

Heidegger on Assertion, Method and Metaphysics

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Abstract: In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger makes several claims about the nature of 'assertion' [*Aussage*]. These claims are of particular philosophical interest: they illustrate, for example, important points of contact and divergence between Heidegger's work and philosophical movements including Kantianism, the early Analytic tradition and contemporary pragmatism. This article provides a new assessment of one of these claims: that assertion is connected to a 'present-at-hand' ontology. I also indicate how my analysis sets the stage for a new reading of Heidegger's further claim that assertion is an explanatorily derivative phenomenon. I begin with a loose overview of Heidegger's position and then develop a sharper formulation of the key premises. I go on to argue that existing treatments of the supposed link between assertion and the 'present-at-hand' are unsatisfactory, and advance a new, 'methodological', interpretation of that link. Finally, I sketch the implications of my interpretation for the further claim that assertion is explanatorily derivative.

1. Introduction

In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger makes several claims about 'assertion' [*Aussage*]. Two are of particular importance. Firstly, he states that there is some connection between assertion and a specific ontology—an ontology of the 'present-at-hand'. Given the importance of the relevant passage, I cite at length:

The entity which is held in our fore-having—for instance, the hammer—is initially ready-to-hand (*zunächst zuhanden*) as an item of equipment. If this entity becomes the 'object' of an assertion [*'Gegenstand' einer Aussage*], then as soon as we begin with this assertion, there is already a changeover in the fore-having. *The ready-to-hand entity with which we have to do or perform something, turns into something 'about which' ['Worüber'] the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. Both by and for this way of looking at it, the ready-to-hand becomes veiled as ready-to-hand. . . . Only now are we given any access to properties or the like. When an assertion has given a determinate character to something present-at-hand, it claims something about it as a 'what' and this 'what' is drawn from that which is present-at-hand as such. The as-structure of interpretation has undergone a modification. In its function of appropriating what is understood, the 'as' no longer*

reaches out into a totality of involvements. As regards its possibilities for articulating reference-relations [*Verweisungsbezug*], it has been cut off [*abschnitten*] from that significance which, as such, constitutes environmentality. The 'as' gets pushed back [*zurückdrängen*] into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand. It sinks to the structure of just letting one see what is present-at-hand in a determinate way. (SZ:157–8; emphasis in original)

Heidegger concludes this cryptic passage by observing that 'presence-at-hand determination [*Vorhandenheitsbestimmung*] is...the speciality of assertion' (SZ:158). He posits the same connection when explaining the work of other philosophers, including Kant and Aristotle.

We cannot emphasise this fact too often: those determinations which constitute the being of the thing [i.e., *katagoria*] have received their name from assertions [i.e., *kataphasis*].... The fact that since then in Western thought the determinations of being are called 'categories' is the clearest expression of the point I have already emphasised: that the structure of the thing [*Ding*] is connected with the structure of the assertion. (Ga41:62–4)

Whilst Heidegger here uses 'thing', he has earlier defined a thing as 'the present-at-hand bearer of many present-at-hand yet changeable properties' (Ga41:33), and the corresponding passage at Ga25:295–6 uses 'present-at-hand' directly. This supposed link between assertion and the present-at-hand is emphasised by many contemporary Heidegger scholars: for example, Okrent states that 'one intends a [present-at-hand] entity insofar as one makes an assertion about it', Schear formulates the relevant claim as 'all and only present-at-hand entities are possible topics of [assertion]' and Tugendhat attributes to Heidegger the view that 'assertoric sentences . . . express being in the sense of presence-at-hand' (Okrent 2007: 166; Schear 2007: 128; Tugendhat 1986: 161).¹ But what exactly is the 'present-at-hand' and what exactly is the connection to assertion which Heidegger postulates? Is it philosophically plausible that such a connection exists?

Heidegger's second main claim is this: assertion is an explanatorily derivative mode of intentionality (SZ:157). The following are representative:

Assertions are first possible on the basis of an already latent comportment to entities . . . making assertions is not at all an originary relation to entities, but is itself possible on the basis of our already-being-among-entities. (Ga26:158)

It is not, and indeed never, the case that an assertion as such—however true it may be—could primarily reveal an entity as such. (Ga29/30:493)

Such passages are typically seen as central to Heidegger's view of intentionality. But, again it seems important to clarify precisely what is being claimed here: what exactly does it mean, for example, to say that a given mode of intentionality can never 'primarily reveal' an entity?

In sum, there are two claims in play: firstly that assertion is somehow linked to the present-at-hand, and secondly that assertion is explanatorily derivative. This article will focus on the first of these claims. I believe, however, that a proper understanding of either claim has implications for the other. In any case, to assess Heidegger's position one first needs a clear definition of the concepts involved. This will be the task of the next section, at the end of which I provide an overview of the direction my argument will take.

2. Defining the Terms of the Debate

Heidegger's two claims employ a number of terms whose meaning needs to be clarified. In line with the focus of this essay, I concentrate on 'assertion' and 'presence-at-hand'. An 'assertion' is standardly understood as a speech act in which one endorses a proposition or propositions. Assume for the moment that the idea of endorsement is clear enough; how should we understand the concept of 'a proposition'? Obviously, there are multiple theories. But the immediate problem is the historical scope of Heidegger's work: he often suggests that he is correcting errors which have been committed, in one form or another, since the Greeks (SZ:165). Indeed, he denies that even the modern revolution in logic has altered this basic picture (SZ:88). One needs therefore to begin from some comparatively wide definition of propositionality: whilst it would be of interest to show that Heidegger has a position on, say, Russellian propositions specifically, he is clearly after a broader result. I therefore propose:

(Def) Proposition = The content of a declarative sentence.²

To say that a mode of intentionality is propositional is thus to say that its content can, at least in principle, be accurately given by the sentential compliments of 'that-' clauses: I believe that *P*, I judge that *P*, etc. Searle, for example, holds this view of perception:

The content of the visual experience, like the content of the belief, is always equivalent to a whole proposition . . . it must always be *that* such and such is the case. (Searle 1983: 40)

This raises a further question. Heidegger links assertion and the present-at-hand. But is his concern specifically with assertion, as opposed to other propositional attitudes, or is he using assertion to introduce a point about propositional intentionality in general? After all, as Brandom (2000: 189) neatly puts it, '[a]ssertible contents, assertibles, are also believeables and judgeables'. It seems clear that the latter interpretation is correct. For example, Heidegger suggests that SZ§33 could equally be formulated in terms of 'judgment' [*Urteil*], and elsewhere he presents the same argument by talking of 'propositional assertion' [*Aussagesatz*] (Ga29/30:439–41), or of the 'proposition' [*Satz*] (Ga20:344; Ga9:130). In taking Heidegger's real target to be propositional intentionality rather than assertion per se, I agree with Wrathall (2011: 20) who reads

Heidegger as making a point about 'propositional modes of comportment (believing, asserting and so on)'. This is not to say that the focus on assertion is an accident. One of Heidegger's aims is to examine the particular influence which analyses of that speech act have exercised on the canon (SZ:165), but his ultimate concern is with the propositional.

I want here to note one other issue. Heidegger often seems to equate the propositional not just with the content of a declarative sentence, but with the content of a subject-predicate sentence (SZ:154). By extension, he seems to equate the pre-propositional and the pre-predicative (Ga9:130). The assumption that subject-predicate form is the primary form of propositionality was a common one: Kant, for example, endorses it (V-Lo/Wiener:933). But I will not build the reference to predication into my *definition* of propositionality. There are theorists that Heidegger would surely believe are guilty of over-focus on the propositional and yet who reject the subject-predicate model: Frege (1967: section 3), for example. I return to this issue in the next section.

Next to be defined is 'presence-at-hand'. One can distinguish, at least *prima facie*, three conceptions of the present-at-hand in Heidegger's work. On the first definition, to say that an entity is 'present-at-hand' is to say that it is a substance in one or more of the senses in which that idea has been canonically understood (SZ:318). For example, Ga20 defines 'presence-at-hand' in terms of the Cartesian conception of substance: 'substantiality means presence-at-hand, that which as such needs no other entity in order to be' (Ga20:232–3). One of the properties of the 'ready-to-hand', in contrast, is that it stands in constitutive or internal relations (SZ:68): the Cartesian vision of the 'present-at-hand' would thus entail that nothing understood as present-at-hand can simultaneously be understood as ready-to-hand. However, the link to Descartes should not be overplayed. This is because Heidegger applies 'presence-at-hand' when discussing the role which substance has played throughout the philosophical canon, and he frequently appeals to the canon's supposed emphasis on assertion to explain why it has prioritised this category. For example, Heidegger contends that a focus on assertion underpins both Aristotle's thought and Descartes's ontology (Ga41:107–8); elsewhere he argues that it underlies both Aristotle's work and Kant's ontology (Ga41:62–4; Ga25:295) and both Aristotle's thought and Leibniz's monads (Ga26:40–2, 53).³ But the concepts of 'substance' employed in these systems are obviously very different. Kant's *substantia phenomena*, for example, cannot exist independently of other entities since they are nothing but sets of relations: they are therefore not 'substances' in the Cartesian sense (KrV:A277/B333; A285/B341). I want accordingly to introduce the following definition; as with 'proposition', its looseness follows from the extraordinary historical scope of Heidegger's ambitions.

