

Being of Being There: Heidegger's Analysis of Tools

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The gentle reader will remember and kindly understand that explaining and interacting with Heidegger is no small task. The translation from German, Heidegger's native tongue to English is no trivial affair. Some of the impetus of the terminology is unfortunately lost in translation. The explication of tools as presented in *Being and Time* is complicated by the inadequacies of the English language in much the same way that confronts philosophers when consider Plato in the original Greek. Additionally, the ebb and flow of considering the question of 'being' alongside the analysis of tools might seem disjointed; this is a small price to pay given the genius of Heidegger's thought.

Many of the thoughts that are present in Heidegger depend a great deal on a better than sophomoric understanding of the history of philosophy and the way in which Heidegger approaches philosophy is unique to his thinking. Even his detractors acknowledge the far reaching and paradigm changing nature of his thought. Some have asserted that his philosophy does not contain innumerable contributions but is a series of reiterations driving home the same point (Harman, 2005). Heidegger seeks to overcome metaphysics, perhaps with or without realizing his own indebtedness to metaphysics. Errors or misunderstandings of such a seminal thinker are commonplace; this paper takes care to avoid gross misapplication of his thought. Respect for the discipline and the thinker himself require such concern.

Another difficulty that is constantly present with Heidegger is his almost constant use of neologisms and words used to signify something specific within his philosophy. Even though the thrust of this treatment is an explication of Heidegger's analysis of tools, necessity dictates explanation and definition of the terms used by Heidegger. This will avoid potential confusion.

Additionally, Heidegger's philosophy is difficult and there is no such thing as real consensus even between Heidegger in his early years versus his later writings.

As a person, Heidegger was not uncontroversial. His contributions to contemporary philosophy are indisputable. However, his spurious and somewhat disputable association with German fascism that is to say his level affiliation with the Nazi party has marred his philosophy. A major influence on Heidegger was another German philosopher by the name of Edmund Husserl. Immanuel Kant and Rene Descartes deeply influenced Husserl. In order to understand the difference between Husserl and Heidegger one must understand from the outset what the study of phenomenology entails. In the book *Phenomenology and Existentialism* Robert Solomon notes that phenomenology is an "attempt to define the "structures" that are essential to any and every possible experience" (Solomon ed., 2001). The difference between Husserl and Heidegger or more properly the existentialists that follow Heidegger is the difference between an epistemological question related to human consciousness and the presuppositions of human action. The former belonging to those aligned with phenomenology and the latter corresponding with the thinking of existentialists.

The aforementioned affiliation with the Nazi party mires some of Heidegger's thinking in controversy. This continued to plague him after the end of the war. This fact alone has spawned two camps. One camp posits a dichotomy between the "thinking" of Heidegger and the "life" of Heidegger as separate and distinct. The second camp does not see the same dichotomy. If we are to follow Heidegger's lead, it is hard not to contextualize the events going on in the world at the time, although this no excuse for his involvement in something that is at least retrospectively unconscionable.

In the book *Heidegger and French Philosophy: Humanism, Antihumanism, and Being* author Tom Rockmore makes a bold claim that certain philosophers down play this fact due to self interest. He writes that some philosophers dependent upon interacting with Heidegger's thinking "like to diminish or even to disregard his political commitment as a factor in the comprehension of his thought" (Rockmore, 1995, p. xiv). In addition, he argues that others who have gone as far as asserting that failing to contextualize his thought without recourse to his political activities is to have utterly no chance at understanding his thinking at all. Regardless, the examination of tools in Heidegger does not necessarily depend upon understanding what if any relationship exists between Heidegger's politics and his examination of metaphysics. The digression should only serve to illustrate the controversial nature of his life and to acknowledge that the discussion of this topic still exists today.

From the outset any discussion of Heidegger's philosophy whether the discussion is centered on the analysis of tools or something else must reckon with his conception of 'being'. For Heidegger the question of being is the fundamental and perennial question of philosophy. Until 'being' is defined, any discourse on Heidegger will certainly miss the mark. Heidegger avoided what had become commonplace, bracketing existence and focusing on essence. Furthermore, for Heidegger the question of being is undoubtedly the aforementioned question of existence. For Heidegger there are many "beings" however only man has existence in the way that Heidegger is defining the term. For Heidegger, animals are beings but they do not exist. Man is a being that does exist and accordingly has being.

