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Dasein and World: Heidegger's Reconceiving of the Transcendental After Husserl

<https://doi.org/10.1515/jtph-2020-0012>

Published online November 2, 2020

Abstract: The following examines Heidegger's analysis of world and Dasein from a transcendental perspective. It is argued that Heidegger's reflections on the interconnected themes of world and Dasein reveal the tensions that exist between the transcendental claims before and after *Being and Time* and the analysis of worldliness. It begins by looking at Heidegger's early analysis of Husserl's critique of psychologism and naturalism, assessing what this tells us about Heidegger's analysis of world and nature. It subsequently addresses Heidegger's transformation of Husserlian phenomenology, and intentionality in particular, arguing against interpreters who claim Heidegger's interconnected concepts of Dasein and world are reducible to one another and hence phenomenologically problematic. In order to respond to this reading, the article examines the twin themes of, on the one hand, transcendental constitutive analysis in Heidegger's work, Dasein as disclosive and 'world entering', and, on the other hand, the centrality of the world and the realm of nature as always more than Dasein's constitutive relationship to it. In order to understand what Heidegger means by worldliness, the article will look at Heidegger's reflections on nature as the world's other, which nonetheless needs to be understood on the basis of worldliness.

Keywords: dasein, Heidegger, transcendence, transcendentalism, world

1 Introduction

The following will offer an interpretation of Heidegger's early work as deeply committed to reconceiving our relationship to the world and to things in the world in a manner that is bent on recovering our 'worldliness'. I say this knowing full well that Heidegger is not advocating an ontology of individual things as bare entities or

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an understanding of the external world as a receptacle for such entities. It is argued that “Dasein’s openness to the world” (*die Weltoffenheit des Daseins*) (1986, p. 137/176) corresponds to the phenomenon of world or worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*) and that nature is the other of world, or the “unworlded world” (1979a, 298/217), and yet understandable only on the basis of the worldliness (*Weltlichkeit*) (1979b, p. 298/199). Thus, the open horizon of world, it will be argued, allows entities to be disclosed and held open by Dasein, as well as allowing Dasein to disclose itself and render the world more meaningful.

In order to provide a thorough analysis of what Heidegger calls “the phenomenon of world” (1986, p. 64/92), the above will be first approached through an analysis of his reception of Husserl’s critique of naturalism and the continuity and discontinuity of their analyses. The claim will be made that to fully appreciate what Heidegger means by “the phenomenon of world,” one must understand how worldliness or worldhood and nature are distinct from one another and yet phenomenologically interwoven. In assessing this, I will look to see what is at stake for Heidegger in his analysis of transcendental subjectivity and world prior to *Being and Time*, and whether he diverges from Husserl’s own critique of naturalism. In the first two sections, I will look at Heidegger’s analysis of Husserl’s critique of the naturalization of consciousness in order to assess how much of a non-naturalist Heidegger really is, before moving on to Heidegger’s own understanding of the phenomenon of world. Here I will focus on his analyses of the open structure of the world, the disclosiveness of Dasein, and the emergence of the problem of transcendence, arguing that the phenomenon of world is not reducible to Dasein’s way of being. What I mean by this is that Heidegger’s phenomenological analyses of Dasein and world have often been depicted, in contrast to Husserl’s analyses, as collapsing the all-important distinction between the human being and world, and ultimately reducing world to its “interwovenness” with Dasein’s being-in-the-world (Alweiss 2003, p. 80). This reading will be contested and the case will be made that his analysis of worldliness can be reconciled with his transcendental approach, insofar as the transcendental is extended through the notion of transcendence found in *Being and Time*, though developed more fully in the lecture courses from the late 1920s.

2 Heidegger’s Critique of Husserl

Like Husserl before him, the more traditionally phenomenological Heidegger of the middle and late 1920s was interested in recovering human being and world from pernicious forms of naturalism and absolute idealism. And he did so in much the same way as the later Heidegger attempts to recover human being and world

from calculative thinking and its assumption that the observable and measurable world is the one true reality. In the early 1923-24 Marburg lecture course, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, Heidegger addresses and endorses fully Husserl's critique of naturalism, by which he means scientific naturalism, wherein philosophical issues are best explained by, or at least must be consistent with, findings in natural science. In a very nuanced analysis of Husserl's phenomenological critique and how it should and should not be understood, he nonetheless asserts that Husserl's "care about already known knowledge" (1994, p. 57/43) is an epistemically driven and consciousness focused deficient form of existential-ontological care, leading to the loss of the historical and existentially experienced world. This, Heidegger claims, is carried out in the name of the higher "treasure trove of valid truths" (1994, p. 74/55). Consequently, while naturalism is ostensibly blind to the phenomenological accomplishments of transcendental consciousness, incapable of seeing the blindness inherent in taking consciousness to be an entity in the world, Husserl's transcendental method, and its commitment to intuitive self-giveness, is itself constitutionally incapable of reflecting on this non-derivative form of existentially situated care in our belonging to the world.

In these early lectures Heidegger claims that Husserl's transcendental methodological "purification" (*Reinigung*) of consciousness, while breaking new ground, is nonetheless a sanitizing of the lived historical dimension of care (1994, p. 51/38). This is done in the pursuit of the universally binding character of the absolute science of consciousness, and the entirety of Husserl's endeavor is carried out, Heidegger tells us, for the sake of "care about certainty" in the form of "already known knowledge" (1994, p. 63/84). What Heidegger is pointing to here is that while Husserl's "transcendental suspension of nature" (1994, p. 58/79) clearly challenges the one-sidedness of the modern scientific perspective, he nonetheless remains beholden to "the scientific tendency" underpinning naturalism. And it is Husserl's drive towards non-participative observation and description, its absolutizing of itself in securing incontrovertible evidence and certainty in the form of foundational principles beneath which one cannot go, that Heidegger finds both revolutionary and insufficiently revolutionary.