(Def) 'Presence-at-hand'¹ = A substance in either an Aristotelian, Cartesian, Leibnizian or Kantian sense.

The second usage of 'presence-at-hand' in Heidegger's writings designates a 'natural thing' [*Naturding*], or a 'physical thing' [*Körperding*] (Ga20:49–50; SZ:361–

2). These are entities individuated by their spatio-temporal and causal properties: to speak of presence-at-hand is to 'speak of materiality, extension, colouration, local mobility', or of properties such as 'mass' and the natural laws that govern it (Ga20:51; SZ:361). The relevant class here is not primary, as opposed to secondary, qualities: Heidegger shows no interest in the difference between colour and extension (Ga20:49–50). Instead, the distinction he intends is between entities considered as 'natural things' and entities considered as pieces of 'equipment' for use in particular projects, projects which in the standard Heideggerian manner are related both to my identity and to other agents in a publically accessible world (Ga20:49; SZ:361). Note that on this definition, unlike in the Cartesian case, it seems that entities can be simultaneously understood as both ready-to-hand and present-at-hand: if my job is measuring the width of bricks, presumably their extension belongs both to their 'tool-character' and to their natural character.⁴ But I want to set that issue aside for the moment. I therefore define:

(Def) 'Presence-at-hand²' = An entity individuated by reference to its spatio-temporal and causal properties.

The third definition is a negative one:

(Def) 'Present-at-hand³' = An entity insofar as it is 'cut off from' the holistic web of instrumental, social, and other relations which define the Heideggerian concept of 'world'. (SZ:83–6, 157–8)

This definition comes centre stage in Heidegger's discussion of assertion. Recall:

When an assertion has given a determinate character to something present-at-hand, it claims something about it as a 'what' and this 'what' is drawn from that which is present-at-hand as such. The as-structure of interpretation has undergone a modification . . . [it] no longer reaches out into a totality of involvements. As regards its possibilities for articulating reference-relations, it has been cut off from that significance which, as such, constitutes environmentality. The 'as' gets pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand. (SZ:158)

There are now three possible definitions of 'present-at-hand' in play, each with some support from Heidegger's texts. Heidegger may be able to demonstrate the identity of these three concepts. But, without some serious philosophical labour, the definitions are not even co-extensive. Presence-at-hand¹ is *prima facie* neither necessary nor sufficient for presence-at-hand²: any moderate empiricism will deny that spatiotemporal entities must be substances in any weighty sense, and at least some of the rationalists listed in the definition of present-at-hand¹ deny that substantiality implies individuation by spatio-temporal or causal properties—think of Leibnizian monads. Likewise, presence-at-hand¹ seems neither necessary nor sufficient for presence-at-hand³. It is not necessary because there seems no reason why viewing an entity as 'cut off' from social or environmental relations need imply anything as sophisticated as thinking of it

as a substance: could I not, as Heidegger himself suggests, simply stare at it (SZ:61)? The idea that presence-at-hand¹ is sufficient for presence-at-hand³ is more plausible but still requires further support: in what sense are Aristotelian substances, say, 'cut off' from social or environmental relations? Finally, presence-at-hand² is neither necessary nor sufficient for presence-at-hand³. It is not necessary because it seems that I might represent some transfinite number, say, as 'cut off' from social and environmental relations without thereby attributing spatio-temporal or causal properties to it. It is not sufficient because there are obviously cases where objects are integrated into the Heideggerian world precisely because of their spatio-temporal or causal properties: imagine running a building yard.

In the light of these results, a more precise formulation of Heidegger's two main claims is now possible.

(A) There is some connection between propositional intentionality and the view that entities are either present-at-hand¹, or present-at-hand², or present-at-hand³ or some combination of these.

(B) Propositional intentionality is explanatorily derivative on some irreducibly non-propositional mode of intentionality.

Clearly, these need further sharpening. But one point can be made immediately: they are, at least without further premises, logically independent. (A) concerns the relationship between a given mode of intentionality and a certain ontology, whilst (B) concerns a connection between two modes of intentionality. Consider the issue in historical terms. Kant enthusiastically affirms the first disjunct of (A) (KrV:A79–80/B104–6). But he would, at least on most traditional readings, reject (B). Similarly, many modern non-conceptualists would endorse (B), whilst demurring entirely from the debate around (A).

I can now summarise the direction this paper will take. As stated, I will focus on (A) although I will highlight the links to (B) where they are relevant. In section 3, I argue that there are serious difficulties in understanding (A). In section 4, I examine what I call the 'Carman-Wrathall model': this is the best existing explanation for (A). One striking feature of the 'Carman-Wrathall' model is that it effectively explains (A) in terms of a particular reading of (B): it thus denies that (A) and (B), properly understood, are logically independent. I contend that this approach, despite its attractions, is not fully satisfactory. In section 5, I therefore defend a new reading of (A). In section 6, I sketch the implications which this new reading of (A) has for (B).

3. Some Problems with (A)

I want to begin by suggesting that Heidegger's case for (A) is deeply problematic. So far (A) remains imprecise: it speaks simply of 'some connection' between propositional intentionality and one or more ontologies. Here is one obvious way

to understand the proposed connection: since the word 'represent' has acquired certain misleading connotations in some circles, I use 'intend' as the verb corresponding to 'intentionality'.⁵

(A*) If an entity *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality then *E* is intended as either present-at-hand¹, or present-at-hand², or present-at-hand³ or some combination of these.

As noted in the introduction, (A*) seems to have immediate support in Heidegger's text:

If this entity becomes the 'object' of an assertion [*Gegenstand* einer *Aussage*], then as soon as we begin with this assertion, there is already a changeover in the fore-having. *The ready-to-hand entity with which we have to do or perform something, turns into something 'about which' ['Worüber'] the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand.* (SZ:157–8)

Furthermore, (A*) is the formulation used by many contemporary scholars. Thus Schear (2007: 128) observes that 'the thesis proposed, in Heidegger's name, is that to judge (or assert) is to comport toward present-at-hand entities'. Similarly Okrent (2007: 165–6) defines 'present-at-hand' as present-at-hand², and suggests that assertion is sufficient for the representation of entities in such a manner.⁶

Yet there is a serious problem. (A*) is philosophically and textually unacceptable. It is philosophically unacceptable because it is surely false. Why should making an assertion, say, about a given entity require me to ascribe any particular properties to it? If I tell the doctor that 'the nausea is better' am I required to treat the nausea as a substance in some philosophically weighty sense, as mandated by present-at-hand¹? If I say 'the number eight is even', am I required to ascribe that number spatio-temporal or causal properties as mandated by present-at-hand²? If I say 'your car for the airport is here' am I required to regard the car as 'cut off from' from some web of instrumental and social relations as mandated by present-at-hand³? These claims seem colossally implausible.

To ram this home, consider, for example, the third example. Surely by making this assertion about the car I precisely preserve and highlight its relations to your forthcoming trip, the need to bring your bags down, etc., and by extension to all the other relations (in Heideggerian terms, the 'for-the-sake-of-whichs' and 'in-order-tos') which attach to your flight. As Schear (2007: 151) observes, someone who construes such an assertion as isolating the relevant entity from that context has simply failed to understand the assertion. One might try to avoid some of my examples by restricting the domain of 'entities': perhaps the number eight, as used in my second example, is not a valid instance of *E*? But this seems both textually and philosophically problematic. It is textually problematic because Heidegger offers no discussion of abstract objects in sections, such as SZ§33, in which he seems to defend (A*): this suggests that he does not regard the domain over which *E* ranges as crucial to that particular argument.

It is philosophically problematic because if one simply stipulates that, say, only spatio-temporal objects are genuinely 'entities' then (A*) will follow trivially: all propositions will be about such entities because those would be the only entities there are.

An historical perspective may help to illustrate the depth of these problems. Consider the claim that propositional intentionality suffices for presence-at-hand³, the representation of entities as severed from social or environmental relations. Heidegger repeatedly suggests that the grounds for this claim are intertwined with his objections to what he calls 'logic': his aim is to 'liberate grammar from logic' by exposing the link between logic and the present-at-hand (SZ:165). But one central achievement of modern logic was *precisely* its treatments of relations: both Russell and Cassirer, for example, reject traditional logic because it 'is unable to admit the reality of relations' (Russell 2002: 133; see similarly Cassirer 1923: 8). Given this, it seems hard to accuse modern logic of 'cutting off' entities from some relational context when one of its main aims was to allow relations to be accommodated. One possible response to this point is to try to *align* Heidegger with Russell and Cassirer. Recall from section 2 that Heidegger often equates the propositional with subject-predicate form. Now, it is the dominance of this logical form which, for Russell (2002: 39–40) in particular, explains the tradition's neglect of relations since it forces them into unarticulated monadic predicates. So Heidegger's point might turn on the assumption that propositions have a particular logical form—namely subject-predicate form—and that it is, as Russell claimed, because of that form that they necessarily 'cut off' relations. This is more promising: it actually sustains some link between propositionality and the absence of relations and thus some grounds for the truth of (A*). Yet as it stands, this proposal cannot be right: Heidegger is unimpressed by modern logic (SZ:88), and he claims not that assertion severs an entity from all relations, as Russell regards subject-predicate logic as doing, but that it severs them from a specific type of 'environmental' relation.