Heidegger sought to overcome metaphysics because he viewed metaphysics as asking the wrong questions. He says, "Because metaphysics inquires about beings as beings, it remains concerned with beings and does not devote itself to Being as Being." (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962) In other words, metaphysics has been traditionally concerned with the essence of beings and has not addressed itself to the "there-ness" of being. For the sake of clarity, 'Being' will not be capitalized, however one should bear in mind that 'being' is intended to mean being in the way in which Heidegger intended the term unless otherwise noted.

Heidegger understood and employed his knowledge of the history of philosophy in formulating the attempt to move past metaphysics. He understood that Aristotle had originally three candidates for defining what he called "primary being". Of the three candidates, essence is the proposition that Aristotle defended. According to Aristotle "Primary being with regard to each thing is the essence of that thing; and the essence of each thing is identical with the ultimate subject of predication with regard to that thing" (Politis, 2004)

We must recall that predicates describe certain attributes of a given subject. One remembers Hume's famous dictum regarding God that perfection is not a predicate. However, human subjects do have certain predicates used to describe them. For example, suppose a person is of portly build, with a round nose, and slightly hunch-backed. By way of predication, the subject is some particular human that bears a striking resemblance to the hunchback of Notre Dame. The essence of the subject is contained within the predicates. The description of the subject attempts to define the essence of the particular human by appealing to the attached predicates.

This harkens back to the previous discussion and assertion on Heidegger's part that metaphysics is asking the wrong questions. The subject-predicate relationship is attempting to discuss beings as beings. By way of analogy, Heidegger uses the metaphor of a tree and its roots. For example, the description of the tree in terms of the colors of its leaves, the shape of the bark, and whether or not the tree is deciduous are all predicates. However, this does not address the existence of the tree. This analogy is poor, as Heidegger would not ascribe existence to a tree in the same metaphysical sense as he would for a human. For Heidegger we must dig deeper than the essence, we must get at the underlying root of metaphysics. Hence, Heidegger unveils the moniker *Dasein* as the metaphysical root and the more sure presupposition of being.

According to Antony Flew, *Dasein* the German word for "being there" is a term employed by Heidegger in the investigation of human existence. Man's particular mode of being-in-the-world is characterized by relatedness to surrounding objects and members of his community" (Flew, 1999). This means that the hallmark of *Dasein* or being defines the connectedness that one has with the world around him or her. Heidegger also mentions the fact that *Dasein* is a being-toward-death. The possibility of death for *Dasein* is something few people face and because of this wind up living life in an inauthentic way.

Death is the end of *Dasein* as a being-in-the-world, with and around others. The possibility of death and its inevitability is one of the few things in Heidegger's philosophy experienced objectively. Accordingly, when *Dasein* dies it becomes whole, not in the typical sense but rather in a way, that transforms *Dasein* from being-in-the-world to present-at-hand. This previous summary hardly does justice to the original. Heidegger writes "...When *Dasein* reaches

its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the Being of its "there". By its transition to no-longer-Dasein [Nichtmehrdasein], it gets lifted right out of the possibility of experiencing this transition and of understanding it as something experienced." (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962)

Death is the experience of experiences, the final experience that ultimately transforms Dasein into something all together different. One remembers the slow climb of the roller coaster as the chain lumbers to pull the cars to the top of the hill. Cresting the hill, the cars plummet toward the end of the ride. The final experience of braking at the end of the ride is not dissimilar to experience of Dasein. The 'authentic' rider acknowledges the finality of the ride and anticipates the climax. Only after the hard braking does one really reflect on the whole of the ride. Likewise only, after the realization of wholeness can Dasein reflect on being. Just as the rider who denies the likelihood of the completion of the rollercoaster is irrational, Dasein that avoids considering death has missed the point of existence.

Equally important to Heidegger is the notion of the factuality of Dasein, the existentiality and fallenness (Flew, 1999). One may take umbrage with Flews' definition not because the denotation of factuality is incorrect but rather because it is incomplete. Heidegger makes an important distinction between factuality and facticity. This important peculiarity of factuality versus facticity bears upon the explication of tools to follow from this synopsis of being. He writes "Facticity is not the factuality of the factum brutum of something present-at-hand, but a characteristic of Dasein's Being—" (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962). Factuality may well be a brute fact but facticity is not properly a brute fact of existence but interwoven into the very being of Dasein. Flew may have missed the mark but Heidegger's treatment of the subject

is *ipso facto* proof that factuality is the corollary to facticity and not necessarily wholly analogous.