On Heidegger's reading, even if attempting to thematize the blindness and partiality that naturalism embodies, Husserl falls prey to a form of scientific certainty-bias, albeit in a purified transcendental register. This is to be seen in the so-called derivative form of care, exemplified in the phenomenological attitude itself, bringing with it the designated neglect of (as abstention from) the being of intentional life and the question of being as such (see 1975, p. 157/113). Simultaneously, this is a neglect of the existential-ontological character of historical life, which is evident in the critiques of both naturalism and historicism. Heidegger is careful to add, however, that such a neglect is not the same as forgetting, it is not a

mere oversight on Husserl's part, but rather what he terms the "virtual" banishing or "purification" of what falls outside the remit of ideal lawfulness. This is done, we are told, in the name of securing a science of consciousness and the comprehensiveness of reason (1994, p. 84/63). This amounts to accessing the field of pure consciousness by means of a *mathesis* of experience, bringing about the thematized narrowing of the world in the name of securing the sphere of "normatively determined and determinable being" (ibid). For Heidegger, this is nothing other than philosophy being injudiciously at the service of the previously identified "care about already known knowledge," prioritising absolute validity and evidence, while simultaneously abstaining from making existence and history relevant to phenomenology proper. Or as Heidegger puts it, "Care about already known knowledge has excluded human existence as such from any possibility of being encountered. History is degraded down one more level as a fund of material and collection of examples for philosophical notions. The tendency to get a grip on human existence is severed [...] The rigor demanded is missing" (1994, p. 94/68). What this amounts to, Heidegger claims, is that Husserl neglects the historical roots of his own philosophical questioning and misses the fact that his demand for clarity, distinctness, and absolute scientific status is itself borne out of the human being's openness to the world and the world's openness to the human.

While he is clear that Husserl is departing radically from Descartes, whose concept of the world, Heidegger writes, is nothing other than "the *objectivity of the apprehension of nature through calculative measurement*" (1979a, p. 245/181), he nonetheless comes to the conclusion that the being of intentional life and the being of the world are, for Husserl, reduced to a correlate of the characteristics of the ego and its personal and intergenerational habitualities. And by extension, it is a correlate of the achievements of an intersubjective community called transcendental humankind. Consequently, even though Husserl discovered something radically new, the care for certainty and evidence that his approach champions is, Heidegger continues, a "sedation of the being of knowing" [*Beruhigung des Seins des Erkennens*] (1994, p. 289/221). It is a tranquilizing of a fundamental modality of human existence, which amounts to the claim that the constitutively situated uncertainty of life sedates itself and even immunizes itself against the uncertainty or ambiguity of life. It sedates itself with certainty. Not only is Husserl's approach defined by what Heidegger terms "anxiety in the face of existence" (1994, p. 95/70), it is also a loss of the world by means of an abstraction that suspends the very thing that cannot be suspended, namely being in the world, in order to demonstrate that the objective world achieves its entire sense and its existential status from the transcendental ego, intersubjectively understood. Yet while Husserl is adamant that he is trying to retrieve the true sense of the world by bringing it into focus for the first time as the horizon of subjective possibilities, it would be problematic to

read Husserl as simply claiming that the real world is reducible to the accomplishments of pure consciousness. And yet it is also arguable that world, as the universal horizon of all phenomena, becomes little more than a guarantor of the unity of orderly and concordant intuitive appearances, with pure consciousness, what Husserl terms “the wonder of all wonders,” being both a space for the appearance of the world and its guarantor. Or as Husserl put it in his nachlass text, *Die Lebenswelt*: “The world that is valid for us is relative to us human beings, thereby primarily to our corporeal organization. The world, and first and foremost nature, is essentially relative to human organization. The world is accordingly not thinkable without a human organism with human psychic life, the life of experience.” (2008, p. 664)

3 Beyond Husserl: Heidegger’s Phenomenological Analysis of World

Pushing against Husserl, there is a phenomenologically rich account of experience in Heidegger’s early analysis of ‘things’ as it pertains to the possibility of relating their worldly-character to what he terms the “original science of life” (1993, p. 141–142/109). This is carried out in a manner that is not about determining ‘things’ as cultural, spiritual, or natural objects that stand over against subjects as agents of cognition. His discussion of the experience of things is focused instead on regaining a sense of the affective and eventlike nature of worldly experience. It is also focused on the meaningful interconnectedness that exists between things and our openness towards this meaningfulness, as well as how this has been arguably lost in Husserl’s insistence on the unworldly character of transcendental consciousness in its constituting transcendent reality as unities of meaning for consciousness.

In his analysis in *Being and Time*, things do not have existence in virtue of having sense bestowed upon them by a transcendental subject, or on the basis of intersubjective achievement, but in virtue of their belonging to a “referential context” (*Verweisungszusammenhänge*) or “referential totality” (*Bewandtnis-ganzheit*) that determines their essence in a worldly manner (1986, p. 70f./100f.). For instance, a book is a book because it embodies certain possibilities of use and application. And a book does not simply contain this possibility within itself as a discrete and isolated thing, but always in the context of shared understanding, and understanding is possible only for a being that can transcend this or that book and hold open the already opened world in which books can acquire public significance as cultural products. In his 1928 Freiburg lectures, *The Metaphysical*

Foundations of Logic, Heidegger describes this as “world-entry” (*Welteingang*). By this he means the structural dynamic of Dasein’s transcendence that allows for extant things to announce themselves as inner-worldly entities (1978, p. 250–251/194).

“World-entry” is another way of talking about the “world’s essential belonging to transcendence” (1978, p. 270/208) and the manner in which transcendence brings beings into a world of time and history (1978, p. 270/209). More specifically, “the event of world-entry” refers to Dasein’s historical worldly existence as the transcendental condition of the appearance of intelligible inner-worldly beings. Such an event is “the ecstatic happening of worlding” (Kisiel 2005, p. 201), where “worlding” refers to the intelligibility and meaningfulness of things. For instance, it is clear in *Being and Time* that the phenomenon of world is shaped by Dasein’s existence because the being of things depends on a disclosed context or horizon of assignment-relation that is constitutive of worldliness. In this sense, both in *Being and Time* and after, the world is the real transcendental theme, what he defines in 1928 as a “transcendental concept in the strictest sense of the term” (1978, p. 218/170). However, this is the case not because worldly meaning is derived from subjectivity or psychic life, but rather from the totality of disclosed contextual involvements that make up the world of inner-worldly entities as continually held-open by Dasein’s distinct mode of being. That is, the essence of Dasein is to transcend this or that being, existing beyond beings, and holding open the world in its being beyond or standing-out. The same is true of all understanding in that it must necessarily take its start from the world towards which it exists and from the historical and worldly context of meaning that precedes and exceeds it.