In addition to the philosophical concerns I have raised, (A*) is also textually unacceptable. Firstly, it contradicts Heidegger's assumption that one can make assertions about 'either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand' entities (SZ:224). Heidegger's use of 'ready-to-hand' exhibits similar ambiguities to 'presence-at-hand'; nevertheless, the point of this remark is surely that the subjects of assertion need not be represented as present-at-hand, and this implies that Heidegger denies (A*). Secondly, if (A*) were true it would generate a self-reference paradox. Insofar as SZ consists of propositions, a point Heidegger freely admits (see, e.g., Ga24:461), it follows from (A*) that it will necessarily represent Dasein in a way which, according to Heidegger, fundamentally misconstrues its nature.⁷

I infer, on philosophical and exegetical grounds, that (A*) is not Heidegger's view. There is, of course, a tradition of transcendental argument, derived from Kant, which holds that the mere possibility of propositional intentionality, and by extension practices like assertion, requires us to ascribe certain properties to objects. But even Kant never endorses anything as strong as (A*). Kant is clear,

for example, that merely making an assertion about an entity does not entail any particular property ascription to that entity: if a substance is that which is always a subject, one obviously cannot conclude that an entity is a substance simply because it is the subject of a single proposition (KrV:B128–9). Yet one can also see from cases such as Kant's that forging a more viable link between propositionality and the present-at-hand will not be easy. Kant, unlike Heidegger, regards any connection between the proposition and what the Critical system calls 'the categories' as highly desirable; yet Kant's attempts to demonstrate that connection are often regarded as irreparably flawed even by Kantians (e.g., Guyer 1987: 26–7; Young 1992: 119). The prospects for (A*) thus seem bleak. Schear (2007: 156), in a superb survey of the issue, recently reached a similarly pessimistic verdict: we must, he concludes, 'excise the link between [assertion] and the present-at-hand from Heidegger's theoretical commitments'.

In the light of this pessimistic conclusion, it is worth saying something about the converse of (A*). Perhaps Heidegger's claim is not that propositional intentionality is sufficient for intending an entity as present-at-hand but rather that it is necessary? More precisely, he might mean:

(A~) If an entity *E* is intended as either present-at-hand¹, or present-at-hand², or present-at-hand³ or some combination of these then *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality.

Or more weakly:

(A~~) If an entity *E* is intended as either present-at-hand¹, or present-at-hand², or present-at-hand³ or some combination of these by a subject *S* then *S* must have the capacity to intend *E* propositionally.⁸

Both (A~) and (A~~) have some philosophical plausibility depending on how complex the notion of the present-at-hand is. For example, one obvious tactic would be to say that the true disjuncts of (A~) are those where the present-at-hand is something highly complex: the justification for this would be that to represent an entity as, say, a Cartesian substance is a sophisticated intentional and inferential achievement, one which only propositional intentionality can sustain. By the same token, an obvious tactic would be to deny those disjuncts of (A~) where the present-at-hand is understood more simply. Consider, for example, present-at-hand². Many philosophers hold that animals lack propositional intentionality and yet can, at least in some thin sense, identify and distinguish items based on their location and causal properties: this suggests that (A~) would be false for present-at-hand².⁹ It seems, then, that (A~) might, at least on some formulations, be attractive to many traditional philosophers. But what would Heidegger's position on this be? The issue here are complex and I can only indicate their basic contours.

Firstly, even if he were to endorse (A~), the problem of explaining (A*) would remain: this is because it seems to be (A*) which is endorsed in texts such as SZ:157–8. Secondly, I believe that Heidegger himself would reject any attempt to motivate (A~), as I just did, by arguing that complex intentionality must be

propositional intentionality. This is because he believes there is a mode of intentionality sufficiently sophisticated to allow the representation of entities as both ready-to-hand and present-at-hand and yet which is not propositional: he refers to this mode of intentionality as 'horizontal' or 'schematic' (SZ:365). So, for example, one core purpose of *Ga3* is to argue that Kant, at least in his work on imagination and the Schematism, recognised the existence of such intentionality and used it to provide a non-propositional analysis of the experience of entities as substances.¹⁰ Likewise, Heidegger himself aims to show that there is a mode of intentionality sophisticated enough to represent entities as ready-to-hand in a way that no animals can, and yet which is nevertheless irreducible to and explanatorily prior to the propositional: it is this which motivates his endorsement of the second main claim considered in this article, claim (B).¹¹ In other words, I take Heidegger to deny both (A~) and the corresponding claim in the case of the ready-to-hand—i.e., that to intend an entity *E* as ready-to-hand requires that *E* is intended propositionally. Thirdly, I believe that Heidegger nevertheless accepts both (A~~) and the corresponding claim in the case of the ready-to-hand—i.e., that to intend an entity *E* as ready-to-hand requires that I have the capacity to intend *E* propositionally. This is because I hold that only Dasein is capable of intending entities as either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand: an animal may obviously be aware of such entities in some sense but cannot, according to Heidegger, see them *as* anything (*Ga29/30*: 291, 416; *GA 27*:192). Furthermore, I agree with Brandom (2002), although for somewhat different reasons, that Dasein is necessarily capable of propositional intentionality. It follows that the only being capable of intending *E* as either present-at-hand or ready-to-hand is also capable of intending *E* propositionally: constraints of space prevent me from defending these views here but some further light is shed on them by sections 5 and 6.

In summary, I believe that, whatever one's stance on the converse of (A*), one needs to give an account of Heidegger's apparent embrace of (A*) itself. Furthermore, I believe that whilst many philosophers would find (A~) plausible, Heidegger himself would reject it: this is because he holds that there are highly complex yet non-propositional modes of intentionality. Finally, I believe that Heidegger would accept (A~~) since he holds that the only agent which possesses those complex modes of intentionality, Dasein, necessarily also possesses the capacity for propositional intentionality; but a defence of that claim is unfortunately beyond this article.

4. The 'Carman-Wrathall Model': Explaining (A*) in terms of (B)

I have criticised several potential arguments for (A*). I will now address the most plausible existing interpretation of that claim, an interpretation defended by both Carman and Wrathall.¹² The key to their approach is that they effectively explain (A*) in terms of (B). (B), recall, states:

(B) Propositional intentionality is explanatorily derivative on some irreducibly non-propositional mode of intentionality.

Carman and Wrathall analyse the Heideggerian concept of 'world' by appeal to the existence of a class of irreducible intentional content which is both explanatorily prior to propositional experience, and in some sense 'richer' than it: this is their explanation of (B) and I will say more about it in a moment.¹³ They then explain (A*) by arguing that propositional intentionality is necessarily unable to capture this richer dimension of experience (Carman 2003: 219; Wrathall 2011: 19–20). Given this, one of the disjuncts of (A*) seems to follow: any entity represented by propositional intentionality will be represented as present-at-hand³—i.e., as 'cut off' from the distinctive relations which define 'worldhood'. This section will first detail the position taken by Carman and Wrathall; I then explain why this approach to (A) is not fully satisfactory.

The best way to flesh out the Carman-Wrathall model is to look directly at what they say. Consider these remarks from Wrathall (I number the passages for ease of reference).

Wrathall1

In our prepredicative experience of the world, things are understood as the things they are in terms of our practical modes of coping with them. Such practically constituted things are implicated in a complex variety of involvements with other objects, practices, purposes, and goals, and are understood immediately as reaching out into a variety of involvements. In assertion, by contrast, our experience undergoes an explicit restriction of our view, and we dim down the whole richly articulated situation in front of us to focus on some particular feature of the situation (Ga2:155). (Wrathall 2011: 19–20)

Wrathall2

In natural perception, then, we ordinarily perceive a whole context that lacks the logical structure of linguistic categories. When we apprehend things in such a way as to be able to express them in assertion, however, the act of perception is now brought under the categories of the understanding. . . . Thus assertion manifests things differently than they are given in natural perception. . . . This allows us to see an object with a thematic clarity that is not present in our natural perception of it. (Wrathall 2011: 20)

Wrathall3

Thus the dimming down or levelling off that occurs when we suspend our everyday dealings with things is what first makes it possible to give something a conceptual character by uncovering the kind of determinate content that allows one to form conceptual connections, draw inferences. . . . That makes propositional truth, in Heidegger's view, a privative concept—it is defined relative to the richer, more primordial givenness of the world which is lost in propositional articulation. . . . The pre-predicative is a non-conceptual way of comporting ourselves toward the things in the world around us. Rather than a conceptual or a logical

articulation, the pre-predicative manifestness of things is articulated along the lines of our practical comportment. (ibid.)¹⁴

Now these from Carman:

Carman1

[Heidegger is saying that] we should not mistake the intentional contents of actions that may admit of various kinds of rightness and wrongness for the fully propositional contents of assertions which can be literally true or false. Intentional attitudes and experiences do not, it seems to me,—*pace* Sellars—typically contain propositional claims, even if we can evaluate them as appropriate or inappropriate, successful or unsuccessful by their own lights, in relation to the practical environment. (Carman 2003: 217)

Carman2

Predicative assertions, that is, let things be seen in a specific light as this or that. Dimming down and so letting things be seen . . . is a kind of abstraction or decontextualization against a background of prior practical familiarity. Propositional content therefore derives from a kind of privation, or perhaps a refinement or distillation, of practical interpretative meanings. Indeed ‘levelling down’ the interpreted intelligibility of entities of all kinds to mere determinations of [present-at-hand] objects is ‘the speciality of assertion’ (SZ:158). (Carman 2003: 219)

As these passages illustrate, the Carman-Wrathall model sees Heidegger as making three points. The first is that there exists an explanatorily primary form of non-propositional intentionality. The second is that this intentionality has some particular feature *X* which cannot be captured by propositional intentionality. In the passages cited, Carman and Wrathall suggest several candidates for *X*: the practical articulation of experience (Wrathall1; Carman2), the perceptual articulation of experience (Wrathall2), and the normative articulation of experience (Carman2). The third point is that since *X* is supposedly constitutive of the Heideggerian world, and since propositional intentionality cannot capture *X*, any propositional representation will necessarily cut entities off from that world. It is assumed that this is what Heidegger means by talk of the ‘dimming down’ or ‘levelling off’ of experience (Carman2; Wrathall3): the result, in short, is that propositional content always implies a ‘narrowing of content’ (SZ:155).

These three points give the Carman-Wrathall model a natural basis from which to explain (A*) by explaining the link between propositional intentionality and present-at-hand³: on this approach, the relations which define the Heideggerian world are precisely instances of *X*—i.e., those aspects of perceptual or practical or normative articulation which the propositional cannot capture. Take the case of perception, for example. As Wrathall3 sees it, propositional content is ‘determinate content’—i.e., content with sharp individuation conditions, which stands in ‘inferential and justificatory relationships’ (Wrathall 2011: 19–20). In contrast, for Wrathall, vagueness is in some

sense endemic at the perceptual level—and this vague perceptual experience is understood as a constitutive part of the Heideggerian concept of ‘world’ (Wrathall2). Carman provides a neat formulation of the same idea when discussing Merleau-Ponty:

Another error, Merleau-Ponty observes, is to suppose that objects are given to us in perception ‘fully developed and determinate’. . . . [E]xperience rarely exhibits such sharply defined features, and no analysis of perception into discrete attitudes with crisply defined contents intending isolated qualities can capture the peculiar ‘perceptual milieu’. . . . Does the chair in the periphery of my visual field, or at the edges of my attention, appear to me as distinctly green or brown, or as larger or smaller than the filing cabinet, or as particularly well or ill placed in the room? Possibly not and yet I *see* it as being there to *sit* in: its perceptual presence consists precisely in its practical significance. (Carman 2008: 47–8)

Any propositional attempt to represent this perceptual content will, Carman and Wrathall suggest, inevitably distort it, levelling it off to the merely ‘present-at-hand’. Thus, it is the fact that propositional content is, as Carman puts it, ‘a kind of privation . . . or distillation’ of some richer mode of experience that explains Heidegger’s view that ‘presence-at-hand determination is . . . the speciality of assertion’ (SZ:158) (Carman 2003: 219). In short, (A*) is explained by appeal to (B): the propositional is unable to capture the distinctive relations which define the world.

The Carman-Wrathall model captures a line of thought present in much phenomenology. But I do not believe that it provides a correct account of Heidegger’s views. To fully substantiate that would require a complete treatment of (B), a task which is beyond this piece—although I sketch my position in section 6. Instead, I want to register two concerns which I believe give us sufficient grounds to look for an alternate approach to (A). One concern is this: nothing has been said about presence-at-hand¹ or presence-at-hand². The fact that propositional content typically possesses sharp individuation conditions, or that it establishes an inferential ordering which somehow differs from the ‘primordial givenness’ of perception, does not imply that those propositions must be about, say, Kantian substances or spatio-temporal entities. The other concern relates to the basic claim underlying the Carman-Wrathall model: that the Heideggerian world necessarily articulates entities in terms of some feature *X* where *X* cannot be represented by a proposition. As one can see from the passages cited, Carman and Wrathall advance three candidates for *X*: the practical, the normative and the perceptual. I will now argue that none of these meet the twin criteria of philosophical and textual plausibility.

Take the practical first. As Wrathall (2011: 20) puts it: ‘Rather than a conceptual or logical articulation, the prepredicative manifestness of things is articulated along the lines of our practical comportment.’ But what sense of ‘practical’ is in play here such that it cannot be ‘conceptual or logical’? Why, for

example, can't the instrumental chains beloved by Heidegger be captured in propositional terms: I am using *f* in order to achieve *g* with a view to the ultimate goal of *h*? The same holds if by 'practical' one means conative: one might accept that desires have explanatory primacy over beliefs whilst still treating all intentional content as propositional. It seems that what Carman and Wrathall really have in mind is some distinctively perceptual or motor intentional model of practicality: recall how Carman's discussion of Merleau-Ponty identifies 'practical significance' with 'perceptual presence' (Carman 2008: 47–8). Before addressing that, though, I want to set aside the second candidate for *X*, the normative. The text I labelled 'Carman1' suggests that propositional intentionality differs from the primary level of intentionality because the former but not the latter 'can be literally true or false'. But no reason has been given why the primary level of intentionality cannot be 'literally true or false': as Christensen (1998: 66) emphasises, Heidegger's primary level of intentionality surely includes contents like my seeing that the nail is in the wood, and this seems open to literal truth or falsity.¹⁵ In any case, suppose that experience at the level of the Heideggerian world were incapable of truth in some 'literal' sense. This does not suffice to show that any propositional representation of the world will cut entities off from their worldly relations: why can I not simply assert propositions such as 'these entities stand in a normative relation other than truth'? If one returns to the text of Carman1 here, Carman develops his initial reference to normativity by arguing that propositional content alone is 'sufficiently well-defined to stand in determinate and evidential relations'. But this seems to shift the burden of Carman's argument to the claim that the explanatorily primitive level of intentionality is in some sense too vague or rich to enter such relations. This is a view which Wrathall³ explicitly endorses. But the only ground for it which either Carman or Wrathall adduce is that primary intentionality is in some sense perceptual. It seems, then, that of the three initial candidates for *X*, the normative and practical both collapse into the perceptual: specifically, I suspect that Carman and Wrathall understand *X* as consisting in a sensory-motor mode of perceptual intentionality very similar to that developed by Merleau-Ponty.

Given this, the concern I have about this single remaining option is simple: Heidegger shows little or no interest in developing the apparatus necessary to defend that kind of theory. Let me give two examples. The first is indexicality. In explaining the distinctively non-propositional nature of perceptual experience, Dreyfus, the godfather of the Carman-Wrathall model, frequently appealed to indexical content: his view appears to have been that propositional intentionality cannot include indexical content, and that it is such content which constitutes the relevant richness of the 'primordial' motor intentional phenomena (Dreyfus 1991: 78, 2005: 12). But as McDowell notes, if this is Heidegger's view it faces an immediate problem: given the definition of propositionality as the content of a declarative sentence, why can't indexical content be easily captured by demonstratives terms (McDowell 2007: 339–42; see also Dreyfus 2007: 371)? This difficulty is an obvious one. One would thus expect any philosopher who holds

that perception is indexical in some distinctive sense to have a sophisticated theory explaining why certain cases of situation-dependent content are necessarily non-propositional. Kelly (2001: 608), for example, argued that it is the indefinite volume of situation-dependent properties, the blueness of this rug as lit by this light at this angle etc., which is problematic for propositionalists.¹⁶ But Heidegger himself seems to attach little importance to the issue of indexicality *per se*, and he makes no attempt at all to provide this type of extended study of different forms of indexicality.¹⁷ For example, whilst Heidegger treats indexicality repeatedly in his accounts of Kantian intuitions, he never suggests that the topic is central to his dispute with Kant, nor do indexicals receive anything but a cursory examination in SZ.¹⁸ Of course, there are *related* issues which Heidegger does care about: for example, he holds that it is often impossible to specify the reasons for an action in situation-independent terms (SZ:298). But so does McDowell, even at his most propositionalist (McDowell 2007: 340).