Perhaps more important is Dasein's existentiality. The existence of Dasein is truly unique to Dasein as a function of existence. This means that Dasein is the only entity that enjoys the primacy of existence over essence. In the book, *Twentieth Century Continental Philosophy* the following quote attempts to encapsulate Heidegger's thinking on this subject. "The world must be understood a priori in terms of existentiality. Properly speaking, only *Dasein* is in the world, and there would be no world without *Dasein* intimately open to it." (Kearney & Taminiaux, 1994). If Dasein does not exist, the world ceases to exist at least in terms of an examination of being. This is an intriguing thread and one that unfortunately will not enjoy full treatment in this paper. While Heidegger does not believe that things would merely vanish or that they are mere mental events, he does not think that things would exist in the same way.

In addition to existentiality and facticity is falling. Falling seems to be the negative side of Dasein. Falling is a sort of preoccupation or a state of being distracted. By way of analogy, as the father of school aged children, video games represent inauthentic falling. This distraction has no real projection and is inauthentic in the sense that nothing is happening of consequence. On the other hand, even if there is some end in sight; say for example the completion of this paper, the distraction of writing can be representative of falling. Contrasted with fallenness, which some mistakenly equate with falling. Briefly, fallenness is a state of affairs where Dasein is hiding from the potential of death. This is vastly different from distraction though correlative.

Essentially, the question of being is the question of what is real. Philosophers have various conceptions of the real. While this is not a treatise of various questions of reality a

perfunctory view of the real is helpful in contrasting existentiality with competing views. Existentialism depends upon the subjective experience of Dasein while other views do not hold to such a notion. For example, the essentialist (in the Platonic sense) believes that the essence of something fully expresses reality. The essence of a circle for example is the truly real. Hence, the forms of Plato are the “real”. While the materialist believes that “to be real is to be material or in matter” (Klubertanz, 1963). This view set over against the view of Heidegger and existentialist proffers no dichotomy between items of experience e.g. things that can be examined and explained by scientific observation and the individual. In the main, existentialists disagree with this notion observing that things may have an objective character and allow for objectivity while people are strictly speaking only subjectively observable. In fact, observation may only be possible with respect to authenticity and inauthenticity.

However, what is authenticity and inauthenticity and what bearing does this have on Dasein. Heidegger’s entire system seems to resist examination as a piecemeal affair. In other words, the entirety of the system needs considered. An integral part of Dasein is authenticity. This means that Dasein’s authenticity entails the asking of the question, what is the meaning of being. To be authentic is to question the fundamental meaning of being.

For Heidegger this is an ethical question and one that places the prime importance on authenticity. “One of the conclusions of Heidegger’s inquiry into authenticity is its priority over morality, Authenticity is the fundamental *a priori* condition for a viable ethics” (Golomb, 1995) However, it should be noted that Heidegger was not necessarily concerned with a discursive self-help program, at least initially. He was attempting a paradigmatic change in philosophy. There

was a certain shift in his thinking later. He ascribes the power of potentiality to Dasein and asserts that this possibility lies with Dasein individually.

Up until this point, everything presented thusly is to establish the language necessary to fully appreciate the thinking of Heidegger. In fact, the context into which tools are examined is not fully developed and for the sake of brevity, not everything has been defined nor discussed. This point has been reiterated on and on *ad nauseum* but the importance cannot be overstated, defining every term and laying a complete groundwork for the following discussion is simply impossible.

Perhaps to the neophyte or the common person the fact that philosophers have even given any consideration at all to the nature of tools may be disconcerting. The common person as far as he is employed in any mode of production that requires the use of his hands and a tool may well understand the *prima facie* importance of tools. However, it does not follow that this common person understands the importance of the distinction that Heidegger has in view when he discusses tools. However, in Heidegger the common person gives way to much deeper truth one that examines the foundation of philosophy itself. In order to begin a cursory examination of tools, forensic examinations of several German words offer the logical point of departure. This is not to say that Heidegger was only concerned with semantics rather the German language conveys a deeper meaning for several terms that Heidegger uses and any attempt to understand and analyze tools depends on some preliminary definitions.

