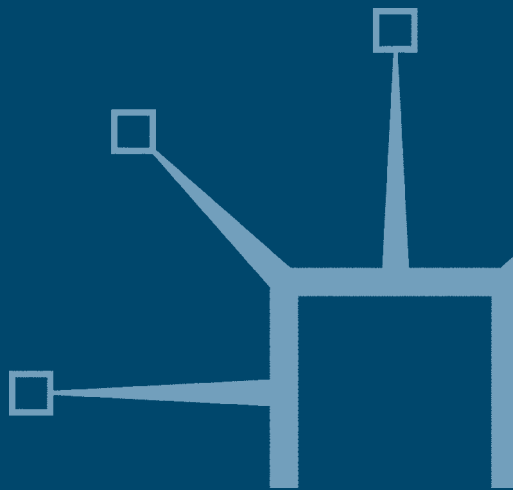


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A Conversation with Martin Heidegger

Raymond Tallis



A Conversation with Martin Heidegger

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A Conversation with Martin Heidegger

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Preface

From the perspective of the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is clear that the pre-eminent European philosophers in the twentieth century were Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger. For a long time, it seemed that one had to choose between them: *either Wittgenstein or Heidegger*. Many Wittgensteinians saw Heidegger as an almost ideally bad example, illustrating precisely the kind of mess that results when 'language goes on holiday'. In his writing, it appeared, all the faults of post-Hegelian German philosophy reached their climax. A Professor of Mist, his opaque system of thought – immunised against exposure to common sense, ordinary experience and empirical testing – was erected on elementary misuses of language. For Heideggerians, Wittgenstein, perhaps judged less by his own works than by those of the schools he inspired, was the antithesis of the philosopher. A Professor of Triviality rather than of Mist, he denigrated the traditional business of philosophy. In his guise as the (unwitting) father of Logical Positivism, he was seen to deny the validity of the deep questions and to assert the nonsensicality of attempted answers to such questions. As the (reluctant) spirit behind Ordinary Language Philosophy, he was thought to have reduced the questions and their answers to matters which could be addressed or dissolved by considering the appropriate and inappropriate uses of language. In either case, the immemorial ambitions of philosophy to describe and possibly understand the world in the most general sense – and latterly in a manner that took account of and even transcended the spectacularly powerful generalisations of science – were belittled, and Heidegger along with them.

Seventy years on from that defining moment when Rudolf Carnap, a leading logical positivist and an admirer of Wittgenstein, singled out Heidegger's *das Nichts selbst nichtet* ('Nothing itself nothings') for execration and thereby provided Heidegger with a world-wide notoriety to match his world-wide fame, we are able to look beyond the mutual caricature. It is now possible to acknowledge the greatness of both philosophers and, moreover, see the deeper connections between the two, the commonalities of vision and purpose beneath those surface differences that for so long created the impression that they were such polar opposites that no one could take both of them seriously without risking self-contradiction.

This is not the place to explore their similarities.¹ My sole purpose is to emphasise that one can acknowledge the greatness of Heidegger without having to unlearn, or be ignorant of, the message of Wittgenstein's profound critique of the ambitions, methods and language of traditional philosophy. The point of my doing so is to support the assertion that the unfinished business left by these two supreme twentieth-century philosophers may help us to define at least part of the agenda for philosophy in the twenty-first century.

It is, of course, the business of philosophy to raise questions rather than necessarily to solve them; it is intrinsic to its business to leave business unfinished. This is not as futile as it sounds; for beyond the questions and even the answers there is something that can be roughly called 'wakefulness'. Raising questions raises consciousness – if only of the multilayered uncertainty which is the condition of ordinary life (notwithstanding that ordinary life is somewhat dimly and intermittently aware of it). Great philosophy, like great art, should help us to overcome the absences and distractedness of everyday life, and to *be there* in italics. Anyway, such is the stature of these great thinkers that their legacy – both positive and negative – will contribute in no small way to shaping the preoccupations of philosophy in the century succeeding them.

I have tried to indicate some of the unfinished business bequeathed by Wittgenstein in the title essay of my previous book *On the Edge of Certainty*.² The present volume is a contribution to specifying some of the important unfinished business left by Heidegger. This may seem a bold, not to say cheeky, claim and I ought to qualify it at once by saying that my definition of the unfinished business is unashamedly personal: I have focused on those philosophical problems that have mattered, and still matter, most to me (and which Heidegger seemed at one time in my life to solve – or at least to dissolve) and on new problems created in the wake of his apparent solutions.

This is by way of a preamble to saying what kind of book this is. It might have been wiser to have begun by making clear at once what kind of book it is not. As will be evident to any genuine Heidegger scholar, *A Conversation with Martin Heidegger* is by no stretch of the imagination a work of primary scholarship. Nor is it an attempt to provide a comprehensive exposition and critique of his thought. Although the great bulk of this book is devoted to a close reading of *Being and Time*, this reading is not informed by anything more than the most superficial acquaintance with the German language. Nor do I claim the kind of knowledge and rich understanding of the many

philosophical traditions – Hellenic, medieval, neo-Kantian, phenomenological, etc. – out of which, or in reaction against, Heidegger's thinking developed and his own vision defined itself, such knowledge and understanding as one might reasonably expect of a professional philosopher. For some potential readers, these will be fatal disabilities and they will read no further. But I am naive enough to believe that truly philosophical ideas can be extricated from, and live outside, the language in which they were first expressed and yet retain their essential thrust. Plato still has worthwhile things to say to thinkers who are not fluent in Greek. And I also believe (in sharp contrast to many fashionable writers) that philosophical texts have a core of meaning that transcends the specific philosophical or philosophico-linguistic contexts in which they are written. Moreover, Heidegger himself never considered his writing to be addressed simply to fellow professors (about whom he was often unfairly scathing). Like Wittgenstein, he addressed his thoughts to anyone who had been troubled by the questions that troubled – and excited – him. And so, I believe, it is not entirely inappropriate that someone such as myself, who is not a professional philosopher, should comment on his work in print.³ If I have any entitlement to an audience for my views on Heidegger, it is because I bring to his writings over thirty years of sustained (though entirely unsystematic) reading in philosophy, and an equally sustained preoccupation with the questions he asked that has not diminished (though it has sometimes occultated) over the years.⁴

A Conversation with Martin Heidegger is above all a report on a personal, and at times passionate, engagement with the philosopher's central ideas. It is not, however, capricious or intentionally impressionistic: the journey through *Being and Time* is closely related to the text, as will be evident from the very large number of passages quoted from the Stambaugh translation. I have, however, endeavoured throughout to engage Heidegger the man as well as the Heidegger embedded in his work. This may annoy, or even offend, some scholars, and for good reasons: it may seem that I have indulged in too much *Gerede*. I trust that those who are able to sense the philosophical hunger behind my examination of Heidegger's masterpiece will see what I am aiming at and not even have to forgive me. While it would be self-deluding to imagine that Heidegger himself would approve, I believe that there is something in him that might not entirely dissent from my mixture of ontology and gossip, if he understood the serious purpose underlying the endeavour to unite the two.⁵