The second example is motor intentionality itself. Suppose, as I have argued, that the practical and normative accounts of *X* appealed to by Carman and Wrathall ultimately collapse into the perceptual account. The Carman-Wrathall model then entails that Heidegger's ultimate justification for two of his central claims, (A) and (B), is the view that the primordial level of intentionality is defined by the distinctively, vague, rich content of embodied perception. But this view faces a serious exegetical problem. The problem is that SZ would, effectively, state Heidegger's views without giving any argument for them: there is little discussion there of the type of detailed motor intentional case study needed to motivate the view that such content even exists. This absence is even more striking in Heidegger's other works. For example, Ga3 and Ga25 detail his disagreements with Kant, yet the body, be it '*Leib*' or '*Körper*', receives no treatment at all. Could one conceivably have said the same of a similarly extensive confrontation with Kant written by Merleau-Ponty or Todes? Ultimately, the Carman-Wrathall model risks turning several of Heidegger's key arguments into a promissory note to be cashed by the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Let me be clear here. I do not think it is possible to *disprove* the exegetical thesis that the primary form of Heideggerian intentionality is motor intentional: this is partly because of the often elusive style of Heidegger's writings, and partly because that would require a specific disavowal by Heidegger of an approach that I think he is simply uninterested in.¹⁹ But it seems, given the striking textual gaps just noted, that the motor intentional reading derives its exegetical plausibility largely from the assumption that this *must* be what Heidegger meant because there is no other way to explain claims like (A) and (B). I hold that this assumption is mistaken: there is an alternative way to make sense of (A) and (B). In short, I have argued that Heidegger shows no interest in defending the basic apparatus which the Carman-Wrathall model needs; I will now attempt to remove the underlying exegetical motivation for that model by presenting a very different reading of (A) and (B).

5. A New 'Methodological' Account of (A)

I have rejected, on both philosophical and textual grounds, a number of explanations for (A*). My own position is simple: I do not believe that Heidegger endorses (A*), and thus I do not believe that he owes or offers a defence of it. When he defends (A), what he has in mind is rather this:

(A#) If an entity *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality *I* and *I* is subject to a certain method of philosophical analysis *M* then *E* is intended as either present-at-hand¹, or present-at-hand², or present-at-hand³ or some combination of these.²⁰

The key difference from (A*) is that in (A#) the antecedent of the conditional is a conjunction: (A#) requires not only that the entity be represented by a proposition but also that the proposition be subject to a certain type of philosophical analysis. This change has several significant implications. Firstly, unlike (A*), (A#) does not entail that simply making an assertion about some entity mandates the attribution of certain properties to it: this is because the connection between the proposition and the present-at-hand is now conditional on the adoption of the relevant philosophical methodology. Secondly, unlike (A*), the threat of a self-reference paradox is removed: Heidegger is free to make assertions in stating his theory provided simply that he refrains from analysing those assertions using the proscribed method *M*. Thirdly, (A#) severs the close link between (A) and (B) required by the Carman-Wrathall model. As discussed in section 2, that model glossed (A) as (A*), and explained (A*) in terms of (B). Once (A) is read as (A#), in contrast, it becomes logically independent of (B): to see this note that an acceptance of (A#) is perfectly compatible with the view that all intentionality is propositional. Of course, Heidegger does *also* endorse (B). But one should not to conflate his distinct arguments for those two quite separate claims; I address the relationship between (A#) and (B) in section 6. Fourthly, as with (A*), it is important not to confuse (A#) with its converse. For Heidegger, the purpose of (A#) is to explain why the philosophical canon has been dominated by a present-at-hand ontology; it does so by highlighting one of the most fundamental reasons for that dominance—namely the tradition's reliance on the method *M*. But Heidegger is not committed to the implausible claim that whenever anyone understands entities as, say, individuated by spatio-temporal or causal properties this must be traced to *M*.

I will now introduce Heidegger's case for (A#). Heidegger's views are clearest with respect to present-at-hand³ and it is there I will begin. This is the relevant disjunct of A#:

(A#/P3) If an entity *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality *I* and *I* is subject to a certain method of philosophical analysis *M* then *E* is intended as 'cut off from' the holistic web of instrumental, social, and other relations which define the Heideggerian concept of 'world'. (SZ:83–6, 157–8)

I start with a particular slice of text, starting halfway down SZ:157. Firstly, note that Heidegger is no longer talking about assertion per se: the basic structure of assertion has been given at SZ:154–5. Rather, his concern here is with the way in which assertion is ‘modified’ within the context of a particular theoretical framework—a framework he refers to simply as ‘logic’ (SZ:157). His claim is that this ‘logic’ assumes, supposedly unquestioningly, that assertions should be studied in a specific way:

Prior to all analysis, logic has already understood ‘logically’ that which it takes as its theme, for example ‘the hammer is heavy’, under the heading of the ‘categorical statement’. The unexplained presupposition is that the ‘meaning’ of this sentence is to be taken as: ‘This thing—a hammer—has the property of heaviness’. (SZ:157)

What is being discussed is a particular method for analysing assertions—a method which generates what Heidegger calls ‘theoretical assertions’ (SZ:157). Note that ‘theoretical’ here does not mean that concepts like ‘heavy’ are replaced with, say, concepts like ‘mass’: even logical analysis still attributes ‘heaviness’ to the hammer (SZ:157).²¹ Rather, ‘theoretical’ refers to the *meta-linguistic* treatment of the original assertion: in the example Heidegger is using, the assertion becomes ‘theoretical’ when it is analysed in terms of concepts such as ‘categorical statement’.²²

Having alerted us to this meta-linguistic analysis, Heidegger’s next concern is to highlight some of its ontological implications. It is now that the key text, the text with which this article began, appears.

The entity which is held in our fore-having—for instance, the hammer—is initially ready-to-hand as an item of equipment. If this entity becomes the ‘object’ of an assertion [*‘Gegenstand’ einer Aussage*], then as soon as we begin with this assertion, there is already a changeover in the fore-having. *The ready-to-hand entity with which we have to do or perform something, turns into something ‘about which’ [‘Worüber’]* the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. (SZ:157–8; emphasis in original)

The claim is that by granting philosophical weight to the type of theoretical framework just highlighted, one not only alters the way in which assertions are understood but, equally, one modifies the way in which one views the entities intended by those assertions. So, for example, from the perspective of “‘logic’” the hammer is not primarily seen as a piece of equipment, but as the referent or “‘object’” of the word ‘hammer’, and thus as the subject of a ‘categorical statement’ to which the ‘property’ of heaviness can be attributed: thus ‘only now are we given any access to *properties* or the like’ (SZ:158).²³ The strange punctuation here arises from Heidegger’s use of single inverted commas as scare quotes when discussing the suspect theoretical terms. His point is that concepts like property, referent and categorical statement are artefacts of a particular

semantic project, a particular methodology for analysing assertions. Furthermore, it is this which explains the connection between assertion and presence-at-hand³.

When an assertion has given a determinate character to something present-at-hand, it claims something about it as a 'what' and this 'what' is drawn from that which is present-at-hand as such. The as-structure of interpretation has undergone a modification. In its function of appropriating what is understood, the 'as' no longer reaches out into a totality of involvements. As regards its possibilities for articulating reference-relations, it has been cut off from that significance which, as such, constitutes environmentality. The 'as' gets pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand. (SZ:158)

Again the initial claim here concerns the assertion *itself*: once subject to a 'logical' analysis, the assertion is removed from the 'totality of involvements'. The reason for this is that the methodological focus is no longer on questions such as 'why was this assertion made', 'what purpose did it serve', 'what was its context', but rather on its syntactic, semantic and inferential structure. What motivates (A#/P3) is the belief that this type of analysis has important implications for the way in which the entities intended by that assertion are understood: the entity 'turns into something *'about which'* the assertion that points it out is made' (SZ:158). An example may help. Suppose I intend Tom and Harry by making some remark about them. Heidegger's point is that if 'logic' is the primary philosophical method for understanding that intentionality, then the primary way in which philosophy will understand Tom and Harry is no longer in the guise of friends for meeting, neighbours for greeting, threats for avoiding, but instead as the 'object' of an assertion [*'Gegenstand' einer Aussage*], something 'about which' [*'Worüber'*] the assertion is made (SZ:157–8). In the context of such a philosophical programme, Tom and Harry would thus be represented as 'cut off' from their significance and so 'pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand'.