While Heidegger’s post-*Being and Time* analysis problematizes his earlier concept of the projective understanding of being, the phenomenon of world is never definable in terms of a totality of things experienced by this or that person. It is rather understandable as a dynamic totality of meaningful references opened up by world-entering transcendence. What Heidegger is bringing to the fore here is an understanding of the world as the “how of beings as a whole” (1996, p. 240), the necessary correlation between historical human existence, i.e., transcendence as belonging to the being of finite Dasein (1996, p. 214–216), and the phenomenon of world as the structural totality of meaning. Again, it is Heidegger’s account of finite being-in-the-world as both opened up and self-opening that makes the difference when it comes to his divergence from Husserl. And since transcendence is understood in the WS1928-29 lecture course *Einleitung in die Philosophie* as the ground of “philosophizing” itself (1996, p. 214), it is reasonable to assume that Heidegger believed Husserl did not “philosophize” in a sufficiently radical way.

It is consequently Heidegger’s commitment to rethinking the original structure of transcendence in transcendental terms, distinct from transcendental

subjectivity or intersubjectivity, which plays out in terms of transcendence shaping the world of meaningful references and relations, as well as exposing us to the nothingness and groundlessness of our being (1996, p. 353). It is therefore his concern with the finite groundlessness of transcendence and its opening of the world that is always already open that forms his critical rejoinder to Husserl for not having rooted the transcendental in human transcendence.

Heidegger draws attention to a stubborn theoretical bias: that there are simply psycho-physical states and corresponding external objects or states of affairs. And that such states are called intentional when there exists a physical object or state of affairs towards which those states are directed. For Heidegger, this is an altogether artificial and speculative construction that runs counter to phenomenological experience. So, when he claims to be radicalizing the Husserlian concept of intentionality, he means it precisely in this way: intentionality becomes the relational meaning of things as opened up by Dasein's world-openness and transcendence. Things, for Heidegger, like Husserl, show up in terms of relations of significance and not as bare objects of sense data. And to be human means to be the discloser and sustainer of such meaningfulness, with this meaningfulness, however, having a life of its own beyond the disclosing. Meaningfulness is thus the world's primary ontological characteristic. While Husserl situates meaning and its bestowal firmly within the noetic realm of subjective and intersubjective life, Heidegger appears to account for both the noetic and noematic sense, with the inter-relatedness of Dasein's disclosiveness, subsequently taken up in his analysis of transcendence, and the meaningfulness of the world in excess of this disclosure. The two are separable, though not separate.

Again, Heidegger is inspired by Husserl, but takes it in a direction other than the one outlined by Husserl in *Ideas 1*, where intentionality is defined as a "fundamental property of consciousness" (1991, p. 349) as well as the universal and unified "stream of mental processes" (*ibid.*). For this reason, we are told, Husserl does not develop the consequences of his intentional analysis more originally.

4 The World as an Open and Opened Whole

Dasein and world are irreducible. And because of this Eugen Fink's critical appraisal of Heidegger's concept of world as exclusively constituted through Dasein's modes of existing – what Fink sees as the all too neat identification of world with Dasein – is, I believe, incorrect (Fink 2016, 66; 68). Admittedly, the analyses of world in *Being and Time* have little explicit interest in the world of nature as a domain of phenomenological significance in and of itself. For Heidegger, the world is addressed in a twofold manner: (1) world is a

transcendental-horizonal “no-thing,” what he terms a *nihil originarium*, making possible the appearance of things, without itself being a thing. And (2) world is simultaneously bound up with the “world-forming” (*weltbildend*) (1983, p. 263/177) manner of human existence, namely, the particular openness, being-thrown, and projective understanding that belongs to the human being (1978, p. 251/195). Yet, I believe it is wrong to say that the world, for Heidegger, is a product of our disclosive existential-ontological activity, since to say this would land Heidegger squarely back in the type of explanatory metaphysics of subjectivity he sought to criticize.

However, the above twofold analysis of world does not appear to be all that far from Husserl’s position, insofar as Husserl, too, would say that the world is the “horizon of all horizons” and that the move to the transcendental sphere should be understood in terms of thematizing the world-forming nature of transcendental consciousness. That said, Husserl would not say that this structural relatedness and openness is an ontological feature of worldliness as such. In *Experience and Judgement*, for instance, Husserl speaks of the “totality of nature” as the “absolute substrate” of experience and as the “universe of material bodies” (1985, p. 159–160/139). Yet he also says that we never encounter such a substrate in single and simple experiences, adding that the “experience of the totality of nature is founded in the prior experiences of individual bodies” (1985, p. 155/137). In other words, there is, for Husserl, a founding structure in our experience of the world that points to an ultimate, non-reducible substrate, which is “the objective reality of nature,” and yet this substrate is always “a fact for the ego” and “not a fact that exists for itself and without any relation to the ego” (1966, p. 215/268). Hence, the world, for Husserl, is constituted as a human world, and nature is similarly constituted as “a unity of possible harmonious experiences” (2003, p. 160) for the subject and only conceivable thusly. Heidegger’s account is different in this regard. For Heidegger, we do not proceed from the experience of individual bodies in order to genetically grasp nature as a substrate. The world, displaying a genuine form of ‘worldliness,’ presents itself as a structural openness bound up with the poetic receptivity of the human being in holding it open. Importantly, however, this structural openness is always more than the receptive and active holding open which is constitutive of Dasein’s way of being. The function of this holding open then is to sustain and illuminate world-openness that would remain indeterminate and unexperienced absent of Dasein.

This notwithstanding, like Husserl before him, though always focussing on the finite nature of the world and our openness to it as a structural no-thing, Heidegger is trying to think together the transcendent dimension of the world as an open whole and the role the human being plays in disclosing the world. The world, which is not the world of nature observed as an extant entity, is for Heidegger

modes of facilitating and engendering ontologically conceived intentional correlations and their meaning actualisation. Thus, insofar as a world is held open, correlations between acts and their objects can be rendered thematic. I take Heidegger's approach to be one that resists assigning absolute priority to either the bare or occurrent thing or to the subjective manner of disclosing the thing, focussing instead on the twin concerns of the ontological structure of world-openness and Dasein's corresponding world-openness as disclosive. And while Heidegger always insists on the relational participant-recipient structure of human experience, he also emphasizes that neither the subjective manner of understanding nor the object as understood can manifest itself outside of the openness of the world. Hence, his main focus is on grounding the intentional correlation between act and object, or understanding and thing understood, on the openness of the world, and not simply on the poles of the correlation. Because of this, Heidegger takes up the issue of intentionality, but only as a starting point, transforming it into the care-structure of human existence and locating it in the unique manner of moved, temporal and affective human life. Departing from Husserl, but also eschewing any form of naturalism, he claims that taken together the two poles of the participant-recipient structure are themselves possible only because of world-openness. This is the transcendental movement of the transcendent world, which is not what is beyond or behind the appearances, but rather what allows act and object pole to appear as correlates in the first place.