I have not yet touched on the most vulnerable point of this book. Although I have tried to be scrupulously accurate in representing his key ideas, my assumption that the *Conversation* addresses Heidegger's central thoughts implies that I am sufficiently familiar with the entire corpus to be confident that the thoughts I have argued with are indeed central. The truth is that (like most others who have written about Heidegger), I have read only a small sample of the fifty or so published volumes of his collected works, and nothing of the estimated further fifty or so volumes' worth of as yet uncollected works. How then can I know that *Being and Time* is Heidegger's masterpiece, and that at least some of the unfinished business I see myself as defining in this *Conversation* is not finished somewhere in those volumes? The answer is that I cannot be sure. There does, however, appear to be a consensus among the most prominent scholars regarding the central place of *Being and Time* in the *oeuvre* (though it was a comparatively early work in a very long writing life) and the centrality of the issues it addresses and the position it advocates.

This is argued persuasively by Herbert Dreyfus in his marvellous commentary where he points out that the 'later Heidegger never abandons the lasting contribution of *Being and Time*, namely the analysis of Da-sein's understanding of being and the world it opens up'.⁶ Frederick Olafson has also emphasised the unity of Heidegger's thought, with being as presence and presence as dependent upon Da-sein remaining the master-thought guiding his explorations.⁷ And for many of those major thinkers who have been influenced by him, *Being and Time* remains the key text. Habermas, who eventually rejected Heidegger's approach to philosophy, none the less judges *Being and Time* to be 'probably the most profound turning point in German philosophy since Hegel'.⁸

The Heidegger of *Being and Time*, in other words, is not an unrepresentative sample, even less a straw man, but an appropriate interlocuter for anyone wishing to engage his thought. Although there were several shifts in his preoccupations and the vocabulary in which they were discussed, and indeed in his style of philosophising, in the nearly fifty years of writing and thinking that Heidegger lived through after completing *Being and Time*, the much-vaunted *Kehre* or 'turning point' (which he himself anyway denied or felt had been overstated) was incomplete. The thoughts of *Being and Time* were never surpassed, even less rendered obsolete or redundant. The important things left unanswered there remained unanswered subsequently. To judge by the

quantity of commentary, these comparatively early thoughts remain the most influential elements of his heritage.⁹

My aim in this book, which is, as I have said, very much the result of a personal engagement with *Being and Time*, is to get beyond some of Heidegger's key arguments and ideas. This has proved more difficult than I had anticipated. The escape velocity required to leave the gravitational field of such a huge intellectual presence is especially difficult to attain because he created a new way of seeing the problems that he addressed and that way of seeing is embedded in a compellingly vivid vocabulary of his own which has now become canonical in much philosophical thought. His way of thinking becomes incorporated into the very tissue of the minds of those who are sympathetic to his way of thinking – as I will shortly confess. For this reason, it is difficult to think about one's own philosophical problems without thinking about Heidegger's problems in Heidegger's language and hence thinking Heidegger. You walk away from argument with him in an endeavour to recover your own vision only to find yourself drawn back, via his pre-occupations and vocabulary, into further argument with him. (This is a pattern that will be all too apparent in the pages that follow.) *A Conversation with Martin Heidegger* is therefore, to some degree, an attempt at exorcism, or a way of rescuing the central problems from their entanglement with Heidegger's distinctive philosophical personality. This endeavour does not have merely personal significance – otherwise I should reserve it for my personal diary: it may help others to, as it were, locate or localise him.

This is not, it will be sufficiently obvious, an attempt to reject him or belittle his achievement. Rather, it is a contribution to the process that will enable sympathetic thinkers to see round him, over him, to see past him, to see him as 'a limited whole', to see his ontology as capturing only part of the picture – a part that has been, extraordinarily, overlooked for 2,000 years – the better to build on what he has achieved. For although this book records, among other things, an endeavour to restore the problems that Heidegger dismissed or bypassed – in particular the epistemological problems – it is, equally importantly, a celebration of a great philosopher. So while I do not offer Heidegger uncritical praise, I am far from wishing to bury him.

The title of my final section, which echoes what is reputed to be Heidegger's own last word: 'Thanks', says it all. Thanks to a great, flawed philosopher, for helping to point the way for philosophers in this new century.

The right kind of elucidation never understands the text better than the author did, but it does understand the text in a different way. This other way must be of such a nature, however, that it deals with the identical 'thing' that the elucidated text reflects upon.

Martin Heidegger, Holzwege¹⁰

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By Way of Introduction

Good Morning, Herr Professor,

I hope this form of address is acceptable to you and that your ghost has not already been put into an unphilosophical state of mind, a 'mode of attunement to the world' inimical to the impassioned but disinterested inquiry which I intend that we shall embark upon together. With a little bit of research, I suppose I could find out how you were customarily addressed by those who wished to indicate their respect for your person; or at least how individuals of your standing would normally have expected and wanted to have been addressed. But there is, as Henry James that most philosophical of anti-philosophers pointed out, a 'fatal futility' in mere facts. A morning in a library, spent thinking not about Da-sein and *Mitda-sein* but employed researching the appropriate way of addressing high-ranking German academics, would take me rather closer than I would wish to inauthentic Da-sein – even to the realm of 'Idle talk', of *Gerede*, which has its place but not here. Our business together is with the ontological and primordial, not with the ontic and derivative. So, for the present, it will be as 'Herr Professor' that I shall address you.

Good morning, anyway – if they have mornings in Eternity, or in Nothingness, or whithersoever it was that you moved when, in 1976, you were disrobed of the body of the sinner Martin Heidegger, were disencumbered of the 'embodied I-thing' that lived out your not infrequently mendacious life, and you left behind the image of your soul and its struggles in the 'massive' (everyone's word for the projected 100 volumes) *Gesamtausgabe* that is slowly being exhumed by an industrial-scale work force of scholars.

Good morning, anyway. We are met here, Herr Professor, on these pages, and in a few places-in-the-world where in my imagination I would like to take you, to have a conversation.

Conversation? Let me explain.

I read recently, in an excellent little book devoted to your thought, that it was one of your strongest convictions that engaging with and commenting on and interpreting the work of earlier philosophers is a central, a primary, philosophical activity. Thinking through what Parmenides or Aristotle thought about the nature of Being is not merely second order compared with addressing the Question of Being 'head on' as it were. Philosophy is, as much as anything, a conversation with one's predecessors. And of course, you are right. After Plato and Aristotle, even after your admired *vorSocratiker*, all philosophers are latecomers, we in the twenty-first century above all: the problems have been posed – worse, *formalised*; solutions have been suggested and rejected; arguments have triggered counter-arguments and these have provoked further arguments in their turn. Even in our profoundest moments, we contemplate the world with the bruit of three millennia of soiled wonder murmuring in our minds; we listen into our own astonishment through entanglement after entanglement of half-remembered talk. Our surprise, our anguish, our puzzlement, our delight are not untutored, innocent movements of the soul.