To see the force of Heidegger's point here, it is useful to return to his attitude to modern logic, something touched on in section 3. As Heidegger himself recognises, where he agrees with authors such as Cassirer or Russell is that they all place great emphasis on relations (Ga20:272, 279). But despite the obvious antipathy which Cassirer or Russell have for substance metaphysics, Heidegger holds that their function-based logic will nevertheless still lead to a present-at-hand ontology. Suppose, for example, an assertion like 'Tom is taller than Harry' is analysed within Russell's framework. It would no longer be treated as a 'categorical statement' with subject-predicate form like the examples of SZ§33; instead, it is studied as an instance of an 'asymmetric relational statement' (Russell 2002: 39–40). Heidegger's point is that, whilst this development may allow an improved grasp of the inferential status of relations *in general*, the price is the neglect of a *particular* set of relations—namely the social and instrumental context within which acts of assertion actually take place. The focus on the

'empty formal idea of relation' ironically thus leads to the 'suppression of the dimension within which the relevant relation can be what it' (Ga29/30:424). And this project in turn, he claims, fosters a concomitantly narrow philosophical approach to the entities discussed in such assertions: '[The assertion] gets experienced as something present-at-hand and interpreted as such; simultaneously the entities it points out have the meaning of present-at-hand' (SZ:160).²⁴

One reason why Heidegger's argument has not been understood is that it has not been recognised that his point concerns a particular philosophical approach to the proposition, rather than propositional intentionality per se. The highly compressed nature of the text in SZ is partly to blame here. Recall, for example, the references to 'dimming down' emphasised by Carman and Wrathall: section 4 argued against their view that this 'dimming down' occurred when propositional intentionality tried to capture some richer perceptual content. On my reading, in contrast, 'dimming down' occurs when a piece of propositional content—namely an assertion—is subject to 'logical' analysis. Consider the key text at SZ:154–5. Note first that assertion's 'primary signification', 'pointing out', comprises not just my indicating an object, but also includes my saying something about it: e.g., 'the hammer is too heavy' (SZ:154). Insofar as the 'primary signification' of assertion says something about an object it is itself sufficient to constitute a declarative sentence, and thus to constitute propositional content. The second signification, which Heidegger labels "'predication'"—note the punctuation—then introduces 'a narrowing of content as compared to the . . . first signification' (SZ:155). It is this second signification which supposedly 'dims down' or 'restricts' our view. In other words, 'dimming down' is something which is done *to*, not by, propositional content. What makes the text here so convoluted is that Heidegger is trying simultaneously to explain how this 'dimming down' is rooted in a perfectly natural tendency. Suppose I start by making the assertion 'the hammer is too heavy'. For some reason, perhaps because I cannot lift it, this aspect of the hammer then becomes the object of explicit attention: with a view to the methodological arguments that are to come, Heidegger refers to this act as "'predication'" just as he talks of "'object'" or "'logic'" (SZ:154, 157). His use of scare quotes is intended to suggest that there exists a continuity whereby I move from casually using the term 'heavy', to focusing on that predicate, to considering the necessary and sufficient conditions for its application, to asking whether every statement ascribes a predicate to something, and ultimately to the methodology Heidegger calls "'logic'" (SZ:157–8). In other words, Heidegger wants to show how this 'dimming down' begins as a perfectly natural, albeit optional, act of focusing on a particular feature of some entity and then gradually develops into the type of meta-linguistic analysis I have been discussing. In short, 'dimming down' is not a relation between the propositional and the perceptual, as Wrathall and Carman read it, but between a particular philosophical method and the propositional.²⁵

To sharpen this initial account of (A#), I need to answer two closely related questions: what exactly is this methodology *M* to which Heidegger supposedly

objects, and how does he think that one should analyse assertions? Heidegger himself spells out the answer to the latter question:

If language is a possibility of the being of Dasein, then it must be made evident in its basic structures in terms of the constitution of Dasein. Henceforth, the a priori structures of Dasein must provide the basis for linguistics. (Ga20:361)

As he puts it elsewhere, insofar as language is one of Dasein's activities, it should be investigated primarily by uncovering the 'concealed essence of man' (Ga29/30:486). Heidegger's aim is thus to move 'from the question what is language to the question what is man' (Ga38:38; similarly SZ:210). Broadening the point to the propositional as a whole, one can say that Heidegger endorses a principle that I will label '*H*':

(Def) *H* = The methodological principle that the primary philosophical analysis of propositional intentionality should take the form of an analysis of Dasein.

H can then be further specified for each of the various modes of propositional experience. Something like this, for example, is what Heidegger has in mind for assertion.

(Def) *H/As* = The methodological principle that the primary philosophical analysis of assertion should take the form of an analysis of the role which assertion plays within Dasein's social context, be it for communication, coordination, or disclosure.

This brings me to the issue of *M*, the method which I have claimed Heidegger opposes. It is not possible, I suspect, to give any more precise characterisation of *M* than this:

(Def) *M* = Any programme for investigating propositional intentionality which is not fully committed to *H* and to its variants such as *H/As*.

It is in this sense that Heidegger insists that we 'must dispense with the "philosophy of language"' (SZ:166): his objection is obviously not to philosophising about language but rather to the idea that the philosophical treatment of language can be pursued independently of, or prior to a broader understanding, of Dasein.

Insofar as *M* includes any methodology which rejects *H*, the definition of *M* is obviously an extremely loose one. This looseness is deep-rooted in Heidegger's work: it has three sources. The first is the extraordinary historical ambition of his project. If one is really to believe, as he frequently suggests, that the mistakes he is correcting are present from Greece to Marburg then those mistakes will need to be characterised very broadly: the looseness of *M* suits this perfectly. The second source is the complexity of Heidegger's own position. Consider, for example, Price and Macarthur's (2009: 103) recent defence of what they call an 'anthropological pragmatism'. Instead of pursuing traditional

philosophy of language, their recommendation is that we focus instead on the various social roles which assertion plays as 'a multi-function tool' (ibid.; Price 2011: 98). I obviously cannot treat the various issues surrounding Heidegger and the many non-equivalent forms of pragmatism here, but what is striking is that Price and Macarthur are able to give a very clear summary of the methodology they reject: they oppose any theory that appeals to a non-deflationary use of semantic notions such as 'truth' or 'reference' (Price and Macarthur 2009: 106–7). Heidegger's goal, in contrast, is first to replace traditional philosophy of language with a focus on the social role of assertion, and *then* to use that account as the ground for reconstructing a theory of truth, and an attendant theory of meaning or 'discourse', which is anything but deflationary (SZ:165–6). The result is that the originality of Heidegger's own position prevents him from offering a neat characterisation of the difference between his own views and *M* in terms of, say, the familiar debate over meaning as use or meaning as truth conditions. The third source of the looseness is that, ultimately, the only way to further specify *H*, and thus *M*, within Heidegger's system is by conducting the type of detailed existential analytic offered in SZ. There is thus an inherent limit on how sharply *M* can be formulated in the absence of a full rehearsal of SZ's core claims.

Bringing these strands together, I can now return to the disjunct of (A#) singled out at the start of this section, the disjunct referring to present-at-hand³. Heidegger's claim is that insofar as I analyse propositional intentionality—e.g., assertion—in a way that isolates it from the social and other relations which characterise the Heideggerian world, I will thereby understand the entities which those assertions are about as similarly isolated: the primary philosophical analysis of a hammer, say, will be one which treats it as the referent of 'hammer', as something '*about which*' [*Worüber*] an assertion is made, rather than as a tool for various tasks. At the primary level of philosophical understanding, such objects would thus be 'cut off' from the environmental relations which make up the world: they would thus be present-at-hand³ (SZ:160). One obvious question is how much work the word 'primary' is doing here. Suppose, for example, a Fregean holds that objects are to be primarily identified on the basis of the syntactic and inferential behaviour of the corresponding terms: why could she not later supplement this account with some discussion of the type of social and instrumental relations highlighted by Heidegger? I will return to the issue of 'primacy' at the end of this section, but I want first to complete the account of (A#) by considering the other forms of presence-at-hand.

I take next presence-at-hand¹. Here is the relevant disjunct of (A#):

(A#/P1) If an entity *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality *I* and *I* is subject to a certain method of philosophical analysis *M* then *E* is intended as a substance in either an Aristotelian, Cartesian, Leibnizian, or Kantian sense.

It will help to consider Heidegger's defence of A#/P1 in two stages, depending on the exact version of *M* involved. Firstly, consider those theories in which, in line with *M*, the proposition is primarily understood via a combinatorial analysis

of propositional form based around the subject-predicate structure: Kant's Meta-physical Deduction is a classic case (KrV:A70–80/B95–106). Given this specification of the antecedent, Heidegger's task becomes a comparatively easy one. This is because he is able to free ride on the fact that many opponents—Leibniz for example—explicitly endorse (A#/P1), and he often suggests that others—such as Aristotle—should be seen as making the same move more inchoately (Ga41:62–4; Ga25:295). The reason these authors endorse (A#/P1) is, of course, because they regard the consequent as a positive result, whereas Heidegger treats it as the basis for a *modus tollens* against the methodological framework mentioned in the antecedent. Since many of his main opponents accept (A#/P1) more or less openly, Heidegger often formulates it loosely, allowing different theorists to cash it in their own terms: Ga41, for example, simply presents the schemas 'substantia—accidens', 'bearer—properties' and 'subject—predicate' as isomorphic (Ga41:33). When criticising a particular author, Heidegger then provides a detailed account of the inference within their work. For example, commenting on Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics*:

Leibniz sees that this interpretation of substance takes its bearings from predication and therefore a radical determination of the nature of predication, of judgment, must provide a primordial conception of substance. . . . Leibniz says that in every true statement the subject must contain the predicate in itself, whether explicitly or implicitly. . . . Here the ontic subject, the substance, is understood from the viewpoint of the logical subject, the subject of a statement. (Ga26:41–2)

This brings me the second part of Heidegger's defence of (A#/P1): what happens once one reaches modern logic? After all, the very same connection which (A#/P1) highlights between traditional subject-predicate logic and a substance ontology, was also noted by Russell—who saw it simply as further evidence of the shortcomings of traditional logic.

