *only* in the context of concretization of his attempt to win dignity and wear down the intelligibility of apartheid. Rather, it is the mutual enrichment and mutual change between dignity and military praxis that makes both dignity and piloting more meaningful and situates a person at this intersection; a person in question wants exactly to be a pilot *and* the rest of it. For without such enrichment in a particularly meaningful field of piloting, the whole network of dignity – every particular dignity-situating field – becomes less meaningful for the person in question. If dignity is restricted to being received at social occasions and some forms of prestigious consumption, it becomes idle and less meaningful; its integrative grip over practices –its ability to facilitate inter-practical communication by disclosing a common currency among them and rendering them mutually significant – loosens. Under this condition of disintegration, each involved practice starts meaning only (more of) itself; consequently, in any of those disintegrated contexts, we would observe (even if slight) deteriorations of meaningfulness, which would make it easier to abandon the whole array of practices that are interconnected by this particular route and search for alternative spaces and alternative ways of gathering practices together (perhaps those that would avoid rather than confront the regime of apartheid).

A departure from Sartre, in this sense, also means a departure from Heidegger, as we refuse to claim that integrative practices function as a source, a fundamental explanation of meaningfulness in any sense. Instead, we should see integration as an *outcome* of the process of attunement among various fields where meaning is generated. Integration only makes practices *more* meaningful, casts *more* light on them and this is by restructuring, tying them together in a practical array and offering us a way of moving across them. Holding a spoon in an upper-class bourgeois family also implies a certain technique of movements, a body posture, a manner of talking and typical topics for discussions, it outlines the zone of preferable occupations, carries a corresponding self-understanding, gropes power relations etc,⁵⁰³ a constellation, which can be easily picked up by jokes and parodies, clichés and commercials of all sorts, but which is too subtle to be grasped by most cognitive efforts. Being permeated with a certain style, an integrated practice indicates the elusive presence of the whole infrastructure of intelligibility. But by influencing our everyday practices, integration remains, eventually, dependent upon what it influences; it gains its meaningfulness only insofar as it finds those interactive spaces – practices that can enrich and be enriched through integration, thus, offering the integrative logic a foothold. In such a way, integration is nothing but an efficient organizational topic, a way of compression that binds a significant number of situations together, thus, maximizing their disclosing potential and, conversely, Dasein's ability-to-be. Here we are dealing not with the relation of enabling but that of *layering* of different strata of meaning.

Avoiding those extremes, we arrive at the final point of this section and this work in general: integrality is a notion that retains at the same time its *quasi-fundamental role* and *cumulative vulnerability*. First, integratory logic normally operates as a fundamental influence that lies at the foundation of cultural open space. First and foremost, new events, practices or circumstances are measured and assimilated based on the resources provided by this cultural *Lichtung* or deserted as largely unassimilable. Thus, we can talk about the fundamental self-understandings and reoccurring features of cultural life that are more fundamental than this or that particular field. Those fundamental traits constitute the disclosive axis of a given cultural *Lichtung*, which is not restricted to a particular practice or event; it does not amount to the scarcity of resources or any other objective factor. Integration follows from the way practices hang together, which is something that requires productivity of Dasein's disclosive abilities and presupposes positive irreducibility to any objective factor that serves to it as a point of departure. Along with this fundamental influence of integrative logic, however, we cannot overlook its *cumulative vulnerability*: as a fundamental impact, it remains eventually dependent upon the bulk of practices it enables and the possibilities that those practices offer. A cultural logic that normally preserves itself in

⁵⁰³ See, Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, pp. 5-6

the face of changing circumstances, unpredictable empirical events can nonetheless run into crises if faced with too many or too significant events that undermine its integratory power and, thus, prepare ground for alternative, more optimal ways of integration. Significant historical events, scientific inventions, climate changes, catastrophes, epidemics reveal that the integrative balance is always unstable and prone to change and re-balancing; even one particular invention, one new strategy, tool or some particular, contingent event can *launch* radical changes in a given culture gradually changing one field after another rendering them less integrable according to the current ways of practical attunement and preparing the soil for a new integrative logic will prove to be more efficient might occur.