The pessimist would conclude from this that we latecomers are condemned to life imprisonment in what Professor George Steiner (a not uncritical admirer of yours) called 'A Secondary City'¹ – the megalopolis of discourse about discourse, of books about books, of commentaries on commentaries, of footnotes to footnotes – in which we are separated from the direct encounter with things by layer upon layer of words about words which have long lost their originary relationship to things, to primordial significances, to the dawn-cry of revelation: '*This is how things are!*' The optimist, on the other hand, your interlocuter for instance Herr Professor, would draw a different conclusion. Is it not the case that each generation of philosophers *builds* on what has gone before, taking account of 'the story so far' in their attempts to make sense – or deeper, brighter, more inclusive, sense – of the world they find themselves in, the world they create?

Of course, even an optimist will admit that the sheer quantity of what has gone before makes it likely that as much will be forgotten as retained; that we may build less on the past than on unrepresentative fragments of it; that we may select bits and pieces that happen to confirm the views or intuitions with which we are most comfortable, which collude with those narrow notions that answer most closely to the constricted fields of awareness of our shrunken selves.

Did not you yourself argue this very thing? Was it not central to your sense of your own mission? Modern philosophers, you believed, far from building on the glorious achievements of their predecessors, have lost much of what the ancients – the very ancients – knew. And you were not talking about minor losses – a mislaid footnote, a cunning argument buried under a thousand layers of competing noise – but a great chunk of possible consciousness. For *we have lost not only answers but also questions*. Such a loss amounted, you thought, to a central scotoma in the Western philosophical vision. Moreover, you argued, the greatest of these losses were not recent – though the emptiness (as you saw it) of modernity was its most tragic consequence. No, some of the most catastrophic losses occurred when the mantle of philosophy passed from the pre-Socratics – Parmenides, Heracleitus – to Plato and Aristotle, and ontology was replaced by metaphysics; a catastrophe which opened the way to technology's 'oblivion of being'.

It was in Periclean Athens that the most fundamental of all questions – what you called The Question of the Meaning of Being – was mislaid:

And what then was wrested from phenomena by the highest exertion of thought, albeit in fragments and first beginnings, has long since been trivialized. (BT 2)

To trivialise a fundamental question is to lose it entirely. These Greeks – Plato, Aristotle et al., our philosophical founding fathers – switched the focus of thought from Being itself to beings: their wonder, directed at the beings around them, overlooked Being, the source of all beings. Which is not itself to be wondered at; for when Being 'discharges itself in beingness', it 'withdraws into unconcealedness'.² Being, as the self-blossoming emergence of things from hiddenness, is forgotten, philosophers no longer see their mission to guard beings in their unconcealedness but to grasp the essences of *types* of being. Man, under their tutelage, falls away from his role as The Shepherd of Being. The consequence of this flight from ontology to metaphysics (and subsequently from metaphysics to epistemology) is Technological Man, for whom the oblivion of being is total. Technology is 'the desolation of earth stemming from metaphysics'.³

The sense that the history of philosophy is not one of unalloyed progress, that there are losses as well as gains, however, only lends support to your view that dialogue with philosophers from the past is a primary, not merely a secondary, activity. We must talk with our great precursors, not just to clarify our own views in opposition to, or even

accordance with, theirs, but also to recover the insights they had and which may have got covered over with the prejudices, the habits of thought, derived from millennia of misdirected philosophical attention; or, more subtly, to know the influences that may be at work, unchallenged, in our own thoughts.

I am thinking at this moment, Herr Professor, of T.S. Eliot's famous defence of the classics, advanced against the dismissive view that 'The dead writers are remote from us because we *know* so much more than they did'. 'Precisely,' Eliot responded, 'and they are that which we know.'⁴ By reading the classics, we get to know better what it is that we think we know – what we, perhaps, take for granted. We see where our knowledge and preconceptions have come from and we see more clearly both their truth and their deficiencies. We may even catch sight of the cul-de-sacs into which we have been diverted and in consequence be liberated, perhaps, from that 'idle talk' which is 'the possibility of understanding everything without previous appropriation of the matter'.⁵ At any rate, our knowledge will become more conscious.

And so, for many reasons, philosophising that takes the form of a dialogue with past philosophers is not second-best, or second-rate. We are always anyway (or, to use your much-used phrase, 'always already') in dialogue. The point, for a philosopher above all, is to be aware of this – and to make dialogue conscious and so fruitful and illuminating.

It is just such a dialogue that I propose to have with you, Herr Professor, the philosopher whose thoughts, more than those of any other, have become incorporated into the very tissues of my mind. Hence our conversation. Whether it will be as profound as the conversations that you had with your great precursors – with Aristotle, with the medieval scholastics, with Descartes, with Kant, with Dilthey, with your great teacher Husserl, to name but a few – remains to be seen.

In order that our conversation shall indeed be fruitful and illuminating, there are one or two slightly awkward matters that need to be confronted first, if only to set them aside – or to try to do so. (I know already that they will come back again and again.) There's your politics for a start. And then there's the streak of charlatanry that goes through all your writing and the charlatanry you licensed in others by your sometimes bad example. And there also is the problem of the sheer size of your *oeuvre*. I should like to deal with each of these. (If this were a medical lecture and not a conversation, I would have prepared a succession of slides with each of these items, 'issues', or whatever, highlighted in their turn.)

Let's get the matter of your politics out in the open first. The kindest interpretation is that you were naive; that you misjudged the Nazis. Not everyone buys that and for many your personal convictions are as evil as the Nazism you did your significant bit to foster before the war and far from enough to repudiate after it. Your (relative) silence in your three decades of postwar life, when it would have been safe, even prudent, to have spoken out clearly and unequivocally against your former positions, suggests that your anti-Semitism, and the rest, was adopted at least in part through conviction rather than merely cowardice or the ruthless ambition of a philosopher making his way in the world. Who, in the end, can be sure where to place the boundary between conviction and opportunism, between sincere belief and calculating strategy? Did you not argue that 'the university's quest for knowledge be grounded in and unified by the confrontation with Being that is part of the German destiny – "the historical spiritual mission of the German Volk that as a Volk knows itself in its state"'?⁶ 'German destiny', 'the historical spiritual mission of the German Volk': to English ears they sound just like the stuff that spilt out of that other moustachioed pair of lips. They sound, in short, sufficiently Hitlerian: at once empty and menacing, vacuous and resonant, void and rabble-rousing. Perhaps your postwar silence merely reflected a stubborn pride – 'Never apologise, never explain' – and something close to malice. Your refusal to discuss the Holocaust with that great, wounded poet Paul Celan, who admired your philosophical writings and who had lost both parents in Auschwitz, certainly seems gratuitously cruel and may have contributed to his suicide not long after his single, long-awaited face-to-face encounter with you.