The ground for assuming substances—and this is a very important point—is purely and solely logical. What science deals with are *states* of substances, and it is assumed to be states of *substances*, because they are held to be of the logical nature of predicates, and thus to demand subjects of which they may be predicated. (Russell 1937: 49)

The question then is this: can Heidegger still defend (A#/P1) when the relevant method of propositional analysis is, for example, Russell's? Heidegger identifies one possible line of argument when he raises the problem of how a list of words 'are put together in *one* verbal whole' (SZ:159). As Russell observed, the words 'Cassio' and 'Desdemona' put side by side obviously do not constitute a sentence, but only a mere list (Russell 1912: 74). But once this is conceded, it is unclear why introducing further terms, say 'loves', will not simply deliver a longer list: why, as Russell put it, does 'loves' function as 'the cement and not just another brick'? (Russell: *ibid.*)²⁶ Russell regarded this problem as one of central philosophical importance; in part because Bradley had adduced it as a

reductio of 'analytic philosophy' understood as the progressive decomposition of propositions into their components parts.²⁷ Heidegger himself placed great emphasis on the very same problem: in Ga24, for example, he works painstakingly through the solutions to this difficulty advocated by Aristotle, Hobbes, Mill, Lotze and others (Ga24:255–91). The relevance of this to (A#/P1) is that, in treating the atomisation of the proposition as a legitimate starting point, Russell's approach will necessarily generate an atomistic ontology if one simply adds some premise allowing the transfer of semantic conclusions on to the ontological domain. And this is precisely what does happen in Russell from his early Moorean-style equation of the semantic and the ontological onwards: the ultimate result is Logical Atomism, the view that 'you can get down in theory, if not in practice, to ultimate simples' (Russell 1986: 234). The ontology of 'particulars' which emerges is present-at-hand¹ because, as Russell himself notes, they meet the Cartesian criterion for substance: not depending for their existence on any other entity (Russell 1986: 179). So it seems as if (A#/P1) may have some force even once one abandons subject-predicate logic. However, the sheer scope of (A#/P1), a scope generated by the looseness of *M*, means that it cannot be fully convincing. Consider, for example, the case of Frege. Frege, at least on the standard reading, solves the problem of propositional unity by an appeal to the essentially unsaturated nature of functions (Frege 1952: 54). This strategy is an instance of *M* and thus satisfies the antecedent of (A#/P1). But whilst Frege's move undoubtedly faces problems (it is the source of the infamous horse paradox) it does nothing, *prima facie*, to generate the type of semantic and thus ontological atomism which makes the conditional (A#/P1) sustainable in Russell's case (*ibid.*). The underlying problem, I suggest, is Heidegger's focus on pre-Fregean logic: bluntly, *M* can take on subtler forms than Heidegger's concentration on Aristotle, rationalism and the occasional empiricist such as Hobbes leads him to believe. On a more positive note, one can see how these results tie back to the principle I labelled '*H*' above. Heidegger's own preferred solution to the problem of propositional unity is to reject it as a pseudo-problem which arises only if one adopts what he calls an 'external' view of phenomena like assertion (Ga24:262). Recall Russell's remark that, when faced with the problem, it is as if the cement had become merely another brick. This is Heidegger's view:

Not only do we lack the 'cement', even the 'schema' in accordance with which this joining together is to be accomplished has . . . never yet been unveiled. What is decisive for ontology is to prevent the splitting of the phenomena. (SZ:132)

Heidegger's positive claim is that insofar as assertion is primarily understood, in line with *H*, as 'one of Dasein's intentional compartments' the problem of unity will simply not arise (Ga24:207). This is presumably because such an understanding pushes one towards treating the assertion as a whole as the primary unit: perhaps because it is the minimal unit for which one agent can be held accountable by another.²⁸

I have now examined (A#) with respect to both present-at-hand¹ and present-at-hand³. What about present-at-hand²—i.e., what about the purported link between propositional intentionality and entities individuated by reference to their spatio-temporal and causal properties. Here I think one must admit defeat. I can see no argument which might both support the connection and still bear some relation to Heidegger's text. The lesson of this, I suggest, is simply that Heidegger is careless with his use of terminology. He uses 'present-at-hand' primarily as a contrast term to 'ready-to-hand', and this leads him to apply to it to very different things in very different contexts. But his system neither affords nor requires a connection between propositionality and present-at-hand².

I want now to take stock. This section introduced and motivated a new reading of (A), namely (A#): on this reading, (A) does not concern the proposition or assertion per se but a particular philosophical approach to it. I then provided a philosophical assessment of Heidegger's views. Three main points emerge from that assessment. Firstly, I conclude that his case for (A#) has reasonable plausibility with respect to present-at-hand³, some with respect to present-at-hand¹ and none with respect to present-at-hand². Secondly, Heidegger's arguments are a matter more of ethos than entailment: at best, his claim is that certain way of thinking about intentionality will make one inclined to construe that which is intended in a certain way. After all, it seems logically possible to insist that the proposition be analysed in terms of subject-predicate form, say, and yet to refuse to make any metaphysical claims at all, let alone claims about substances. Thirdly, my reconstruction of (A#) shows how difficult it is to extract individual Heideggerian arguments from their place in SZ as a whole. For example, nothing has been said to explain why philosophers have found supposedly questionable methodologies like *M* so attractive: just as Nietzsche linked subject-predicate grammar to the slave revolt, Heidegger's answer will be in part psychological in a broad sense, grounded on his view of humans as agents who persistently obscure their own nature (SZ:322) (Nietzsche 1994: 1.13). Similarly, to return to the point introduced with the example of the Fregean who attempts to develop an account of social or instrumental relations, nothing has been said to justify the weight Heidegger attaches to concepts like 'primary'. Suppose, for example, I employ a version of *M*, say Kant's. In line with (A#), my primary philosophical analysis of the proposition, and by extension the intended entities, will thus make sense of those entities as substances, cut off from the Heideggerian world. But why cannot I then *add* an account of, say, social and environmental relations on top of this metaphysical base? Heidegger insists repeatedly that such progressive modification is impossible: the entities would still 'have their sole ultimate ontological source in the previous laying down of . . . things as the fundamental substratum' (SZ:99). But further arguments are clearly needed to justify this, to warrant the weight which Heidegger places on the idea of an 'ultimate ontological source': in the absence of those arguments, one should reserve a final judgment on (A#).

6. The Status of (B): Intentionality, Content and Grammar

This article began with two central Heideggerian claims: (A) and (B). I have argued that (A) should be understood as (A#). I want to close by saying something about what this implies for (B). (B), recall, is this:

(B) Propositional intentionality is explanatorily derivative on some irreducibly non-propositional mode of intentionality.

The Carman-Wrathall model explained (A) and (B) simultaneously by positing a class of motor intentional content which was irreducible and explanatorily prior to propositional content (thus B), and which could not be adequately captured in a proposition (thus A). I have denied that Heidegger's argument for (A) appeals to any such content. This has immediate advantages: for example, if there is no class of content such that it cannot be captured by propositions, then the fact that SZ itself consists of propositions does not, contra Blattner (2007: 23–7), trigger a fatal self-reference problem. But my approach also leaves me facing an obvious challenge. The challenge is this: if there is no class of content such that it cannot be captured by propositions then how can I explain (B)? How can there be a mode of intentionality which is irreducible to the propositional if all content can be intended propositionally?

I want to close by indicating how this challenge might be met, and in a way that meshes perfectly with Heidegger's text. The basic move is simple: if two modes of intentionality feature irreducibly different types of content that may suffice for those modes to be irreducible—but it is not necessary for it. Specifically, I believe that Heidegger recognises a mode of intentionality which is irreducible to the propositional not because the two modes have different contents, but because they have irreducibly different *grammars*.²⁹ This is exactly what the text of SZ itself suggests. The crucial sections, SZ§§33–4, devoted to the derivative status of assertion make no mention of the motor intentional content appealed to by Carman and Wrathall; instead, Heidegger summarises his argument by stating that his aim is to 'liberate grammar from logic' (SZ:165). From Heidegger's point of view, there are thus two, quite distinct, mistakes that the tradition had made: it has developed a way of analysing propositional intentionality which distorts the objects of such intentionality (thus A#), and it has failed to recognise that, even were propositional intentionality freed from such an analysis, such intentionality would remain explanatorily dependent on a form of experience defined by a very different grammar (thus B).