The combination of those two factors can be completely coherent only insofar as this fundamental influence is neither a fundamental explainer nor something that can be exhaustively explained by other factors. It is a result of productive dialogue, a *de facto* efficient way of putting practices together and generating meaning. The integrative status is not a question of necessarily condition but that of *interactional optimality* of cultural space and, as such, it is essentially flexible. In principle, any possibility and any practice can be deployed as integral, any possibility can be seen as such an integrative measure of other practices, i.e., as laying a claim on commensuralizing vocabulary; and there is no way of saying in advance what organizational topics will prove themselves as the most efficient ways of gathering practices together. *What* would be an integrative practice, *where* various possibilities would intertwine are questions with an open answer – and it is up to the concrete understanding and continuous experimentation to grope those integrational points. Here we are more than in any other place dealing with what Merleau-Ponty describes as the “realization of truth:” meaning is *generated* as a result of nestling of practices together, their continuous intertwining, which is a process that on overall cannot be measured with regard to its correctness or incorrectness but only with regard to its richness or poorness.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *L'institution dans l'histoire personnelle et publique*

Conclusion.

This work has started with formulating the task of radical reflection, that is, the task of arriving at the account of facticity of human existence, which would recognize that this very account belongs to what it tries to account for. The five following chapters were meant to offer a particular pragmatic realization of this goal.

In the first chapter, we have seen why the solution to this goal must take an ontological form. By analysing modern neo-pragmatic approaches represented by such figures as Brandom, Rorty and Habermas as well as a naturalistic perspective proposed by Peregrin we have seen that the analysis of a particular linguistic 'doing' is not sufficient for accounting for such a facticity. By moving from Brandom to Peregrin, from Peregrin to Rorty and from Rorty to Habermas, we have seen the very same constraint limits the explanatory scope or/and rigidify the explanatory tools of neo-pragmatists: locating the 'condition of possibility' at the level of linguistic praxis, which realized by concrete individuals, presupposes a more fundamental layer of pre-reflective experience and a corresponding philosophical method that would be able to cope with the fluidity of pre-reflective experience.

For this goal, we have switched our analysis to the existential wing of phenomenology represented by such figures as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and others. In the first section, we have seen how they opt for a very particular starting point investigating the *mutual relatedness* between human existence and the world; the analysis of the pre-reflective experience for them means, in the first place, the analysis of the point of the encounter between the subject and the world. This mutuality brings with itself a new argumentative strategy that substitutes the transcendental argumentation: instead of relying on the explanatory priority of the conditioning element over what is conditioned, they stress the explanatory relation that is based on the mutual explanation. Just like the world is unintelligible without human existence that reveals it from a particular standpoint, human existence is unintelligible without the world. In section two, we have located this mutuality in Heidegger's conceptual pairing between significance and for-the-sake-of-which, which is a move that has supplied us with necessary the conceptual tools that we will use consistently throughout the following chapter of the present work. In the third section, we have also investigated Dreyfus's attempt to reinterpret this Heideggerian background in a pragmatic fashion. While explicating some crucial motives in Heidegger's work and emphasizing the ungrounded nature of the mutual relation between Dasein and the world, Dreyfus has failed to explicate the full significance of this new methodological strategy. Instead of seeing mutuality as a fundamental explanatory principle, Dreyfus lays particular practices at the foundation of intelligibility and systematically overlooks the question of the formation of practices.