The first word that is of prime importance is the word *Zeug*. According to the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of *Being and Time*, "The word 'Zeug' has no precise English equivalent. While it may mean any implement, instrument, or tool, Heidegger uses it for the most part as a

collective noun which is analogous to our relatively specific 'gear'" (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962) The keyboard, screen, and mouse are all a part of the equipment that is being used to construct this paper. This seems to be the sense in which the term *Zeug* is most applicable. Indeed, the screen may be used to watch a television program given the proper connection i.e. a cable or satellite receiver but as a part of the computer, the screen becomes or perhaps is a part of the tool.

Another term that is important in the analysis of the tool is *bewandtnis* commentators seem to agree that the meaning of *bewandtnis* is involvement. There is no simple way to explain this term as the context is important in construing the meaning. However, thinking of this term as the "what something is up to" (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962) does seem to suffice at least from the outset. Other terms are important but can be defined alongside the exegesis of the concepts under consideration. The word *Zeug* enjoys prime consequence at least as far as an evaluation of tools in Heidegger's philosophy.

Involvement is a complicated subject but seems to indicate the freeing of entities ready-at-hand to be involved in the world. For instance, an axe is ready-at-hand as far as it is involved in the world. This a priori relationship between something ready-at-hand and the relationship between its ready-at-handness and the chopping of wood seems to encapsulate what Heidegger means by involvement. An important point should be noted, this relationship is a priori and as such, Dasein already enjoys such involvement. The involvement of an axe is not discovered a posteriori neither is Dasein. At this point jumping into Heidegger's analysis of tools might seem natural. Instead, the basis for the analysis and the similarity to Dewey's critique of the *spectator theory* provides a more sure foundation. Many philosophers see affinity between Heidegger's

existentialism and Dewey's pragmatism. In order to lay the proper foundation a very brief comparison will serve as the ground for further analysis.

First, a definition of spectator theory must be proffered. Simply put the spectator theory of truth "represents knowledge as a kind of idle contemplation or passive beholding which transforms the knower but not the objects known." (McDermid, 2006) As McDermid notes the knower, which in this case could be anyone in world can be effected by knowledge without the equipment of the world being transformed. The parallels between Heidegger's rejection of this view and Dewey's sustained critique will shortly come into view.

Dewey saw this view as creating an insoluble problem for epistemology by establishing what he called a cul-de-sac of knowledge. His critique is centered on the fact that essentially objects become unchangeable and this "forces us to say that "the object of knowledge is a reality fixed and complete in itself, in isolation from an act of inquiry which has in it any element of production of change" (McDermid, 2006)

Heidegger sees the world and the world equipment as the backdrop upon which we live and work. His analysis is similar to Dewey in that tools take shape and become ready-at-hand. As one philosopher notes however, the similarity between Dewey and Heidegger are disparate from then on. Heidegger does not view higher forms of animal life in the same sense that Dewey does and thus the agreement ceases (Philipse & Hamburger, 1998)

This brief interlude and contrast between Heidegger and Dewey notwithstanding, the tool has a place of prestige in Heidegger's philosophy. The tool is the "skeleton key" unlocking a more robust understanding of Dasein's being. The tool entails a new understanding not only of being but forces epistemology into a subservient role in Heidegger's thinking and attempts to

reground philosophy by assessing the root of philosophy. In no small way, Heidegger is on a rescue mission one designed to free philosophy from the shackles of epistemological concerns that have hijacked the discipline.

Heidegger provides two German terms to describe material objects. He uses the word *vorhanden* to describe something being on hand (Schmidt, 2001). Heidegger seems to employ this term in the typical Cartesian way acknowledging that a rock is something that has extension into the world of our experience. This would be essentially the same way that the term is employed by Decartes. In the book *Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz: The Concept of Substance in Seventeenth-Century Metaphysics* we find this definition: “the nature of matter, or body...consists not in its being something which is hard or heavy or coloured, or which affects the senses in any way, but simply in its being something which is extended in length, breadth and depth.... (Woolhouse, 1993)

The same rock for would be on hand in the same sense that a tree is on hand, this on handness is simply the fact that this material substance has extensionality in the world. The difficulty is apparent when one asks the childlike question, what is a rock for? Does a rock by virtue of the fact that a rock is an extended substance provide the rock with some purpose? This query would result in the negation of such a premise. In fact, a rock is simply an aggregation of carbon and has no proper purpose.