He thus follows a path opened up by Husserl, yet radicalizes it by looking at the transcendental problematic in terms of the conditions of possibility of appearing as such, including the appearance of a psycho-psychical subject and a physical object, and reflecting on those conditions historically. Yet by 1911, Husserl had already criticized Dilthey's historicism because of what he saw as the specter of historical relativism, indicating the need to distinguish between a science of historical consciousness, a factual science, and science of objective validity. In the name of scientific "rigor," this leads Husserl to contrast "science as a cultural phenomenon and science as a valid systematic theory" (1965, p. 125).

But as Heidegger replies, "In the critique of historicism it is evident that the care and what it is concerned about—absolute validity in the interest of shaping the idea of humanity—put the existence of the human being and genuine interrogation of it out of play" (1994, p. 95/69). With this reference to something being put "out of play," Heidegger is obviously pointing to what must be suspended in the name of phenomenological abstention, and as suspended it becomes surplus to phenomenological analysis. This is the case because Husserl, fearing that historicism will lead to skepticism, does not fully examine how the contrast between factual and absolute validity comes into being in the first place. And when he does, he is forced to choose between two grounds: the concrete and factual or the intellectual and rational. As Heidegger sees it, Husserl does not give an account of how the contrast

between these two spheres, “absolute validity” and “holding something to be valid” (1994, p. 95/70), is itself possible, with only “a squinting glance at [anxiety-inducing and uncertain] existence” being offered (ibid.). The point is that the contrast between validity and factuality is itself derived from a historical worldly openness to which we are already disposed and limiting the analysis to these two spheres is tantamount, Heidegger claims, to the analysis becoming “unfree” (1994, p. 95/70).

Distancing himself significantly from the letter of Husserlian phenomenology, a phenomenological analysis of world, for Heidegger, means examining the historical world openness that makes theory and analysis first possible. In pursuing the question of the historical world openness that renders the two spheres of being, factual and ideal, possible, he both remains faithful to Husserl’s efforts to ensure that meaning, truth and logic get reduced neither to the psychological sphere nor banished to an unworldly region. Yet he redirects Husserl’s energies in claiming that meaning, truth, and logic are valid for everyone because we move within an openness, established by historical being-in-the-world, that is not simply a product of the human, even if essentially having the character of the human as a meaningful whole, which is the phenomenon of world.

For Heidegger, intentionality is shifted from the centrifugal sphere of conscious experience and its constitutive structures, its directedness at the world, and redirected toward the opened and open space of appearances which are disclosed by the mode of being of the human as standing out towards the world and holding a horizon in front of itself. Everything that exists as disclosed and uncovered is taken as stemming from this radicalized notion of intentionality, which is reframed in terms of the moved standing-out care-structure of human existence as constitutive of the meaning of being which is sharpened further in the late 1920s through the concept of transcendence and world entry. Heidegger refashions Husserl’s theory of intentionality because he feels Husserl remains beholden to a modern conception of subjectivity. However, to be clear, the appearance of things or the appearance of objective sense is, for Husserl, not the result of an intellectual synthesis. Instead of a heterogenous bundle of sensations that need ordering, we perceive objects in an orderly way because the object is one and the same and because being conscious involves conferring sense on an already orderly experience. Yet it is the understanding of the human being as a sense-bestowing, as a transcendental subject, that Heidegger finds most difficult to live with. Therefore, while Husserl does not view intentionality as a psychic event, he does see it as the mode of being of consciousness.

However, the development of Heidegger’s relationship to transcendental phenomenology is important here. While Heidegger grappled with the concept of intentionality throughout the 1920s, the account of intentionality he provides in his 1927 Marburg lecture course, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, is not altogether dissimilar to Husserl’s. This lecture course starts with the claim that “it

is precisely intentionality and nothing else in which transcendence consists” (1975, p. 89/63), modifying this account significantly a year later, and moving to the more radicalized conception of intentionality found in the 1928 Marburg lecture course. This course, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, concludes with the stronger claim that “transcendence, being-in-the-world, is never to be identified and equated with intentionality” (1978, p. 215/168). The concept of intentionality is here taken up into the problematic of transcendence as Dasein’s mode of being. Clearly dissatisfied with fundamental misunderstandings of being-in-the-world and care-structure as a whole as nothing more than a warmed-over existential take on Husserl’s concept of intentionality, he writes, “Dasein itself is the passage across ... Transcendence is the fundamental constitution of its being” (1978, p. 211/165).

This developmental tension and the emergence of Heidegger’s unease with Husserl’s version of transcendental phenomenology notwithstanding, he continues to affirm that Husserl was insufficiently radical in questioning the pre-suppositions of the modern conception of subjectivity when developing his concept of intentionality. And if we are to get to the essence of the intentional, we need to move from subjectivity to world as the “original play of transcendence” (1996, p. 310–311) so as to examine the appearance of meaning and its historical lineage. Clearly, meaning is not to be understood here in terms of its having been bestowed by a transcendental subject, or even transcendental intersubjective and intergenerational constitution. It is understood, rather, in terms of the totality of human practices and practical contexts of meaning that make up the human world as historical. As is clear from the WS1928-29 lecture course, though not fully developed in *Being and Time*, Heidegger is trying to bring together, as opposed to “put out of play,” the “play character of life as transcendence” and “the wholeness of world” (ibid.) that make human practices and practical contexts of meaning possible in the first place. Dasein is hence not a subject that playfully confers meaning on encountered factual objects or states of affairs, but is rather the site through which the phenomenon of world can show up or make itself felt. Dasein is the site through which being and the world can appear as always having been disclosed and understood, though never as an object of knowledge.