In chapter three, we have tried to remedy this shortcoming and to formulate a specifically phenomenological version of the primacy of practice. For this goal, we have argued that particular contingent practices (as particular entwinings between Dasein and the world) cannot explain the way we disclose the world; rather it is our practical pressing forward into possibilities and the world that responds to this pressing forward by offering possibilities are what make possible particular practices. We have claimed, in such a way, that practices nothing but sets of interactive possibilities that disclose further possibilities; as such they maximize Dasein's ability-to-be and enable more intense participation in the world. In the second section, we have investigated the Heideggerian notion of foreclosure arguing that foreclosure can be seen as a counter-force of disclosure. Disclosure of a practical situation, which consists of a set of interactive possibilities, goes hand in hand with foreclosing all the alternative possibilities. In this sense, the task of maximization of Dasein's ability-to-be was shown to be synonymous with the task of optimization of its ability-to-be; it is impossible to pursue too many possibilities at the same time without transforming them into meaningless logical possibilities. We have concluded the chapter arguing that navigating through multiple situations and continuously disclosing and foreclosing various practices is a skill that every socialized Dasein is expected to be proficient at.

In chapter four, we have dealt with a double task. The first one was to demonstrate how something like universal validity and cognition can arise in the context of being-in-the-world. The second accompanying task was to avoid what Habermas describes as performative self-contradiction: we demonstrated how our particular account that claims that understanding is guided by the need to maximize the ability-to-be is still entitled to raising truthful claims about human understanding. In the first section, we have argued in favour of distinguishing between cognitive and non-cognitive practices; namely, we have claimed that non-cognitive practices, unlike cognitive ones, are not aimed at reaching universal validity. In the second section, we have argued, based on the Heideggerian interpretation of Plato, that cognition occurs as a historically contingent attempt to subordinate understanding to an external criterion, i.e., to the regulative assumption of the independent world. The assumption of an independent world makes it possible to place different perspectives within the same logical space and promises the possibility of reconciliation among conflicting perspectives, thus, establishing the minimal requirement of the cognitive praxis. In the last section, we have also argued that even the cognitive attempt to disclose a universally valid situation is still a form of maximization of our ability-to-be. At the core of this form lies the paradoxical transformation of understanding that forecloses its own productivity while at the same time presupposing it.

In the final chapter, we have investigated the question of how various practices hang together and influence one another despite being incommensurable. In the first section, we have approached the

instrumental interconnection between practices claiming that instrumentality is a particular connection between practices where instrumental practices do not organize a sufficiently complex interaction and make sense only in terms of its future foreclosure by a target practice; instrumental practice is not meaningful on its own terms. Additionally, we have argued that instrumentality is not a correct model for analysing the problem of interaction among practices as such. Treating instrumental subordination, i.e., meaningfulness not on its own terms, as a fundamental explanatory model is a typical treat of what Heidegger has described as ontotheological tradition. Contrary to this, we have tried to emphasize the self-standing meaningfulness of various fields as a fundamental explanatory move. In the second section, we have proceeded to the problem of integration among various practices. Integration consists of introducing homological patterns across various practices and enriching them. Taking as an example Sartre's analysis of the rebellion of a pilot, we have seen how the possibility of retaining dignity becomes meaningful across different fields rendering them communicative while preserving their borders.

How can we conclude this work? Overtaking entirely the goal of radical reflection, we have assumed that the methodological emphasis on mutuality is the most consistent way of reaching it. The mutuality that no longer requires a grounding element along with its ability to organize one-sidedly the grounded elements led us to the figure of *praxis*. When it comes to human experience and the specific intelligibility of our existence no reference to some state of affairs will count as a sufficient explanation; it must take into account the active realization and participation in the meaning-formation where 'causes' are transformed into motives and where each step of meaning-formation presupposes the irreducible role of the productivity of human understanding. Only by abandoning the search for the ground and substituting it with an emphasis on praxis of meaning-making can we win the vocabulary that would adequately deal with the flexibility and agile nature of our factual situation in the world. In this way, we have realized that facticity is, indeed, a "coefficient:" it is not a ground that imposes limitation on us but an indicator of our inscription into the world.