Richard Polt, in his brilliant introduction to your writing,⁷ summarises seven types of interpretation of the relationship between your philosophical ideas and your political pronouncements and behaviour. We won't go over these interpretations – they range from the view that, if you were a bad man, you must be a bad philosopher, to the opposite view that there is no relationship between an aptitude for philosophy and moral character. Instead, I shall take from these seven different interpretations permission to be agnostic: the extent to which your Nazism and your philosophical thought are caught up in each other's essences is simply undecidable. It would, of course, be quite easy to show connections between the one and the other, and to demonstrate that *Being and Time* is a crypto-fascist Bible and that your ontology of Da-sein is in fact a 'political ontology' which, as Bourdieu argues, prepares the way for Nazism, albeit in part unconsciously.⁸ But

then it is easy to show connections between anything and anything else and, in the absence of robust independent tests of those apparent connections, there is no way of checking the reality of the connection. At any rate, since millions of Germans were anti-Semites, Hitlerphiles and Nazis, as were hundreds of thousands of intellectuals, while only one German intellectual of the Nazi era had your philosophical profundity, we may assume that the relationship between your politics and your philosophy is probably going to be weak, so that it is acceptable for us to talk about your ontology without always have to bear in mind your unpleasant political pronouncements – those public speeches that played their part in giving Nazism cultural cachet – and your equally unpleasant, politically inspired behaviour.

Which is not to say that our conversation will be entirely unhaunted by the image of Herr Professor Husserl in old age, that gentle, bearded man, whose rather Chekhovian portrait (it is the pincenez that reminds me of the Great Doctor, I think) you see on the wall of my study. He was the complete philosopher, a tragic wrestler with the truth to the end. You rejected him – kicked him in the teeth – in his last years of ill-health, though he had been your mentor and supporter, indeed your philosophical father. In 1926, it was expedient to dedicate your one masterwork, *Being and Time*, which will frame our conversation, to Edmund Husserl ‘in friendship and admiration’. Very wise since, as one of the most famous philosophers in Europe, Professor Husserl had power and influence and he had used this influence to support your career with glowing testimonials. (Did he not say of you, in 1919, when you were a humble *Assistant*, that he had not met anyone who exhibited ‘such freshness and boundless originality’?) Despite this, you also found it expedient, in 1934, when you were Rector, not to refrain from signing a letter forbidding him to enter the University to which he had given so much, and whose reputation he had so enhanced, because he was a Jew.⁹ And in 1938, you found it equally expedient not to attend his funeral. Neither of us should forget this, Herr Heidegger, lest we become more superficial than we ought to be in a philosophical conversation.

At the same time, however, we may also remind ourselves that the connection between Herr Rector Heidegger the public man and the Martin Heidegger of the moments of his deepest thinking is uncertain, even frail. ‘Such a great philosopher and such a little man,’ as your illustrious pupil Hans-Georg Gadamer once said. Our present conversation will be with you the Great Philosopher and not with you the calculating, cunning, often downright unpleasant, Little Man. If this

separation between the philosopher and the man is precisely counter to the whole tenor of existentialist thought that you may have done much to foster with your talk of 'being-towards-death' and 'living authentically', so be it. We will, no doubt, come back to that in due course and with it the issue of the Little Man.

Which brings us to the question of your charlatanry. This is not – *pace* the logical positivists and purveyors of other brands of analytical thought – to be found in your particular assertions. *Das Nichts selbst nichtet* ('Nothing itself nothings') – to take the favourite target of your earliest opponents – is not entirely opaque, empty or unhelpful; though it sometimes seems that, as with a Rorschach ink-blot, one can make out of it what one brings to it. (Nor is this notorious statement founded entirely upon an elementary blunder: upon the belief that to every word or phrase capable of acting as the subject of a sentence there corresponds a quasi-thing-like entity. Indeed, I can think of a sense in which it might be profoundly true.) No, for me, the charlatanry is to be found in certain pervasive characteristics of your thought.

The first is in the sales talk that disfigured some of your lectures: you managed to create the sense of the immanence of revelation, of a final solution to problems, simply out of raising questions. The disappointment this brought in its wake was often devastating to your pupils:

We nicknamed Heidegger 'the little magician from Messkirch' ... His lecturing method consisted in constructing an edifice of ideas, which he himself then dismantled again so as to baffle fascinated listeners, only to leave them up in the air. This art of enchantment sometimes had the most disturbing effects in that it attracted more or less psychopathic personalities, and one female student committed suicide three years after such guessing games.¹⁰

That is, perhaps, a little hard. It is difficult to establish a causal relationship between lectures given to many hundreds of students and a single *Selbstenthauptung* several years later. But the impression of your lectures as the-casting-of-spells on youthful Da-sein seems to have been consistently reported:

Who among those who then followed him can forget the breathtaking swirl of questions that he developed in the introductory hours of the semester only to entangle himself in the second or third of these questions and then, in the final hours of the semester, to roll

up deep-dark clouds of sentences from which the lightning flashed to leave us half- stunned?¹¹

'Already by 1921, disgruntled colleagues had spoken of students being – as if bewitched – be-Heideggered [*verheideggert*].' ¹² Perhaps, as a fellow professor and a fellow performer on the podium with similar aspirations to electrify and change at least some of my audience, I am more than a little jealous of you. So you may take that into account when I try to bring you down to size by sniffing at a dodgy argument. And the fact that I, too, have been bewitched at times. At any rate, the two of us, I suspect, are going to enjoy, in the hours of our conversation, a relationship somewhat different in kind from the one you enjoyed with your pupils and colleagues. Though I must tell you, Herr Heidegger, I am no less passionate a thinker than you or your be-Heideggered pupils; I have been as deeply struck – and wounded – and excited – by philosophical questions as you; and I share your fundamental questions: Why is there something rather than nothing? How is it that the world we live in makes sense? But I am an Englishman, and we have a more sceptical attitude towards magicians and prophets and heroes – and even professors. So we should be able to level with one another, even in the luminous vertigo of true philosophical wonder.