What Heidegger brings to the fore is that the world gives us meaning as much as we contribute meaning to the world. Of course, our unique frame of reference sets the terms in which that meaning can show up, but we remain significantly participative and receptive to what is given. To arrive at this insight, it was necessary for Heidegger to overhaul concepts such as intentionality and sense-bestowal, to overhaul the transcendental, and to center it around the kind of being that both understands and occupies itself with what it means when we say something *is*. For Heidegger, no form of subjectivity, be it empirical or transcendental, can account for this sufficiently because subjectivity itself is an “arbitrary”

and “phantom construction” of something more original, existing prior to the construction and yet occluded by it (ibid. 115).

5 Nature as Un-Worlded World

Heidegger appears however to be committed to some form of constitutive transcendental analysis in that the holding opening of the world, or world-entry as transcendence, takes place by way of existential-ontological sense-making and understanding. This is precisely what he terms the unbracketable “a priori perfect” (1986, p. 85/117) or the “ontological or transcendental perfect” (1986, p. 441–442) structure of Dasein’s mode of being. This he takes as both inhabiting a world of sense that exceeds our constitutive powers, being towards a world that is always more than our relation to it, and holding it open as what is both inescapably mine and yet common to all. Consequently, to return to things as they are in the world is to return to things as they are given in a relational context. And yet to return to these things in the knowledge that their transcendence is always more than their immediate context and hence more than my disclosive involvement with them.

Things of this sort constitute ‘nature’ in what *Being and Time* terms the “the environment-nature” (*die Umweltnatur*) (1986, p. 71/100). Nature is thus not exclusively an object of natural science but rather something that needs to be retrieved from the world of what is available. Nature is the specific world of natural being which has been reduced to an extant collection of things. As he puts it in *Being and Time*: “The ‘Nature’ which ‘surrounds’ us is, of course, an entity within-the-world, but it displays the kind of Being which belongs neither to the ready-to-hand nor to what is present-at-hand as ‘Things of Nature’” (1986, p. 211/254). This claim is, I believe, what causes Heidegger to write a year later: “World is only, if, and as long as a Dasein exists. Nature can also be when no Dasein exists” (1975, p. 242/169; 249/175).

That Heidegger is both recognizing and endorsing the important difference between extant nature and world is again evident in the following claim in his 1925 lecture course *History of the Concept of Time*:

Nature is what is in principle explainable and to be explained because it is in principle incomprehensible [unverständlich]. It is the incomprehensible pure and simple. And it is the incomprehensible because it is the ‘unworlded’ world [die Entweltlichung der Welt], insofar as we take nature in this extreme sense of the entity as it is discovered in physics. This is connected with the fact that in this kind of explanation and discovery of the world as nature, nature is still investigated and interrogated only with regard to the presence of the entity in it; and this entity is admitted only insofar as it is determined by laws of motion which remain invariant, unaltered, always the same for every possible approach and regard under which the consideration of nature is placed (1979b, p. 298/217).

At first the above does not seem to tally with the understanding of nature found in *Being and Time*, in which nature is first considered as material for ready-to-hand entities or as present-at-hand objects of factual scientific research. Yet as noted above, in *Being and Time* Heidegger also defines nature as more than the materials of the ready-to-hand and present-at-hand, which means that at bottom nature is an excess that is nonsensical (*widersinnig*), indicating worldliness as the horizon of all sense-making (1986, p. 152/193). It is important to note, however, that Heidegger is not trying to define nature as ineffable, and hence as a realm worthy of awe and reverence. What he is pointing to, instead, is nature as always more than its cognitive capture and to the limits of categorial determination: nature as an object of cognition, or nature as an object of use. Or as Heidegger puts it in *Being and Time*:

We can abstract from nature's kind of being as handiness; we can discover and define it in its pure objective presence. But in this kind of discovery nature, nature as what 'stirs and strives,' what overcomes us [*uns überfällt*], entrances [*gefangen*] us as landscape, remains hidden. The botanist's plants are not the flowers in the hedgerow (1986, p. 95/66).

What I believe he is advancing in the above and throughout the middle and late 1920s is an understanding of the being of nature as an excess that nonetheless strikes us and gets mediated through worldliness and world-entry, namely, the becoming meaningful and worldly of what is, in essence, *widersinnig*. It is in this sense that Heidegger claims that "*nature as reality can only be understood on the basis of worldliness*" (1979, p. 298/199), and yet he stops short of saying that nature is reducible to worldliness, or that worldliness is reducible to the being of Dasein as transcending. His claim then that "*nature is a boundary case of the being [*Grenzfall des Seins*] of possible innerworldly beings*" (1986, p. 88/61) amounts to recognizing that the being of nature, while being mediated through worldliness, is always more than world, prior to world, and thus is at its core "*unsinnig*" and "*unverständlich*" (1979a, p. 202/142; 298/217).

Accordingly, what "being a thing" (*Dingsein*) means for Heidegger is the way in which a thing makes itself felt in those affordances or concerns of world involvement. What is characteristic of everyday concern is the fact that things present themselves within a more or less familiar, dynamic, and purposeful context of reference, designated by Heidegger as the "world of concern" through which nature is mediated (1979a, p. 70/99). Directly challenging attempts to construe the world as a product of immediately given sense data or even as the totality of things on hand, he declares: "*nature as reality can only be understood on the basis of worldliness*" (1979b, p. 271/199). This does not mean, however, that nature as extant being is a constitutive part of worldliness, but rather that an understanding of worldliness cannot be extrapolated from the concept of nature as

extant material existence, because an understanding of nature is possible only by way of worldliness. Here Heidegger appears to be operating with a founding verses founded distinction, with the “entitative relationship” between things being derivative on a more original ontological grounding. The point here is that “nature is present primarily in a worldly way” (ibid.) and as such occurrent things do not first show up as isolated sensible and material things and then become worldly. Nature is always mediated and made sense of by way of worldliness.