On the other hand, is the term *zuhanden* or being-at-hand has a different connotation altogether. According to Heidegger “The kind of Being which equipment possesses—in which it manifests itself in its own right—we call “*readiness-to-hand*”[*Zuhandenheit*].¹ Only because equipment has *this* 'Being-in- itself' and does not merely occur, is it manipulable in the broadest

sense and at our disposal.” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 98) Heidegger uses the example of a hammer and for the purposes of illustration, a hammer is useful to demonstrate the point he is making. A hammer does not simply occur in nature. When walking through the woods, hammers are not found hanging from trees. The hammer is designed with a purpose in mind and as a tool is used for that purpose. In contradistinction to iron ore, which exists in nature and is readily on-hand the iron ore must be smelted and poured into a form that becomes a hammer. The same goes for many pieces of equipment that are ready-at-hand for contemporary society. The semi-conductors that comprise the circuitry of this computer are ready at hand. However, the gold, silver, and other elements that comprise them are on hand.

The difference between these two words entails a modal view of items in the world. For instance, when someone sits at a desk, the paper is ready at hand. Only the irrational would pose the question, what is paper for? The for-ness of paper is just that words, drawings, or symbols are conveyed onto the paper and the paper is ready at hand in case one wants to communicate. Simply put, paper is a medium of communication employed by Dasein. When used, paper has the ontical property of a means of correspondence. If this were the end of the analysis, this would offer a very neat and tidy stopping point. However, there is more to Heidegger’s thought than merely distinguishing between a tool ready at hand and extended matter that are on hand.

Tools are a part of the world. In fact, tools are the first thing that confronts Dasein. The totality of equipment in the world is a workshop of sorts. When one opens the door to a shed, immediately a number of tools present themselves as ready-at-hand. The rake is ready at hand for raking leaves, the lawnmower is ready at hand for cutting grass, and the broom is ready-at-hand

for sweeping up the clippings after the mowing and raking is complete. In a sense, this seems to apply to Dasein as well. Suppose someone hires a lawn mowing crew to cut his or her grass. The tools of Dasein include the aforementioned tools but also seem to include something else. The Dasein that is paying must have money ready-at-hand and so loosely, money is ready-at-hand to pay for the services of other Dasein.

In fact, Heidegger says that there is really is no such thing as tool. (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962) What does this mean exactly? This seems to mean that tools and their usefulness are driven by the context in which they are used. As a thought experiment, consider the following the scenario for a moment that will hopefully illustrate Heidegger's point about the contextualization of tools. Suppose in a few years from now you were selected to lead a one-man expedition to an alien planet that we just being discovered. After the arduous journey, you finally arrive. As you make your way out of your spacecraft, you observe what appear to be alien workers constructing domiciles of some sort. The process of building is vaguely reminiscent of the procedure used on earth. However, as two "walls" come together an alien taps the corner with a "tool" the resembles a coat hanger. You continue to watch this process repeated repeatedly for many months. Fortunately, the alien culture is far advanced and quickly learns how to communicate with you.

You exhibit interest in the building process that you have been observing over the past. One of the alien explains that the walls are an advanced polymer that is poured while a liquid retains its shape until the "wasbot" a device that not only solidifies the polymer but also bonds the

two surfaces together. The device is used in a manner that is similar to a hammer, tapping the corners but functionally works as a soldering iron and also functions to cure the polymer into a solid wall. Even though the construction techniques of earth-dwellers has improved since the time of tongue-in-groove timber construction or better yet mud adobe structures the “wasbot” has no equal on earth.

Now, consider another direction that this thought experiment could take. Suppose the same astronaut returns from his journey after many years, a form of stasis and travel at the speed of light being gifted to him from his newfound alien friends. When he returns to planet earth, he believes that by now surely earth-dwellers will have stumbled upon the element that his alien compatriots had developed. He is given a “wasbot” to take with him back to earth. Much to his chagrin, earth dwellers have not discovered the composite polymer. Therefore, his tool is rendered useless. For now, this is an aside, as the conspicuousness of tools will be considered later.

The thought experiment seems to prove the point that Heidegger is making. Tools are properly so called based upon the context into which they are employed. Alien builders coming to earth would have no use for the “wasbot” as the tool depends upon the advanced polymer that creates the space for functionality. Conversely, a hammer transported with you for the purposes of assisting alien cultures in their building projects may find no useful application. Certainly, the possibility exists that a hammer could be used for something else such as propping open the door of the spacecraft but this too is ultimately part and parcel of the contextualization of the tool

Furthermore, the tool in the thought experiment retains the meaning of equipment in a sense. In our modern day experience, we can imagine the many ways that tools come into and out of usefulness. The disk drive may in fact be such a tool. For most people the usefulness of the disk drive no longer retains the status of tool properly speaking. However, for computer programmers the disk drive may in fact remain a tool. It is plausible to assert that the disk drive could make a comeback however this is unlikely.