More seriously, you often present implicitly as an answer something that is merely a restatement of a question. The opacities of your style (not all of them, by any means, unnecessary and not as serious as people who haven't read you with sufficient attention claim) sometimes conceal the emptiness of the answers to the questions you posed with such oracular authority. Again and again, as I read your wonderful *Being and Time*, I am exasperated at the way you seem to imply that by merely asserting what is the case – for example, that Being-in-the-world is constitutive of *Da-sein* – you have solved problems that have baffled others. In many cases, I feel that the problems have been simply recast, parked up or bypassed: redescription poses as explanation. On the other hand, your description of how things are, in the most general sense, is an act of intellectual love towards the world that has rarely been surpassed. In your questioning of the meaning of Being, you opened up the widest 'That [it is so]! That [the world is thus]!' that the century that has just passed afforded. And you have helped me to talk to myself in a way that is less shallow – distracted, merely occasioned – than it might otherwise be. You have made visible things that were simply overlooked. Above all, you have disclosed dis-

closedness itself – something that most of your fellow philosophers have not noticed. And so, although the unfolding discussion of *Being and Time* may seem like a journey from a question to an answer when it is nothing of the kind, the circular journeying it invites one to undertake is a supremely worthwhile adventure of the spirit.

The second characteristic of your writing that I take exception to – the other aspect of your charlatanry – is your tendency to gather up the history of Western philosophy in a single, summarising phrase, a single sweep of the hand. This vice has cleared the path for writers immeasurably less knowledgeable and philosophically gifted than yourself to adopt a manner of dealing with the past that is, to say the least, unhelpful. It was your bad example, I suspect, that started the fashion, lamentably ubiquitous in late twentieth-century postmodern thought, of treating everything that has been said since the pre-Socratic thinkers as if it was in some sense a single blob of ideas. Your own rather sweeping history of Western philosophy (and your later, even more sweeping ‘history of Being’ itself – in which you discovered yourself as the spokesman for *The Autobiography of Everything*) was rooted in good reasons and profound intuitions: you wanted to rescue the question you felt that Plato and Aristotle had lost, the Question of the Meaning of Being. But this gave the green light to those one hundred per cent charlatans, whose names we shall withhold for the sake of their families, to speak dismissively of quasi-unitary entities such as ‘the Western metaphysics of presence’ and to share with their disciples and pupils a superior attitude to a history marked by giant intellects whose names they could hardly spell and whose works they had never read. We forgive you, as we do not forgive them, because you have helped set the agenda for serious philosophy in the twenty-first century – and for our conversation.

In summary, Herr Professor, while I recognise your charlatanry, I would assert that it is not as great and as damaging a fault as the charlatanry of those who have expropriated you for their bad philosophising. If one side-effect of our conversation is to contribute to rescuing you from association with those charlatans, then I shall not be discontent.¹³

One last preliminary. How can we have a conversation if you are dead and I am alive? Does this not imply an intolerable asymmetry in the conditions of our exchange? Well, when you were alive, you certainly had your say in those innumerable lectures and in your many published works. It is through them that you will continue to speak – as you have done to me over the last thirty or more years. But your

'Works' do pose a problem; for, even now, more than a quarter of a century after your death, not everything you wrote for publication has been published. Out of a projected 100 volumes of the *Gesamtausgabe* only fifty have so far appeared. Of those fifty, your interlocutor has read only a handful, albeit with close attention and much subsequent reflection. So, while I might argue that you have had your say and now it is my turn to speak, you could equally well argue that most of what you have said has been sidelined or silenced and is simply unknown to me.

Well, yes and no. The truth is, I am interested only in your central thoughts and in their most direct expression. These ideas are, it seems to me, more than enough to nourish a worthwhile conversation. If, in due course, there are major discoveries which demand a total revision of our understanding of what you were trying to say, even in *Being and Time*, then I shall happily engage you in *Another Conversation with Martin Heidegger*. And if, in the meantime, you would prefer that I described our present dialogue as *A Conversation with Part I of Martin Heidegger*, or even *A Conversation with an Important Bit of Martin Heidegger*, that would be fine by me. A conversation with a part of you is a thousand times more worthwhile than a conversation with the whole of most other thinkers. Anyway, I have been having this conversation with a part of you now for over thirty years, since I first opened *Being and Time* at the age of twenty. The time has come to have it more publicly and bring it to some kind of head or provisional conclusion.

I am not, at any rate, unaware of your famous 'turn', or *Kehre*, talk of which annoyed you so much. I know that there was a later Heidegger for whom Being and Da-sein were no longer eternal categories and became historical entities, whose nature evolved over time. And I know also that your view of the nature of Being itself changed so radically that you came to prefer other terms for 'the mysterious wellspring of beings' – such as 'the event of appropriation' which is the necessary condition of anything happening at all. And there were many other suggestions that came out of your decades of poetic meditation upon language, art, poetry, things, the earth, the sky, the gods. But it seems to me that there is, none the less, important business left unfinished in *Being and Time* and it is this that is most worth engaging with. The massive achievement and equally massive failure of *Being and Time* is more deserving of attention than even the most profound of those of your subsequent meditations with which I am familiar.

To this we now address ourselves.

Part I

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In My Study: Beyond the Subject and the Object

I hope you feel comfortable, Herr Professor, looking out of the portrait I have of you on my desk. (You used to be up there on the wall with Professor Husserl and Professor Wittgenstein and many others. But that was before I learnt so much about Heidegger the Little Man.) The framed photograph was cut out of one of my many books on or about you. The frame is a cheap thing that I bought in an indoor market when I was on holiday a few years ago. (I thought you might appreciate the concreteness of specification.) It is a strange portrait. Your generous domed forehead cannot erase the resemblances, created by your period moustache, between your face and that of Mr. Oliver Hardy. You are wearing a little skull cap to keep your head warm (at the right temperature for thought, perhaps). I can just see the top of a jacket whose velvet lapels enable one to guess the Tyrolean rest. ('He usually dressed,' so reports one of your ex-pupils, 'in knickerbockers and a folksy Black Forest peasant coat with wide facings and a semi-military collar, both made of dark brown cloth.'¹⁴) It is cut off just below the neck, so I am spared the spectacle of your shortness clad in shorts, for that would make serious conversation more difficult. There is just your face and it is – despite what I have just said – a remarkable face! Beneath the banker's brow there are deep, dark, tragic, unsmiling eyes, at odds with the mouth that is doing its best to smile for the camera. (Your full smile is unfortunate. It is reproduced on the cover of Richard Polt's book. When both eyes and mouth are smiling, there is a falsity, which I cannot quite pin down: a contrived mischievousness, a failed twinkle, like that of an inexperienced uncle trying to engage his nephews at their own level; or a sly pixie; or even something maidenly and demur. Or, again, in its falsity, something *gemütlich*. I am reminded of Karl Löwith's observation that your 'natural expression was one of cautious peasant-sly mistrust'.)¹⁵

So there it is: your physical appearance, among the impedimenta, the paraphernalia, the ready-to-hand, on my desk. You look out from your frame into my spacious, rather empty, booklined study, with its vast picture window, which in turn looks across the garden to the tree-filled valley and the Pennines beyond – mere hillocks compared with the mountains around your wooden hut in Todtnauberg, which we shall, in due course, visit.