Bibliography

- Agamben, G. (2000), *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics* (London: University of Minnesota Press, London).
- Arendt, H. (1990), "Philosophy and Politics," in *Social Research*, Vol. 57, No. 1, Philosophy and Politics II, pp. 73-103.
- Arendt, H. (1973), *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).
- Aristotle (2012), *Metaphysics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Bernstein, R. (2010), *The Pragmatic Turn* (Cambridge: Polity)
- Bhaskar, R. (1998), *Dialectical critical Realism and Ethics* (New York: Routledge)
- Blattner, W. (2008), "What Dewey and Heidegger Can Learn From Each Other," in *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 36, No. 1, Pragmatism
- Bliss, R. and Priest, G. (2017), "Metaphysical Dependence, East and West," in: *Buddhist Philosophy: A Comparative Approach* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell)
- Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).
- Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul)
- Bourgeois, P. (2002), "Pragmatism and Phenomenology, A Recent Encounter," *Analecta Husserliana* 80
- Brandom, R. B. (2000), *Articulating Reasons. An Introduction to Inferentialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- Brandom, R. B. (1998), *Making it Explicit. Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
- Brandom, R. B. (2011), *Perspectives on Pragmatism: Classical, Recent, and Contemporary* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
- Brandom, R. B. (2000), "Facts, Norms, and Normative Facts: A Reply to Habermas," in *European Journal of Philosophy* 8 (3)
- Brandom, R. B. (2002), *Thales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays in the Metaphysics of Intentionality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
- Brodsky, G. (1982), "Rorty's Interpretation of Pragmatism," in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* Vol. 18, No. 4
- Carman, T. (2003), *Heidegger's Analytic* (New York: Columbia University).
- Casati, F. (2018), "Heidegger's Grund: (Para-)Foundationalism," in Bliss, R. and Priest, G. (eds.), *Reality and its Structure: Essays in Fundamentality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

- Cerbone, D. (2019), "Ground, Background and Rough Ground: Dreyfus, Wittgenstein, and Phenomenology," in Burch, M., Marsh, J. and McMullin, I. (eds.), *Normativity, Meaning, and the Promise of Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge)
- LePore, E. (1986), *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, (Oxford: Blackwell)
- Davidson, D. (1973), "Radical Interpretation," in *Dialectica* Vol. 27 No. 1
- Davidson, D. (1982), "Rational Animal," in *Dialectica*, Vol. 36, No. 4
- Deleuze, G. (1990), *The Logic of Sense* (New York: Columbia University Press)
- Dennett, D. (2006), "Essay on Robert Brandom, Making it Explicit"
- Descartes, R. (2008), *Meditations on First Philosophy* (London: Oxford University Press.)
- Dewey, J. (1910), *The Influence of Darwinism in Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Henry Hold & Co.)
- Dewey, J. (2008), *The Theory of Inquiry* (Saerchingner Press)
- Dewey, J. (1916), *Essays in Experimental Logic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
- Dillon, M. C. (1988), *Merleau-Ponty's Ontology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press)
- Dreyfus, H. L. and Spinoza, C. (1997), "Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on How to Affirm Technology," in *Man and World* 30 (2)
- Dreyfus, H. L. and Taylor, C. (2015), *Retrieving Realism* (Harvard: Harvard University Press)
- Dreyfus, H. L. (2017) *Background Practices: Essays on the Understanding of Being* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press)
- Dreyfus, H. L. (1990), *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge: The MIT Press)
- Dreyfus, H. L. (2002b), "Could Anything Be More Intelligible than Everyday Intelligibility?: Reinterpreting Division I of Being and Time in the light of Division II."
- Dreyfus, H. L. (1980), "Holism and Hermeneutics," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 34, No. 1
- Dreyfus, H. L. (2005), "Merleau-Ponty and Recent Cognitive Science" in Carman, T. and Hansen, M. B. N. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Dreyfus, H. L. (2005), "Overcoming the Myth of the Mental: How Philosophers Can Profit from the Phenomenology of Everyday Expertise," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 79(2) .
- Elster, J. (2000), *Ulysses Unbound Studies in Rationality, Precommitment, and Constraints* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Fink, E. (2016), *Play as a Symbol of the World: And Other Writings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press)