According to Richard Schmidt, the point is “unless something was at one time, not too far in the past, or is now a member of a tool-context, it is not a tool and cannot be said to be for anything.” (Schmidt, 2001) This is essentially the recasting of Heidegger’s assertion in *Being and Time* that “taken strictly, there ‘is’ no such thing as an equipment” (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962). In non-technical language, this means that tools only exist subjectively or contextually at the time they are employed as a part of the existentiality of Dasein.

Thus, the preceding thought experiment will not suffice. The example of the alien has imported something that philosophers call intentionality. Is there a state of mind or rather a belief about the “wasbot” that allows for a sort of Cartesian dualism? Is materialism mistaken and the subjective character of tools a prima facie indictment of Heidegger’s analysis of the tool? In his book *Approaches to Intentionality*, William Lyons is quick to point out that intentionality is not the same as the idiom that is commonly used denoting an intention to do this or that. Rather intentionality has a special place for philosophers and as an extended quote from Lyons will reveal goes beyond the ordinary usage of the term.

Intentionality covers those characteristics of mental activities because of which those activities are said both to have a content that contains information about something beyond the content and the activity, and to involve a particular sort of attitude towards that content. Moreover, it is a peculiarity of mental content that it is necessarily 'perspectival'. (Lyons, 1995)

Primarily intentionality is not the only thing that is in view. Schmidt asserts that there is some sense in which intentionality or beliefs toward a tool entail a casual connection as well (Schmidt, 2001). This means that tools would simply reside in the mind and would be reduced to mere material. However, Heidegger makes a distinction between the material and the tool. If we concede that Heidegger is, correct than we are committed to the view that tools may enjoy certain properties that are analogous with a tool. Perhaps the most apropos example of this dichotomous relationship is found in the example of a rock and a hammer. As Schmidt, points out certain predicates can be applied properly to rocks and to hammers. However, the meaning of the terms differentiates between the two and is used as an argument for the distinction.

That is not to say that Heidegger avoids the subject of intentionality. On the contrary, in another neologism, Heidegger discusses intentionality as care. Briefly, Heidegger argues that care is born from the primordial structure that confronts Dasein. In other words, a person's beliefs about thus and so confronts them as logically prior. Perhaps allowing Heidegger to speak to this subject will help illustrate this point. Heidegger writes "Care, as a primordial structural totality, lies 'before' ['vor'] every factual 'attitude' and 'situation' of Dasein, and it does so existentially *a priori*; this means that it always lies in them" (Heidegger, 1962, p. 238).

The totality that Heidegger speaks of is the sum total of the items of the world that lies before Dasein and are observed a priori. The question of the nature of this structure confronts us and should be addressed before moving too far away from the discussion of care. Care seems to be loosely analogous with the concept of a presupposition. Unfortunately, if we consider the presuppositions that are present to Dasein we run the ship aground. Heidegger anticipates something akin to the previous assertion and offers a rejoinder to the notion that presuppositions are the appropriate starting point.

Another thought experiment may prove helpful, though Heidegger will again be allowed to have the last word on the matter. If someone supposes that a party exists in his or her honor and has observed all of the ornaments that are entailed by such an event being purchased, this supposition seems to be grounded in certain pre-existing facts that correspond with the reality of the party that will occur subsequently. However, the supposition is only partially true, as the individual under consideration, for which the party is being thrown, must already “know” that there is an occasion by which a party would be apropos.

Dasein always comes 'too late'; for in so far as, it does this presupposing as an entity (and otherwise this would be impossible), it is, *as an entity*, already in a world. 'Earlier' than any presupposition which Dasein makes, or any of its ways of behaving, is the '*a priori*' character of its state of Being as one whose kind of Being is care. (Heidegger, 1962, p. 249)

At some level the example does no justice and not completely analogous with the question of presuppositions in terms of Dasein. No matter how unhelpful the illustration, the point remains Dasein is present in the world prior to the presuppositions that confront Dasein.