That is enough distraction. Let us go at once, Herr Professor, to what is for me the heart of the matter. I am talking about your peremptory solution to the mind–body problem. This was the earliest problem that bothered me and has caused me the most enduring trouble – and delight. It opens on to everything else; most importantly on to our sense of what we are and what we might be and what we could one day become. It concerns our place in nature; or, if that is already to foreclose part of the discussion, our place in the wider scheme (or schemelessness) of things. It is key to our notion of how our (human) being relates to Being.

The mind–matter problem (or consciousness–matter problem or subject–object problem) has preoccupied me in many ways and at many levels. At the most superficial level (where it has detained me longest), it is a puzzle about the relationship between our minds and our brains. I won't go over the arguments that I have set down in too many pages over too many years.¹⁶ Nor will I try to e-mail the disks where those pages are stored to the unplace where I suspect you are not-@ or not-quite-@. Suffice it to say that I have proved to my satisfaction that the activity in our brains cannot explain why or how we are conscious, or how we are conscious, and separately and distinctly conscious, both of objects outside of ourselves and of ourselves; that consciousness (of things) cannot be accounted for by the interaction between things – between, for example, a human body or brain and other things in the world – or more generally by material objects rubbing up against or banging into one another; that there is nothing in the brain, more specifically in nerve impulses, to explain the presence of one thing to another or (to use your excellent term) the 'disclosedness' of things in the world – either in the form of the web of significances that constitutes the unified world of things that are ready-to-hand (of which more presently) or in the form of the objective presence of the merely present-to-hand. At the same time, however, I am absolutely certain that the fate (and content and the very possibility) of my consciousness is bound up with the function of my brain and the body upon which my brain depends. Let me put this another way

(and then I will stop, for this, after all, is the *superficial* problem!): I can find nothing in neurones or their activity to account for their supposed role in disclosing the world to a someone (e.g. me). And I can find nothing in them to explain the existence of that someone – that ‘who’, ‘I’, ‘me’. At the same time, however, I cannot deny the central role of the brain in enabling us to be people for whom there is a world; nor – and I speak as one whose main professional concern is with patients who have suffered strokes – can I ignore our dependency on the normal functioning of the brain for our normal awareness and our normal conduct as human beings.

At a deeper level (one which I visit rather too rarely), I cannot explain how the subject relates to the object. I have gone round and round the circuit marked out by solipsism and idealism and phenomenism and naive realism in my endeavours to answer these questions:

How do *I* seem to experience the not-I?

How do my experiences of the not-I cohere into my world?

How does that world dovetail with others’ worlds to form, participate in, contribute to, be immersed in, the common world of humanity – so that, as Heracleitus said, we the waking share a common cosmos?

And how does that common human cosmos, the object of our talk and timetables, connect with the world of natural science?

Yes, I have gone round and round the circuit of notions and I have discovered that it is possible to enter the circuit at any point and always to make some progress before one gets stuck.

For example, we may begin with solitary human experiences – understood, perhaps, as arising out the impact of the material world on our nervous systems, if that is what we believe the basis of experiences to be. But if we begin here, we are left trying to explain how those experiences give us access to an outside world – the very outside world that is supposed to have given rise to the experiences; and how they amount, what is more, to reliable accounts of enduring objects which are the objects of others’ experiences. Failing to find such an explanation, we may conclude that we cannot break out of the charmed circle of our experiences, that our experiences cannot reach outside themselves to take us beyond experience.

One way out of this (worst-case) solipsist or (best case) idealist position is a phenomenism according to which seemingly external objects are constructs out of experience. In other words, we begin at another point in the circle and regard *experiences*, understood as elements of consciousness, as primary. The difficulties that this view brings in its wake need not be spelt out for you, Herr Professor; they are a minor version of the difficulties your mentor Professor Husserl experienced on a grand and tragic scale in his decades of unremitting philosophising, the difficulties he described so often in the agony of his last years:

How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object? How can experiences be mutually legitimated or corrected by each other, and not merely replace each other, or confirm each other subjectively? How can the play of consciousness whose logic is empirical make objectively valid statements, valid for all things that exist in and of themselves? ... How is natural science to be comprehensible ... to the extent that it pretends at every step to posit and know a nature that is in itself – in itself, in contrast to the subjective flow of consciousness?¹⁷

If I quote him here, if I allow his voice (the voice of authentic philosophy) to intrude on our private conversation, it is not to discomfort you, but to remind both of us how deep this worry may penetrate. And yet, for me, there is a deeper level to which the whole question once penetrated – a level I seem no longer to be able to visit, barred as I am from it by the accumulated patina of preoccupation, of worldliness, of responsibility, of easy articulation, that intervenes between me and my most solitary self. At this deepest level, there is *terror*: that the world of my experiences – what I encounter as *the* world, the scene of my life, of my conscious existence – might have no external reality corresponding to it. In short, that everything – my life, my self, my relationships with others – might be a dream out of which I shall one day awaken into something utterly different – wonderful or terrible, I know not; though, when it was the recurrent metaphysical terror of my adolescence, I suspected it might be terrible.

You cut through, or dismissed, or bypassed all that. First, you discarded the notion of the discrete subject ('an I-thing encumbered with a body', BT 100; 'the prediscovered isolated subject', BT 189) located in the world, at a point in space, externally related to other entities ('physical objects'). For you, humans are not 'subjects' faced with an

impossible task of somehow inferring or constructing an outside world from experiences arising out of their interactions with physical objects. The 'I' is not some kind of non-physical object, drawing insufficiently grounded conclusions about the nature of things outside of itself – so that it could say, as Descartes did, or feel, as I felt: 'I might be dreaming'. The subject is not an entity in the world in the way that a chair or a table is a thing in the world. The view of the subject as a discrete non-physical object among physical objects is an artefact of a way of looking; it is derivative, the child of a certain theoretical stance; it is not primordial. Equally derivative, non-primordial, are those physical objects, best understood as the material entities of physics, that are supposed to confront the subject as the world it encounters, or the building blocks of that world, the material out of which the subject has to construct its notion of an 'outside', 'an outside of itself' or 'the outside world'. This is your second, and very important, step: your assertion that the world we inhabit does not originally consist of physical objects as science understands them, or even of 'objective presences'.

For you, therefore, Herr Professor, the differentiation of the world into (immaterial) subjects and the (material) objects they somehow have to gain access to through knowledge – the very world-picture that has created the mind-matter problem and underlay my terror – does not correspond to any primordial reality. Far from being inescapable as the fundamental ontological reality of our world, and the justification of the insuperable problems of epistemology, you have argued that the notion of immaterial subjects amongst material entities understood as 'objective presences' is only the product of a recent way of understanding the world. Well, relatively recent: it arose when, with the Greeks, metaphysics replaced ontology, and the focus shifted from the question of being to particular types of beings; and it was powerfully reinforced by the shift from metaphysics to epistemology – to the problem of how we know what is there and what it is we *can* know – that took place with Descartes' search for absolute certainty in the midst of systematic doubt.