- Fisher, E. P. and Lipson, C. (1988), *Thinking about science: Max Delbrück and the origins of molecular biology* (New York: W. W. Norton)
- Foucault, M. (1980), "Theatrum Philosophicum" in Foucault, M. and Bouchard, D. F., *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (New-York: Cornell University Press)
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1989), *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum)
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1999), *Neuere Philosophie I: Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck)
- Habermas, J. (1971) *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press)
- Habermas, J. (1988), *On Pragmatics of Communication* (Cambridge: MIT Press)
- Habermas, J. (1987), *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press)
- Habermas, J. (1987), „Philosophy as Stand-In and Interpreter,“ in Appleby, J., Covington, E., Hoyt, D., Latham, M., Sneider A., (eds.), *Knowledge and Postmodernism in Historical Perspective* (New York: Routledge)
- Habermas, J. (2003), *The Future of Human Nature* (Cambridge: Polity Press)
- Habermas, J. (1984), *The Theory of Communicative Action* (Boston: Beacon Press)
- Habermas, J. (2014), *Truth and Justification* (Hoboken: Wiley)
- Habermas, J. (1985) "Questions and Counter-Questions," in Bernstein, R., *Habermas and Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press)
- Harman, G. (2002), *Tool-Being: Heidegger and Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court)
- Haugeland, J. (2013), *Dasein Disclosed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
- Haugeland, J. (1999), *Having Thought* (Cambridge: MIT Press)
- Heidegger, M. (1966), "Only a god can save us: the Spiegel interview," in Sheehan, T. (ed.) (1981), *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing)
- Heidegger, M. (1977), Gesamtaufgabe Band 2, *Sein und Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann) translated as Heidegger, M. (2008), *Being and Time* (New York: HarperCollins)
- Heidegger, M. (1977), Gesamtaufgabe Band 5, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1997), Gesamtaufgabe Band 6.2, *Nietzsche II* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (2000), Gesamtaufgabe Band 7, *Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1996), Gesamtaufgabe Band 9, *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1997), Gesamtaufgabe Band 10, *Der Satz vom Grund*, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)

- Heidegger, M. (2006), Gesamtaufgabe Band 11, *Identität und Differenz* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1985), Gesamtaufgabe Band 12, *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (2007), Gesamtaufgabe Band 14, *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1986), Gesamtaufgabe Band 15, *Seminare* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1975), Gesamtaufgabe Band 24, *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann) translated as Heidegger, M. (1982), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press)
- Heidegger, M. (1984), Gesamtaufgabe Band 45, *Grundfragen der Philosophy*, (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (2003), Gesamtaufgabe Band 46, *Nietzsches II. Unzeitgemässe Betrachtung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1992), Gesamtaufgabe Band 54, *Parmenides* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1989), Gesamtaufgabe Band 65, *Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (1997), Gesamtaufgabe Band 66, *Besinnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (2019), Gesamtaufgabe Band 72, *Die Stege des Anfangs* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Heidegger, M. (2013), Gesamtaufgabe Band 73, *Zum Ereignis-Denken* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann)
- Herzog, M. (2014), "German Blitzkrieg Football Against the English 'Wall Tactic': The Football System Dispute in the German Empire 1939–1941," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31:12
- Ingram, D. (1991), "Habermas on Aesthetics and Rationality: Completing the Project of Enlightenment," *New German Critique*, 53
- Levinas, E. (1969), *Totality and Infinity: an Essay on Exteriority*, (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press)
- Lowith, K. (1995), *Martin Heidegger and European Nihilism* (New York: Columbia University Press)
- Koloskov, D. (2020), "The World of Truth: On Merleau-Ponty and Davidson's Holistic Arguments," *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology and Practical Philosophy*, vol. XII, NO, 2