But what does this mean? What might it mean to say that the primary form of Heideggerian intentionality possesses the same content as, and yet a different grammar from, say, assertion? The answer, I suggest, is that the primary form of Heideggerian intentionality is conceptual and yet non-propositional. This possibility has been overlooked for two reasons. On the one hand, Heidegger himself obscures matters by often using '*begrifflich*' to denote explicit or focused attention (e.g., Ga25:24): I am obviously not claiming that our experience primarily has that property. On the other hand, even the most acute commen-

tators typically conflate the conceptual and propositional. This is Carman's argument against the view that Heideggerian intentionality is conceptual:

Fore-conception in Heidegger's sense, it seems to me, involves nothing like fully articulated concepts, that is, recurring and reidentifiable constituents of propositional contents. For example, Heidegger nowhere says that fore-conceptual aspects of interpretation correspond to particular linguistic predicates. (Carman 2003: 214)

I agree that the primary form of intentionality as Heidegger understands it cannot be analysed in terms of 'linguistic predicates' or 'propositional constituents'. But this does not imply that Heidegger is a non-conceptualist. That follows only if one assumes that conceptual intentionality must be propositional intentionality; as claimed, for example, by Kant in the *Metaphysical Deduction* or by Frege on one reading of the context principle (KrV:A69/B94; Frege 1953: Introduction). But those are substantive claims—and claims which I believe Heidegger is trying to undermine. It was, of course, the Kantian version of such views with which Heidegger was most familiar: Kant justified it by arguing that only 'pure, general logic' could provide the 'universal grammar' of conceptuality (Log:13). It is against this backdrop, I suggest, that one should see Heidegger's ambition to 'liberate grammar from logic' (SZ:165; Ga20:344). By extension, it is to the idea of grammar that one should look for an account of (B).³⁰

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NOTES

¹ Okrent uses 'extant' rather than 'present-at-hand' for '*Vorhanden*' and its cognates, whilst Schear uses 'judgment' for '*Aussage*': I have modified their texts for the sake of terminological continuity. With respect to Schear, I return to the link between judgment, assertion and other propositional attitudes in section 2.

² This definition is intended solely to provide a starting point for the discussion by appealing to one widespread view of propositions. I assume that the relevant sentence will be in a natural language such as English or German, or some extension of such, but nothing in what follows rests on this. An alternative would have been to introduce propositionality by reference to truth value. Heidegger's complex attitude to truth, however, makes that tactic unsuitable for introductory purposes.

³ Recall that Ga41 equates 'thing' with 'presence-at-hand' (Ga41:33).

⁴ Compare Ga20:269–70 and SZ:361. I assume that Heideggerian 'equipment' is at least a subset of the ready-to-hand.

⁵ I will occasionally employ 'represent' and its cognates as a stylistic variant on 'intend' and its cognates: in this I follow much contemporary philosophy of mind.

However, I minimise talk of 'representations' in order to avoid any implication either that intentionality should be understood on the veil of ideas model, or that intentionality consists of thematic states, such as occur in acts of deliberate self-consciousness. This may seem an unnecessary precaution, but the clarification regarding thematic awareness is particularly important since, as Searle observes, this is an issue which has created serious misunderstanding between analytic philosophers of mind and Heideggerians such as Dreyfus (Searle 2000: 74–6).

⁶ What Okrent actually says is that 'one intends a [present-at-hand] entity insofar as one makes an assertion about it'. To say that *y* happens 'insofar' as *x* does might be read as meaning that *x* is necessary rather than sufficient for *y*. However, Okrent presents his remark as a gloss on the passage from SZ:157–8 just cited, and that surely claims that assertoric practice is, somehow, sufficient for the representation of the present-at-hand: I thus read Okrent as attributing (A*) to Heidegger. I consider the converse of (A*) at the close of this section.

⁷ Blattner (2007: 23–7) has suggested that it is such self-reference problems which push Heidegger towards mysticism. I offer another solution: Heidegger never endorses (A*).

⁸ I use 'subject' in the broadest possible sense to refer to whichever being has the relevant intentional states: Heidegger obviously opposes many traditional models of 'subjecthood'.

⁹ One might read 'individuation' more thickly so as to include, say, the ability to re-identify over time gaps: one could then argue over both whether animals possess this capacity and whether it requires propositional abilities.

¹⁰ Heidegger's reading of Kant is enormously complex. For a discussion focusing on the issue mentioned, see Golob (Forthcoming). For a contained example of the type of argument which Heidegger employs to illustrate the supposedly non-propositional representation of Kantian substances, see Ga3:107.

¹¹ On the 'abyss' between human and animal cognition, see Ga9:326.

¹² Neither Wrathall nor Carman divide up the issues in exactly the way I have, but I believe it is reasonable to attribute the following proposal to them. In any case, it represents a view which underlies much contemporary Anglo-American work on Heidegger.

¹³ For a clear presentation of these views, see especially Carman (2003: 219) and Wrathall (2011: 19–20).

¹⁴ I have altered the sentence order. Wrathall is obviously using 'thing' here as a blanket term for any entity—and not as definitionally equivalent to the present-at-hand.

¹⁵ The fact that the nail is integrated into various tasks makes no difference: indeed, that alone could be cashed in terms of propositional attitudes with a 'world to mind' direction of fit. Note also that my claim that the primitive level of Heideggerian intentionality is open to literal truth or falsity is compatible with the fact that Heidegger has a highly novel account of what literal truth or falsity consists in.

¹⁶ I do not want to evaluate Kelly's argument; although I share Speaks's reservations (Speaks 2005: 21–2).

¹⁷ Thus Kelly's own misgivings about Dreyfus's reading (Kelly 2005: 16–7).

¹⁸ For Heidegger's strikingly blasé treatments of indexicals within a Kantian context, see Ga41:14–8; Ga25:57, 71, 117; and Ga3:16, 57.

¹⁹ In an earlier draft I suggested that passages such as Ga5:364 and SZ:163–4 were evidence that Heidegger explicitly argued against a 'fine-grained' view of perceptual content of the type defended by Heck's 'richness argument' (Heck 2000: 489–90). But it seems more plausible that these passages are simply directed against sense-datum accounts of experience. I am indebted to the anonymous referee for convincing me of this.

²⁰ As explained at the start of section 3, I employ 'intend' as the verb corresponding to 'intentionality'.

²¹ The 'changeover' in SZ§33 thus differs significantly from that in SZ§69b.

²² Similarly Ga20:362: there Heidegger stresses that his concern is with the 'theoretical propositions of logic' [*theoretischen Satz der Logik*]. As a glance at any logic textbook shows, the propositions involved need not be, and rarely are, theoretical in the sense of attributing complex scientific properties to objects: on the contrary, they tend to stick with familiar examples like 'all men are mortal'. Instead, the propositions are theoretical in the sense that they are subject to particular kind of meta-linguistic analysis, e.g., by being broken down into quantificational clauses with embedded scopes and so on.

²³ Heidegger's use of the term 'logic' is complex, in part because he aims ultimately to redeem the word by recapturing the original idea of *logos* (see, e.g., Ga33:121). That issue is beyond the scope of this paper: I therefore use 'logic', as Heidegger does in SZ:§§33–4, to denote a particular philosophical method and one which he rejects.

²⁴ The original text here refers to 'The *logos*' rather than 'The assertion'. I have simplified matters by avoiding the former phrase: taken as a whole, Heidegger's original paragraph makes it plain that my substitution is acceptable.

²⁵ Another reason that this is not clear is that Heidegger summarizes the nature of assertion per se as a 'communicating, determining pointing out' [*mitteilend bestimmende Aufzeigung*] (SZ:156). But I suggest that 'determining' here either simply means 'saying something about something' without any necessary tie to dimming down, or, if such a tie is assumed, then 'determining' must be at most a necessary possibility, a possibility triggered by the slide from explicit attention to logic which I have just highlighted. There are, of course, other passages where Heidegger talks about 'levelling off' or 'dimming down'. A full treatment of these is beyond this piece but it is worth noting that many, read in context, are unsympathetic to the Carman-Wrathall model. For example, Wrathall cites Ga20:76–7 (Wrathall 2011: 20). But the issue there is not the richness of perception but the possibility of categorical intuition; and a few pages earlier Heidegger has stated, apparently unabashedly, that 'our comportments are ... shot through with assertions' (Ga20:75).

²⁶ Following SZ§33, I formulate the problem at linguistic level here but, as Russell and Heidegger are aware, the question can equally be posed at the propositional level: I return to the question of truth bearers below.

²⁷ Indeed, as a young man Russell described its solution as 'the most valuable contribution which a modern philosopher could possibly make to philosophy' (Russell 1990: 145; I owe the reference to Stevens 2005: 15). For a summary of Bradley's concerns, see Bradley (1911).

²⁸ Heidegger's remarks on the problem of unity have recently been highlighted by Okrent, who argues that they show that sentences, not propositions, should be the primary truth bearers (Okrent 2011). But surely the nature of the truth bearer per se is irrelevant: as Heidegger himself notes the problem arises equally for avowed sententialists such as Hobbes (Ga24:262). I think that Okrent is much nearer the mark when he observes that for Heidegger, 'what makes an assertion an assertion ... is that it is a certain kind of intentional comportment of a certain kind of agent' (Okrent 2011:104): in my terms this is a statement of *H*.

²⁹ I am simplifying things a little here. I actually believe that the primitive mode of Heideggerian intentionality has both a grammar which is irreducible to the propositional and a distinctive mechanism for representing the very same content—i.e. concepts—

which is found in propositions: this mechanism is what Heidegger calls 'horizontal' or 'schematic' intentionality. For some details on this proposal in a historical context, see Golob (Forthcoming).

³⁰ I am greatly indebted to Raymond Geuss, Nick Jardine, Fraser MacBride, Wayne Martin and Joseph Schear for discussion of these issues, and to audiences in Cambridge and Oxford. I would also like to thank an anonymous referee for this journal for a hugely helpful set of comments and suggestions.

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