If objects and subjects are not primordial, what then is? Da-sein – being there – is primordial. Your argument for this is (to be frank) a bit quick, but here it goes:

To work out the question of being means to make a being – he who questions – transparent in its being. Asking this question, as a mode of *being* of being, is itself essentially determined by what is asked about in it – being. This being, which we ourselves in each case are

and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being we formulate terminologically as Da-sein. The explicit and lucid formulation of the question of the meaning of being requires a prior suitable explication of a being (Da-sein) with regards to its being. (BT 6)

Thus the case for the primordially of Da-sein: Da-sein is that being which has some kind of understanding of being and through which being itself must be approached. Now Da-sein is not a subject sealed off from the world; nor is it an object that is merely *in* the world but not of it. Da-sein is being-in-the-world. It is engaged in, thrown into the world, but does not engage it from an outside that is its own inside, is not thrown into the world from within itself. One the contrary, unlike the discrete subject of post-Cartesian philosophy, Da-sein has no 'inside'; even less is it an 'inside': being-in the-world is constitutive of Da-sein:

Da-sein ... must ... be seen and understood *a priori* as grounded upon the constitution of being which we call *being-in-the-world*. (BT 49)

The 'outside world' is as much inside Da-sein as outside it. Or, more precisely, it is neither inside nor outside Da-sein. For the relation of Being-in is internal to Da-sein: the world is within Da-sein; but at the same time Da-sein is within the world (though not as an objective presence in the world). Da-sein *exists* (for you a very special word to which we shall return) in the world. Its being subsists in its being *thrown* (another very special word) into the world:

being-in is not a 'quality' which Da-sein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could with it. It is not the case that human being *is*, and then on top of that has a relation of being to the 'world' which it sometimes takes upon itself. Da-sein is never 'initially' a sort of being which is free from being-in, but which at times is in the mood to take up a 'relation' to the world. This taking up of relations to the world is possible only *because*, as being-in-the-world, Da-sein is as it is. This constitution of being is not at first derived from the fact that beside the being which has the character of Da-sein there are other beings which are objectively present and meet up with it. These other beings can only 'meet up' 'with' Da-sein because they are able to show themselves of their own accord within a *world*. (BT 54)

In other words, Da-sein does not have to derive, construct, infer or sense its world, weaving it together, for example, out of interactions with bumped-into beings which are 'objectively present' – out of bumpings into things or (to put it a little more conventionally) out of perceptual experiences or sense impressions. For

Da-sein has always already referred itself to an encounter with a 'world'. This *dependency of being referred* belongs essentially to its being. (BT 81)

There is an important potential misunderstanding here which needs to be pre-empted: the world of Da-sein is not the internal accusative of the subject as is the world of the solipsist or idealist. It *is* externality. But this, too, must not be misunderstood: the beings in Da-sein's world – you call them 'innerworldly things' (or, rather, your excellent translator does) – are not the natural objects of physics, composed of neutral matter. Indeed, they are not things that are merely 'objectively present', the usual types of objects that preoccupy epistemologists and ontologists and are the typical objects of scientific enquiry. Those objects – objective presences, understood as being intrinsically bits of matter – are rather late arrivals on the scene:

we must remember that knowing itself is grounded beforehand in already being-in-the-world which essentially constitutes the being of Da-sein. Initially, this already-being-with is not solely a rigid staring at something merely objectively present. (BT 57)

Our relationship to the inner-worldly things is not like our relationship to objective presences 'rigidly stared at' or detachedly contemplated. The things that belong to Da-sein's world are *invested with significance*; they belong to a web of significance which is woven out of Da-sein's constitution as a being 'whose being is an issue for itself':

Being-in-the world, as taking care of things, is *taken in by* the world which it takes care of. (BT 57)

This is a crucial step: because 'being-in-the-world belongs essentially to Da-sein, its being-towards-the-world is essentially taking care' (BT 53). Da-sein's interpretations do not 'throw a "significance" over what is nakedly objectively present and does not stick a value on it, but what is encountered in the world is always already in a relevance which is

disclosed in the understanding of the world' (BT 140). 'Only Da-sein can be meaningful or meaningless' (BT 142); conversely, Da-sein's world is through and through meaningful. It is characteristically composed of things that relate to its purposes and needs, inextricably connected with Da-sein's status as 'a being whose being is an issue for itself', whose essential being is Care – its 'existential meaning'. When a being is disclosed to Care, 'it is always already a thing at hand in the surrounding world and precisely not "initially" merely objectively present "world-stuff"' (BT 80).

It is because 'being-in-the-world belongs essentially to Da-sein' and 'its being toward the world is essentially taking care' (BT 53) that the beings Da-sein encounters are not objective presences, things merely present-at-hand, but things that are ready-to-hand. Da-sein is not merely side-by-side with its world: the being-with that characterises Da-sein cannot be reduced to the mere side-by-side of material objects which (as we shall see in a moment) itself requires Da-sein to make them be together-with one another – to *be* side-by-side.

The primacy of world, understood as a 'web of signification', or a significant whole, implies that we do not merely encounter one thing at a time, in isolation. The worldliness of Da-sein's world is 'the referential totality of significance' (BT 115). This significance is invested in things that are 'ready-to-hand'. Such things would include tools such as hammers and nails to help us perform certain tasks. The hammer is not a neutral, meaningless bit of matter, which is then expropriated for particular purposes: its very presence, in the moment of our encounter with it, is invested with use, with purpose, with meaning. That meaning, what is more, reaches beyond the isolated act of hammering; for hammering itself makes sense only as part of a world in which there are human needs served by hammers – and nails and wooden planks: a world in which there are dwellings and the skills of construction and foresight:

Strictly speaking, there 'is' no such thing as *a* useful thing. There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing can be what it is ... A totality of useful things is always already discovered *before* the individual useful thing. (BT 64)

This connectedness between the vast number of things in Da-sein's world is not seen in the case of beings which are merely objectively present – the material objects of science. The elements of the atomic

world of science are utterly isolated from one another. While we may loosely speak of the chair touching the wall, they do not really touch: chair and wall do not belong with one another, they do not 'encounter' one another; they are not even side-by-side:

A being can only touch an objectively present being within the world if it fundamentally has the kind of being of being-in – only if with its Da-sein something like world is already discovered in terms of which beings can reveal themselves through touch and thus become accessible in their objective presence. Two beings which are objectively present within the world and are, moreover, *worldless* in themselves, can never 'touch' each other, neither can 'be' *together* with the other. (BT 52)