- Kouba, P. 9 (2015), *Řeč a zjevnost* (Prague: Oikoymenh s Filosofickým ústavem)
- Kuhn, T.S. (1962), *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
- Marion, J.-L. (2002), *Being Given* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press)
- Marion, J.-L. (1998), *Reduction and Givenness* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press)
- McCarthy, T. (1990), „Private Irony and Public Decency: Richard Rorty’s New Pragmatism,“ *Critical Inquiry*, 16
- McCarthy, T. (1993), *Ideals and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory* (Cambridge: MIT Press)
- McDaniel, K. (2015), “Heidegger and the “there is” of Being,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 92(2)
- McDowell, J. (1997), “Brandom on Representation and Inference,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 57 (1)
- McDowell, J. (1994), *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2003), *L'institution dans l'histoire personnelle et publique - Le problème de la passivité, le sommeil, l'inconscient, la mémoire. Notes de cours au Collège de France (1954-1955)* (Paris: Belin)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1996), *Le primat de la perception et ses conséquences philosophiques* (Lagrasse: Verdier)
- Merleau-Ponty, M (2002), *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: New York: Routledge & K. Paul; Humanities Press)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964), *Signs* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1973), *The Prose of the World* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1983), *The Structure of Behaviour* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press)
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968), *The Visible and Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press)
- Nietzsche, F. (2013). *On the Genealogy of Morals* (London: Penguin Classics)
- Okrent, M. (2013), “Heidegger’s Pragmatic Redux,” in Malachowski, A. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Pragmatism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Okrent, M. (1988), *Heidegger's Pragmatism: Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics* (New-York: Cornell University Press)
- Patočka, J. (2016) *Natural World as a Philosophical Problem* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press)
- Patočka, J. (2010), *Fenomenologické spisy II* (Prague: Oikoymenh)
- Peregrin, J. (2014) *Inferentialism: Why Rules Matter*, (London and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan)
- Plato, (1943), *Plato's The Republic* (New York: Books, Inc.)

- Plato (1997). *Parmenides*. In Cooper J.M. (ed.) and Hutchinson D.S. (associate ed.) *Complete Works of Plato* (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company)
- Priest, G. (2015), "The Answer to the Question of Being," in Bell, J.A., Cutrofello, A. and Livingston, P.M. (eds), *Beyond the Analytic-Continental Divide: Pluralist Philosophy in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Routledge)
- Putnam, H. (2012), *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Ramberg, B. (2000) "Post-ontological Philosophy of Mind: Rorty versus Davidson," in Brandom, R. (ed.), *Rorty and His Critics* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell)
- Ratner, S. (1951) "The Evolutionary Naturalism of John Dewey," *Social Research*, vol. 18
- Ricoeur, P. (1992), *Oneself as Other* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)
- Richir, M. (2006), *Fragments phénoménologiques sur le temps et l'espace* (Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Millon)
- Richir, M. (1992), *Méditations phénoménologiques*, (Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Millon)
- Romano, C. (2016), *At the Heart of Reason* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press)
- Romano, C. (2009), *Event and World* (New-York: Fordham University Press)
- Romdenh-Romluc, K. (2012), "Thought in Action," in Zahavi, D. (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary Phenomenology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
- Rorty, R. (1991), *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Rorty, R. (1989), *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Rorty, R. (1993), "Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and the Reification of Language," in Guignon, C. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Rorty, R. (1979), *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press)
- Rorty, R. (1983), "Pragmatism Without Method," in Kurtz, P. (ed.), *Sidney Hook: Philosopher of Democracy and Humanism* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1983).
- Rorty, R. (1988) "Representation, Social Practise, and Truth," *Philosophical Studies* 54
- Rorty, R. (1980), "Rorty, Taylor, and Dreyfus: A Discussion," *Review of Metaphysics* 34
- Rorty, R. (1993), "Chapter 12. Truth and Freedom: A Reply to Thomas McCarthy," in Outka, G. and Reeder, J. P. (Princeton: Princeton University Press)
- Rorty, R. (2021), "Universality and Truth," in Rorty, R. and Mendieta, E., (eds) *Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press)
- Rouse's Articulating the World
- Rouse, J. (2000), "Coping and its Contrasts," in Wrathall M. and Malpas J. (eds.), *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive science: Essays in Honor of Hubert Dreyfus* (Cambridge: The MIT Press)