Things are hence not simply extant objects or component pieces of the natural physical world standing apart from us *qua* natural physical subjects. We are not only struck by occurrent things; we are integral to their coming into and passing out of being in our engagement with them as meaningful. Yet not all that far from Husserl, this should neither be taken to mean that things are dependent upon us for their reality, nor that things are just out there as bare occurrent entities in the physical world. The human being does not create or construct things, although in letting things appear there is enacted the *poietic* capacity of bringing something into the world, and simultaneously being claimed by what is brought into the world. That we are essential to things and their worldly meaningfulness signifies that nothing that exists relationally can do so without making a worldly claim on us, even if the claim is not evident to us. To say that we are essential to things is to say that we do not exist apart from a nexus of meaningful ontological relations. But more than that, for Heidegger the world is open and held open as intelligible both by our manner of existing, later termed transcendence, and by the nexus of worldly relations that exist between things, in excess of our manner of existing. This is not to understand the givenness of objects of experience as determined or conceptually circumscribed by subjects, but rather as facilitated by our world-forming understanding, allowing worldly relations to exceed our manner of disclosing them.

Consequently, when Heidegger states in *Being and Time* that “Dasein is its world existingly” (1986, p. 364/416), it is also the case that world-existence is not reducible to Dasein’s mode of being and that what he means by this is that the world is again held open and given more determinateness by Dasein. Thus world-openness, which is constitutive of our experience, is sustained by Dasein’s ‘being-in-the-world’ and not constructed by it. Thus, it is the all-important distinction between reciprocal (yet irreducible) world-openness as ontological structure, nature as excess, “*unsinnig*,” “*unverständlich*” and “*widersinnig*,” and the existential-ontological holding-open of world, that allows us to differentiate worldliness, nature, and Dasein in a manner that some readers, such as Lilian Alweiss, claim is both impossible and untenable (2003, p. 80f.)

In the years after *Being and Time* Heidegger struggled with the starting point and subjective-theoretical bias of transcendental phenomenology, insisting with

even greater emphasis on the “finite” nature of “philosophizing,” and on the fact that only the human being and the phenomenon of world have “existence” in the true sense of the term (1996, p. 71). And yet in his WS1928-29 lecture course, he still insists that *his* concept of the “transcendental,” rooted in the concept of “transcendence,” is “more fundamental, more original, and more expressive” than Kant’s or Husserl’s use of the term (1996, p. 209), specifically because “ontological truth is grounded in the transcendence of Dasein; it is transcendental” (1996, p. 207). As such, from 1928 to 1929, transcendental phenomenology is possible only by way of a thorough determination of and reflection on Dasein *as* finite transcendence.

The phenomenon of world, as a transcendental theme and correlate of finite transcendence, is therefore not understandable in terms of what surrounds us, that is, a profusion of objects or interests known or as yet unknown, useable or useless. Rather, the phenomenon of world is understandable only by analyzing the corresponding mode of being of the human being as world-entering and world-forming and thus as transcending “the encompassing contextual ring of living beings” (1983, p. 403/278). This move evinces Heidegger’s radicalization of Husserl’s highly formalized concept of the transcendental in terms of disclosively understanding the world as both the open and held open totality of referential signification, prior to the world being uncovered in a propositional attitude. This means that the world is understood originally as interconnecting modes of being with myself and with others in holding open relations of significance among things and in understanding (or failing to understand) myself as inhabiting an open and free space of possibility that always exceeds my possibilities.

The critique of naturalism found in Heidegger’s lecture course from 1923 to 1929, and his indebtedness to Husserl’s critique of naturalism, stems from an understanding of the altogether strange and seemingly paradoxical claim regarding the non-appearance of the world absent of the human being, and the world, understood as structural articulation of appearances characterized by an open wholeness. Again, this openness is not produced by the human being, but needs to be disclosed and held open by way of transcendence. Importantly, Heidegger notes in *Being and Time* that letting something be does not mean making or producing something, but rather uncovering something in as much as it is *already* this something, and encountering it as it is, freed for its referential involvement (1986, p. 85/117). And while Heidegger claims that the world is “Dasein-ish” (*daseinsmäßig*), that the being of the world is distinct from the extantness of occurrent objects, he is simultaneously wary of what he calls the “heresy of subjectivism” creeping in the backdoor (1975, p. 237/166–167). Throughout the 1920s he insists that the world is not a product of Dasein and that reconceiving the sense

of the world brings with it the need to reconceive what it means for the human to be *in* or *toward* the world.

Therefore, there is, for Heidegger, no return to ego or consciousness. Instead, what we need is an understanding of worldliness as an open whole and what allows for this understanding is the mode of Dasein's being *as* existing understandingly. The projective understanding of *Being and Time* is subsequently taken up in what he sees as transcendental world-entering which is, at its core, the "original play of transcendence" (1996, p. 310–311). The existential-analytic of *Being and Time* is thus provisional because the Dasein analysis is primarily an ontological clue that is essential to understanding the analogous (though not identical) phenomenon of world. Consequently, any reconceived understanding of the world is simultaneously a reconceiving of the meaning of human existence as the holding open of the referential context of worldly meaning.

When it come to the irreducible nature of Dasein and world, it is noteworthy that in *Being and Time* Heidegger comes to define the always more of experience in terms of the "worldliness of the world" as revealed in the fundamental attunement of anxiety, in which the meaningfulness of inner-worldly things no longer has purchase on me. And yet in this interruptive and revealing moment, what "obtrudes," as Heidegger puts it, is the "world in its worldliness" (SZ, p. 187/231). Put simply, this open whole is the transcendental condition of the possibility of things and their meaningfulness showing up and it has a form of "presence" all of its own (1979, 256/189, see Dahlstrom 2001, p. 228–229). What Heidegger is claiming is that the referential frame sets the terms in which meaning can show up, but Dasein is a participant and recipient of what is given and hence the world puts meaning into us as much as we put meaning into the world. And it is because of the modification of perspective, triggered by the fundamental attunement of anxiety, that the unique mode of givenness of such a condition is indicated (though not "conceptualized" [SZ, p. 187/232]) as a "*pale and inconspicuous presence*" (1979, p. 256/189).

The world is thus both a dynamic a priori medium through which the unity of references and relations emerge, as well as a sphere disclosed by the transcending of "being-in" that displays the "character of inconspicuous familiarity" (SZ, p. 104/137). This is the case because relations between certain 'subjective acts' and their 'objects' are only thematizable for the 'subject' because the world, this dynamic structural whole, has already been disclosed. It is because of this continually presupposed a priori openness that the world can become thinkable. Therefore, for Heidegger, neither Dasein's understanding, allowing the openness to unfold and obtain (see 1976a, p. 150/126), nor the existent thing as understood, "exist" before or outside of the openness of worldliness.