This means that in order to have a presupposition about the world of experience, one must be in the world already. Furthermore, the preceding pages have simply offered a view of Heidegger's thought that requires one to accept a few premises. For one thing, we must accept the notion that Heidegger was correct or at least that he has been correctly interpreted. The second premise we must accept is that Heidegger actually stands outside of the metaphysical tradition that he seeks to criticize. In fact, at least one philosopher, Graham Harman has taken umbrage with the prevailing view of Heidegger. This is not to say that he is the only one rather to point out that not everyone agrees with the current orthodoxy of Heideggerian interpretation.

Over against the backdrop of the preceding premise, Harman asserts that most if not all of Heidegger's commentators have been sadly mistaken (Harman, 2005). They have incorrectly assumed that Dasein is confined to humans. This special status of humans has relegated the being of tools to the scrap heap of present at hand and Harman disagrees with this assessment in favor of a philosophy of objects. One quick note is necessary, it would be impossible practically to invoke all of Harman's criticisms and this brief synopsis only seeks to offer a few points as succinctly as possible. This is not to say that many who interact with Heidegger are want to agree with him, rather to say that serious inquiry is still ongoing as the correct hermeneutic as applied to Heidegger and particularly his analysis of the tool.

There seems to be a prevailing thread in the thesis that is proffered by Harman, the relations of or between objects and human Dasein. Harman does not believe that the mass annihilation of human beings would concurrently bring about the non-existence of objects. Nor does he assert that Heidegger would follow this tract either. He concludes, "Heidegger merely

gives us the noncommittal and pseudo-Sophisticated claim that such objects would neither exist nor fail to exist in the absence of Dasein." (Harman, 2005). This means that the relationship between objects, as present-at-hand and ready-at-hand do not exist as some privileged example of human endeavor but rather are engrained in the very structure of those relationships. Harman uses various elements in order to demonstrate this point. For example, the bolt that is a part of a bridge, one in constant relationship with the bridge that if removed or better yet, broken affects the whole of the bridge itself. The similarity between the metaphysical doctrines of universals and particulars notwithstanding the bolt is a part of the equipment of the world until something paradigmatically changes.

This broken tool analysis and the subsequent relational aspect of tools as dichotomized by present-at-hand and ready-at-hand are presented by Heidegger in *Being and Time*. Heidegger notes that "All preparing, putting to rights, repairing, improving, rounding-out, are accomplished in the following way: we take apart in its "in-order-to" that which is circumspectively ready-to-hand, and we concern ourselves with it in accordance with what becomes visible through this process." (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962) To wit, the taking apart or repairing a tool presupposes a particular way that the tool presents itself to Dasein. Take as an example the doorknob that becomes broken. The doorknob is presented to Dasein in relation to the door. The broken doorknob presupposed the relationship between door and doorknob but more appropriately door as a condition of a particular experience of the world as-is.

Harman sees this implicit "double axis" that exists in Heidegger as a form of dualism between the presence and absence that presents itself to Dasein. Harman couches this by

asserting that Heidegger's philosophy "is dominated by a recurring opposition between absence and presence, as seen in the famous strife between tool and broken tool" (Harman, 2005). However this strife is not simply between the tool and the broken tool but is rather the conspicuous difference between equipment and things. In a sense, this means that taken *in Toto* equipment becomes a thing when it becomes conspicuous to Dasein. Consider the above example of a door. The doorknob is simply a part of the equipment of a doorway until such time that brokenness renders it noticeable to Dasein. This hearkens to the early paragraph that references the way in which the totality of equipment confronts Dasein.

Does it follow that the broken tool is properly speaking, a thing? Again, the conspicuousness of the broken tool calls out to Dasein. This is also true for tools that are not present. They become things for dasein when they are conspicuously absent. Consider for example an amputee that has lost one or both hands. Prior to amputation, assuming that both hands were ready at hand, the hands were part of the sum total of the equipment presented to dasein. However, amputation creates the situation where hands are no longer present at hand and thus are a thing. The same goes for many items in our experience. The stapler that was a part of the total equipment on a person's desk has the same effect as a missing hand.

Harman does not necessarily stop there. According to one reviewer Harman puts forth the view that "Heidegger's 'tool analysis is neither a theory of language and human praxis, nor a phenomenology of a small number of useful devices called 'tools.' Instead, Heidegger's account of equipment gives birth to ontology of objects themselves'" (Hyde, 2004). This would certainly cast Heidegger in a new light. The mere fact that Harman's body of work extends well into at

least two complete books on the subject negates offering a full treatment of his premise.

However, the scholarship on this subject and the ramifications continue to come into sharper focus.