- Rouse, J. (2002), *How Scientific Practices Matter: Reclaiming Philosophical Naturalism* (University of Chicago: Chicago Press)
- Sachs, C.B. (2014) *Intentionality and the Myths of the Given: Between Pragmatism and Phenomenology* (London: Routledge)
- Sartre, J.-P. (2003), *Being and Nothingness* (London: Routledge)
- Sartre, J.-P. (1974), *Between Existentialism and Marxism* (New York: Pantheon Books)
- Sartre, J.-P. (1982), *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Volume I (London: Verso)
- Sartre, J.-P. (1963), *Search for a Method* (New York: Knopf)
- Schatzki, T. (2012), “A Primer on Practices,” in Higgs, J., Barnett, R., Billett, S., Hutchings, M., and Trede, F., *Practice-Based Education: Perspectives and Strategies* (Rotterdam: SensePublishers Rotterdam)
- Schatzki, T. (2002) *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change* (University Park: Penn State University Press)
- Scheur, J. (2013), *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate* (New York: Routledge)
- Schürmann, R. (1990), *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press)
- Sellars, W. (1997), *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)
- Sheehan, T. (2015), *Making Sense of Heidegger: A Paradigm Shift* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield)
- Sheehan, T. (2013), “What if Heidegger was a Phenomenologist?” in Wrathall, M. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Being and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Soffer, G. (2003), “Revisiting the Myth: Husserl and Sellars on the Given,” *The Review of Metaphysics* Vol. 57, No. 2
- Suits, B. (1978), *The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press)
- Švec, O. and Čapek, J. (2017), *Pragmatic Perspectives in Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge)
- Švec, O. (2017), “The Primacy of Practice and Pervasiveness of Discourse” in Švec, O. and Čapek, J. (eds.), *Pragmatic Perspectives in Phenomenology* (New York: Routledge)
- Tahko, T.E. and Lowe, E.J. (2015), “Ontological Dependence,” in Zalta, E. (ed), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- Taylor, C. (2004), “Merleau-Ponty and the Epistemological Picture,” in Carman, T. (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Thein, K. (2008), *Vynález věcí: O Platónově hypotéze idejí* (Praha: Filosofia)

- Thompson, E., and Zahavi, D. (2007), "Philosophical issues: Phenomenology," in Zelazo, P. D., Moscovitch, M. and Thompson, E. (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Timmerman, D. M. (1993), "Ancient Greek Origins of Argumentation Theory: Plato's Transformation of Dialegethai to Dialectic," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 29(3).
- Todes, S. (2001), *Body and World* (Cambridge: The MIT Press)
- Warnke, G. (1995), "Communicative Rationality and Cultural Values," in White S. K. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Wellmer, A. (2003) "The Debate about Truth: Pragmatism without Regulative Ideas," *Critical Horizons*, 4:1
- White, C. (2005), *Time and Death: Heidegger's Analysis of Finitude* (London: Routledge)
- White, S. K. (1989), *The Recent Work of Jürgen Habermas: Reason, Justice and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- White, S. K. (1995), *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Wikerson, W. (2010), "Time and Ambiguity: Reassessing Merleau-Ponty on Sartrean Freedom," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48(2)
- Withy, K. (2017) "Concealment and Unconcealment in Heidegger," *European Journal of Philosophy* 25 (4)
- Wittgenstein, L. (1969), *On Certainty* (Oxford: Blackwell)
- Wittgenstein, L. (1953), *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell)
- Wittgenstein, L. (1983), *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Cambridge: MIT Press)
- Wrathall, M. A. (2006), "Existential Phenomenology," in Dreyfus H. L. and Wrathall M. A. (eds.) *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism* (New York: Wiley-Blackwell)
- Wrathall, M. A. (2010), *Heidegger and Unconcealment: Truth Language and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Wrathall, M. A. (2013), "Heidegger on Human Understanding," in Wrathall, M. A. (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger's Being and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Wrathall, M. A. (2006), "Motives, Reasons and Causes," in Carman, T. and Hansen, M. B. N. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Young, J. (2004), *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)