6 Reconceiving ‘Worldliness’ and Reconciling it with the Transcendental

In Heidegger’s analysis, the world is a surrounding openness through which possibilities of the self and the appearance of things come to be as relational significations manifest themselves. Therefore, possibilities are brought to light because they are held open *as* possibilities by human existence, understood in terms of transcendence. Hence, meaning exists in the world because it is nothing other than an understanding of meaning as an engagement with what concerns me, which is rendered possible by the reciprocal openness of human being and world, and not primarily by thethetic components of consciousness. The world, which is held open by human Dasein as sense-discloser, is thus a structural articulation of a comprehensible whole that permits sense to be brought to light without the human being functioning as the sole originator of sense. This is why it is wrong to understand Heidegger’s analysis of world as far less extensive than Husserl’s because it is more unashamedly Dasein-centered, less object-focused, and ultimately reduces the world to Dasein’s disclosive immanence (see Alweiss 2003, p. 81f.). For Heidegger, fending off the previously mentioned “heresy of subjectivism” and the quicksand of idealism, the subject, in his non-subjectivistic reconceiving of the subject, does not overlay things with sense, nor does sense simply inhere in things, but is instead drawn out further into the world only insofar as it is already accessible nascently, demanding encounter and explication.

Heidegger’s analysis of the world of experience is thus not wedded to an understanding of the world in which things are just there in themselves as bare entities, independent of subjective experience, and then subsequently experienced and apprehended. Nor is the experience of things for him the previously mentioned categorial apprehension of things *as* experienced. It is in this sense that one can say that the world, for Heidegger, is experienced as the open communality of things and spaces of possibility. And this is not subjective if by subjective one is referring to psychic interiority, or to an image we have of ourselves as monadic centres of activity or interest, since the ‘subjectivity’ that Heidegger is referring to is a totality of ‘subjectively’ open and opened centres of possibility, which are actualisable because the world is always already open, drawing Dasein further out into such openness.

Accordingly, things offer themselves to me from a certain perspective not because of the unity of my psycho-physical point of view on these things. Instead, I look at them and am drawn in by them because they are collocated and ordered into a certain system of compatible references whose wholeness points to world-horizon as an open ‘no-thing’. Things make demands on me because they are

entwined with historicity, and hence replete with meanings and practical purposes to which I am receptive and participative. This amounts to the following: I can thematize and enter into an intentional relation with a certain set of possibilities, be they practical or theoretical, only because I have been thrown into a space of interrelated intelligibility articulations that shape these particular possibilities in advance. Thus, the meaningfulness that determines the structure of the world is not a network of relations that an at first worldless subject lays over some kind of encountered material that offers itself up as possibly useful or interesting.

The human being, understanding itself, others, and its world in the unity of being-there-together, comes back from the structure of world-openness (which is not entity) to the entities encountered within and thanks to that structure. Moving from the dynamic structural no-thing of world-openness to these entities in world-entering as holding open is the existential meaning of ‘letting things be’ by ‘making’ them present. It is this approach that is contrasted with what Heidegger terms ‘representational thinking’ which takes the world as something that can be put before the subject.

Therefore, if the modern scientific manner of examining the world starts by removing all reference to what is subjective, limiting itself to an examination of the recurrent properties that belong to the world independently of our knowing it, for Heidegger the world is not a way of characterizing entities absent of Dasein; it is rather “a characteristic of Dasein itself” (SZ, p. 64/92). Yet this claim is not without some ambiguity. For instance, as previously mentioned, Eugen Fink argues that Heidegger’s analysis of world amounts to understanding human existence not as “being ‘in’ the world,” but rather *being* “the world,” with the world, as he puts it, “transferred to the subject” (Fink 2016, p. 68).

As we have seen, it is clear that Dasein plays a constitutive role when it comes to accounting for the being of the world and the emergence of meaning. Yet I believe it is wrong to claim that the world is reducible to Dasein’s way of being, or that world, as a dynamic structural openness, is something Dasein achieves. Heidegger himself rejects such an interpretation as a failure “to grasp the decisive problem” of world (1983, p. 413/285). What he means is that Dasein always finds itself thrown into a world that is already open, and because of this the world is to be seen neither as a product of subjectivity nor as a complex of circumstantial practices established by human understanding. What he is alive to is the necessary structural relation between the horizon of world and appearance or manifestation. This is why the world is more fully understood as interrelated ways of being with myself and with others in actualizing possibilities that the world, the open “*manifestness of beings as such as a whole*” (1983, p. 414/286), already facilitates an encounter with (see Malpas 2012, p. 28).

It is certainly the case that the previously mentioned referential totality of meaning is disclosed through Dasein’s manner of being, and that “only Dasein can

be meaningful” (SZ, p. 151/193). I do not want to suggest otherwise. However, it does not follow that meaning is disclosed starting from Dasein and only because of Dasein. What I am claiming could be summarized thusly: while the world can show up as meaningful only to a being that can freely disclose it and engage with it by means of transcendence, it would be wrong to claim that the world and the particular givenness that defines the being of the world is dependent on the ‘subject’ as discloser of meaning. Without the human being, there would be no appearing, granted. But appearing, as the structural articulation belonging to the phenomenon of world, is not under the sway of the human being and is most certainly not reducible to it. For instance, as previously noted, Heidegger makes it clear in *Being and Time* that “letting something be” what it *is* does not mean making or producing something. Instead, it means “that something which is already an ‘entity’ must be discovered in its readiness-to-hand, and that one must thus let the entity which has this being be encountered” (SZ, p. 85/117). And throughout the 1920s he returns to the phenomenon of world, irreducible as it is to traditional forms of idealism and realism, insisting that his phenomenological goal is to reconceive the nature of ‘subjectivity’ in tandem with reconceiving what it means to experience the givenness of the world as the enabling condition of meaning.

The challenge then is to ascertain how the world, which “exists” and has “Dasein’s mode of being” (1975, p. 237/166), the world as “something Dasein-ish” (ibid.), is nonetheless neither a product of subjectivity nor an aggregate of extant things. One way of doing this is to look at how the human being, as discloser of the world, is simultaneously confronted with the open and dynamic structure of worldliness, giving meaning to its own existence in this confrontation (ibid.). This giving meaning to its own existence, existence questioning itself against the horizon of the world, certainly has an impact on world as an open whole. This is the case insofar as the inconspicuous domain of transcendental worldliness is “lit up” (SZ, p. 75–76/105–107) or thematized, becoming thinkable, though not as an object or empty horizon containing objects (Held 1999, p. 9).