According to Harman, his Guerrilla Metaphysics finds its point of departure in Heidegger's account of the hammer. Heidegger puts forth the thesis that the usability of the hammer is only discovered by the act of using the hammer. Heidegger says that "No matter how sharply we just *look* [*Nur-noch- hinsehen*] at the 'outward appearance' [*Aussehen*]' of Things in whatever form this takes, we cannot discover anything ready-to-hand" (Heidegger, Macquarrie, & Robinson, 1962). This hidden property of objects is the axiomatic premises that Harman begins from and sees as the real thrust of Heidegger's thinking.

Harman says that from this starting point we can reason that objects that exist in the world are not simply the sum total of the negative characteristics that take shape with use. He says, "For this reason an object is not just dead shapeless matter, but rather a specific entity with a specific form that has set up shop in the world in some particular way" (Harman, 2005). This is precisely because if all tools or objects were simply matter there would be ultimate unity and every object would be at some level a monad. Harman uses this assertion as a compelling premise that every object has what he likes to call notes. This means that there is a real distinction between physical objects.

Signs offer another corollary to tools that finds expression in Heidegger. He notes that signs are ready-to-hand and in *Being and Time* discusses an arrow on the back of a car. This particular sign presents itself to Dasein and may serve as indicative of a warning. For example, the sign may warn of something that will follow the sign. On most highways, at least in North America, yellow lights are posted on top of orange highway signs that signify a danger yet undisclosed to Dasein. In the same sense one can image that an ordinary traffic sign conjures up both a ready-to-hand sign; as well, a sign that signifies a warning of something that will follow. The traffic light that has turned from green to yellow warns of coming red light.

Signs can be experienced as inauthentic. When we see a sign and do not recognize to what the sign refers we are only superficially or in Heidegger's words circumspectively viewing the sign. A sign that point us to something else that is ready-at-hand for example. Signs can also simply be something that is a part of the equipment of the world. Consider a bulldozer for a moment. The blade on the front is simply part of the equipment of the bulldozer. On the other hand, once the bulldozer comes to life and the blade is raised the blade becomes ready-to-hand. The action of the blade indicates or is a sign that something is about to happen, i.e. earth is about to be moved.

There is some level of overlap between signs and tools. Just what or how this works may seem mysterious however; this is all part of the scheme that Heidegger has designed. This coming into and out of various states has effects for Dasein. However, this is not in a purely psychological way but in a fundamental way in how dasein is corresponding to the world.

The conclusion is the most difficult task of all. Summarizing such a subject as Heidegger's analysis of tools entails the various notions that comprise his attempt at overcoming metaphysics. Regardless of whether we accept the conclusion that *dasein* and a grappling with being comprise the prime directive for philosophy Heidegger must be considered one of the most important thinkers of all time as he one could argue that he singlehandedly redirected the inquiry amongst the so-called Continental Philosophers. The analysis of tools is part of Heidegger's program of returning philosophy to a study of being rather than the worn out canard of being as beings. The tool is a part of the equipment of the world and the implications for epistemology and metaphysics are undeniable. In the main, Heidegger wrote about being there, however this was merely the departure point and the voyage into the space he created for philosophy to examine its roots is still being explored. One notes with piqued curiosity the words of many philosophers who recount Heidegger as being solely responsible for changing the direction of their inquiry.

The new turn for Heidegger's philosophy may well be contained in the philosophy of Graham Harman and others who find the usual analysis of Heidegger's lacking and look forward to a more robust philosophy of objects. Even those in the analytical tradition are taking note of Heidegger and this bespeaks the genius and originality of his thought. In the end phenomenology and the eventual turn toward existentialism finds confluence in the thinking of Heidegger. Heidegger was certainly not the first existentialist, that designation may well rest with Kierkegaard and nor was his pioneering work in phenomenology however he most definitely brought these two disciplines together. We have a leap of faith to take, one that leaps into

existence and seeks to address the foundations of the philosophy. No longer can we take for granted the fact of being.

The analysis of the tool may well provide the foundation for a new philosophy of objects; then again, it may not. Regardless, as one philosopher has remarked, you cannot read Heidegger without coming away changed. This change causes us to reflect and marvel at existence and being and forces us to look at the world around us in a different way. We can no longer travel the road disinterested in the question of our existentiality and wonder at our unavoidable end in wholeness. The tool, both present-at-hand and ready-at-hand bids us to come and examine our lives as Socrates once did.

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