The fundamental point Heidegger is driving at is that meaning does not dwell in the interiority of consciousness, or in the achievements of subjectivity or intersubjectivity, but instead unfolds in the openness of the world as the region of possible intelligibility. This is, for the human being, the totality of its possible *praxeis* that the openness of the world affords it and its capacities enable. The world is taken not as an empty container that receives its orderliness from human consciousness, nor is it taken as a totality of sensibly given bare things laid out before consciousness. It is rather conceived as a continually unfolding space replete with meaning towards which the human being transcends and enacts itself. The world is accordingly an openness through which possibilities come into being,

and meanings are what accrue to such possibilities as they become more and more manifest in their being actualized. Meaningfulness is thus “a categorial determination of the world” and the world is a coherent structural openness through which meanings are brought to light, becoming available and practically knowable (1985, p. 90/68). Accordingly, human existence is defined as “‘subjective’ *a priori* being-in-the-world” (SZ, p. 110/144) because being-in-the-world means living *towards* the openness of sense, actualizing possibilities via the whole pre-given web of referential meaning that is the world.

Heidegger is not wrong then when he notes that the concept of the world, shaped as it has been by the extremes of idealism and realism, must be reconceived radically so as to avoid the blindness of “realism” as well as the “ungenuine subjectivism” of various forms of idealism (1975, p. 249/175). In his attempt to reconceive subjectivity, the point he is making is that the web of possible meanings and *praxis* relations cannot emerge absent of the human being. And yet this does not imply that meaning is created by the human being. In a word, the subject does not construct meaning out of experience, but explicates it in its receptive and participative encounter with the world. It brings meaning out into the open, but only insofar as it is already available and afforded by the world.

7 Conclusion

Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis of the world is driven by perceived insufficiencies in the modern account of subjectivity and objectivity. It is also bound up with the interconnectedness of world and nature, the latter becoming truly comprehensible only by means of worldhood, and yet nature is not simply conceived as the other of the world. And for this reason, Heidegger offers us the tools to critically dismantle the modern concepts of subject and object, arguing that at its core the human being is constitutively inclined toward the world of practical knowing as a mode of transcendence. The human being is thus not understood as a subject exposed to sensory experience as the building blocks of propositional or conceptual knowledge of the world. Rather, the world is more fully understood as interrelated ways of being with myself and with others in actualizing possibilities that the world already facilitates an encounter with. Being worldly then means being constitutively relational and engaged in the task of sustaining meaning relations, with world being understood as both the totality of meaning references, as well as the inconspicuous and dynamic horizon of such references that he calls *Weltlichkeit*. For Heidegger, a philosophy of the inside or of the outside are themselves products of the theoretical bias and amount to a withdrawal from the world and world engagement. Meaning is not to be located in

psychological interiority, nor is it to be found in bare occurrent things. For instance, when I think or write, I do not withdraw into the life of the mind as an isolated non-worldly sphere. Rather, I reflect on the possibilities that the world has already afforded me prior to reflecting. It is for this reason that Heidegger claims in *Being and Time* that “Being-in-the-world is already ‘outside’ when it understands” (SZ, p. 162/205).

Being in the world is thus not reducible to the cognizing activity of an un-worldly transcendental ‘subject’ because only a ‘subject’ that belongs to the world can make sense of and engage with worldly phenomena. Obviously, one’s thought processes have an internal life and a manner of self-givenness which are uniquely particularized. However, such processes can take place and become uniquely mine because of what the world has already afforded me as worthy of reflection and common to all. The upshot is that meaning manifestation is possible only by way of human existence as the relational worldly activity of transcendence. This notwithstanding, the openness of the world, as a transcendental structural nothing, is always in excess of our transcending disclosure, pointing to the inconspicuous whole through which disclosure becomes possible. The tension in Heidegger’s account of the phenomenon of world is that meaning appears to be both “the world’s primary ontological characteristic” (2004, p. 24/17) and the primary mode of our “encounter” with it (2004, p. 25/19).

Throughout the 1920s, with many tensions and shifts of emphasis, Heidegger returns to the fundamental question of the world to which Dasein’s world-openness corresponds. In the 1929-30 lecture course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, such openness corresponds to the “manifestness of beings as such as a whole” (1983, p. 412/284) to which Dasein always responds. Therefore, while “world is the designation for human Dasein in the core of its essence” (1976b, p. 154/120), what this amounts to is that the holding-open of the open is the work of Dasein in its world-forming engagement with the world. Yet the openness of the world is itself concealed, or at least one “can never look upon the phenomenon of world directly” (1983, p. 431/298), in the sense that one cannot give an account of it – because, as a no-thing whole, it accounts for everything. And yet it is possible to experience, indicate, and think this surpassive and inconspicuous wholeness.

Heidegger’s reference to world as the “manifestness of beings as such as a whole” (1983, p. 412/284), which again is not the aggregate of extant things or entities in the world, is a development on his *Being and Time* account of worldliness as an ontological concept. There world was analysed on the basis of Dasein’s capacity for projective understanding, practical comportment, and the structure of equipmentality. This is one of the main reasons why the interpretation of the world as practical-equipmental can only ever be a partial analysis of what Heidegger means by Dasein’s constitutive relation to the world. In the lecture courses after

Being and Time, the above “manifestness” is still constitutively related to Dasein, but is also in excess of Dasein’s projective understanding and the teleology of usefulness, with world getting defined as “the free surpassive counter-hold” (*übertrifftige Widerhalt*), distinguishable from Dasein’s manner of being as the “upswing” (*Überschwung*) of transcendence (1978, p. 249/193). At this juncture, the transcendental element is again noteworthy: one can encounter things or states of affairs as meaningful because of Dasein’s disclosiveness and because of the context of meaning and its historical and temporal particularity. But this open context of meaning has itself been freed to become understandable and available to us thanks to worldliness. Consequently, it does not come down to deciding between whether it is really all about Dasein or all about being, but rather reflecting on the phenomenon of world as the open site that facilitates the co-belonging of distinct elements that can co-belong only because they are not reducible to one another.

Acknowledgments: Thanks goes to Thomas Sheehan and Jeff Malpas, and to the two anonymous reviewers, for their valuable and critical comments.

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