The presence of the hammer, and indeed of all the objects in Da-sein's world, therefore, is not the aseptic presence-at-hand of physical objects extended in physical space but the readiness-to-hand of a world that is integrated into Da-sein's concerns, the latter converging in Da-sein's overriding and continuous care for itself. Thus:

'World' is ontologically not a determination of *those* beings which Da-sein essentially is *not*, but rather a characteristic of Da-sein itself. (BT 60)

Objects may not infrequently crystallise out of the nexus of meaning as brute matter – as when, for example, they are broken, or dysfunctional, or uninterpretable, or in a science laboratory – but this is atypical, unusual, and must not be seen as typifying the way Da-sein is related to its, or the, world. (As you put it in your inimitable way: '*Conspicuousness* presents the thing at hand in a certain unhandiness', BT 68.) Even then, the presence of the merely present-at-hand is a privative or 'deficient' mode of readiness-to-hand, and in this sense, it is still 'bound to the handiness of useful things'. Dispassionate observation of neutral objects, in which those objects are reduced, say, to extended, solid, shaped, physical entities – to 'objective presences' – may be useful in science, but it is not a way of showing how objects are an issue for us in the everyday world of Da-sein: 'being-in is quite different from a confrontation which merely observes and acts, that is the concurrent objective presence of a subject and an object' (BT 165):

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 of nature, nature as what 'stirs and strives', what overcomes us, entrances us as landscape, remains hidden. (BT 66)

Most importantly,

world is essentially disclosed *with the being* of Da-sein; 'world' is always already discovered with the disclosedness of world, too. (BT 188)

Disclosedness is part of the primordial package. The mind-body problem does not therefore arise. We do not first have mind which has to disclose the not-mind of the material world. Nor do we first have matter which then has to give rise to mind which reveals matter to itself. Neither of these problematic (indeed insolubly problematic) scenarios arises because

The objective presence together of the physical and the psychical is ontically and ontologically completely different from the phenomenon of being-in-the-world. (BT 190)

Neither the objective presence of things nor the subject is primordial: they are derivative. What is primordial is being-in-the-world.

And it is here, not in confrontation with something like material objects, that the basis of 'reality' is to be found: 'With Da-sein as being-in-the-world, beings have been already disclosed' (BT 192) and 'this existential and ontological statement seems to agree with the thesis of *realism* that the external world is objectively present in a real way' (BT 192). Reality cannot be grounded in certain perceived properties of the world, in the realm of the ontic ('pertaining to particular facts about entities, without regard to their Being') as opposed to the realm of the ontological (pertaining to Being).¹⁸ Experiences, or the relationships between them, would be too far down the track to establish reality – for example, the reality of external objects in general, or the reality of an extra-mental world. It could not be discovered in, derived from, or proved by certain observed or experienced relations between 'real' things. The reality, or otherwise, of the 'external' world cannot, therefore, be called into question; nor, correspondingly, can this reality be demonstrated through, even less grounded in, some specific property of things such as (Dilthey's suggestion) 'the experience of resistance':

The experience of resistance, that is, the discovery of resistance in striving, is ontologically possible only on the basis of the disclosedness of the world.

... [The sum of experiences of resistance] does not first introduce the disclosure of the world, but presupposes it. The 'against' and 'counter to' are supported in their ontological possibility by disclosed being- in-the-world. (BT 194–5)

That there is something that is real, that there is something called, and experienced as, 'reality', is dependent upon Da-sein, whose being is an issue for itself, whose being is care: *Reality is referred back to the phenomenon of care.*

This may seem to suggest that reality is internal to Da-sein and may look a little like idealism or even magic thinking. We shall return to this (a fundamental problem for your ontology, Herr Professor) more than once and merely note your pre-emptive strike on this suggestion:

The fact that reality is ontologically grounded in the being of Da-sein cannot mean that something real can only be what it is in itself when and as long as Da-sein exists ...

Even so, you go further and make suggestions that remind me of my own thoughts in *The Explicit Animal*:

However, only as long as Da-sein *is*, that is, as long as there is the ontic possibility of an understanding of being, 'is there' [*gibt es*] being. If Da-sein does not exist, then there 'is' no 'independence' either, nor 'is' there an 'in itself' ... *Then* it can neither be said that beings are, nor that they are not. *Now*, as long as there is an understanding of being and thus an understanding of objective presence, we can say that *then* beings will still continue to be. (BT 196)

In *The Explicit Animal* (which was even more influenced, I now suspect, by your thoughts than I was aware of at the time when I wrote it), I didn't go quite this far; but I did argue that 'That X is the case' is dependent upon human consciousness; that such consciousness imports 'That' into the world and makes of Being configurations of being corresponding to 'That X is the case'. (As I say this here now, Herr Professor, it seems a less radical thought than it has seemed on many other occasions of thinking it.)

We shall, I am sure, revisit this spot. For the present, let us note the important thing, Herr Professor: that you seem to have succeeded in bridging the gap between the subject and the object by throwing the subject into the world and, by dint of portraying that world not as an

array of opaque, neutral, unconscious material objects – which may or may not in reality exist – but primarily and irreducibly as a network of significances in which objects participate, you have thrown the world into the subject. You have also restored the priority of ontology over epistemology: the ontological question of what kind of things there are has absorbed the epistemological question of how we know what kind of things there are and how valid our knowledge is. You have thus reversed the Cartesian revolution. (Your great – and equally bigoted – fellow countryman, Gottlob Frege, overthrew the Cartesian revolution in a different way – by giving the philosophy of language priority over epistemology, making the question of meaning and language, rather than that of knowledge, foundational.) The subject – superseded by Da-sein, being-ahead-of-itself towards its ownmost possibilities – is opened up to temporality (of which more eventually) and through this into historicity and society. Intersubjectivity and society and culture are built into the primordial structure of Da-sein. No longer is the subject an isolated pocket or packet of awareness reaching out into things of which it is aware; nor is it a succession of experiences trying to piece together a world from the body in which it is incarcerated. Like Wittgenstein, you managed to dispose of the impenetrable interior of the subject. And objects dissolved – like words (whose meaning, according to Wittgenstein, could be understood only in as much as they belong to forms of life) – into ‘the stream of life’.¹⁹

For all of this, I was grateful. As one who had suffered not a few metaphysical wobbly moments and, like a good Cartesian, had endured weeks when I had lived in terror of the possibility that the world might be a dream, I felt liberated. It was exhilarating to hear you talk like this:

The ‘scandal of philosophy’ does not consist in the fact that this proof [of an existence outside of our own] is still lacking up to now, but *in the fact that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again*. (BT 190)

For the existence of an outside world was precisely one of those things that could not be questioned; for it was not a mere belief, but something presupposed in all belief. It was inherent in the being of the world that its existence should need no guarantee with respect to a knowing subject.

The feeling awoken in me by your saying this was not too distant from the emotions Russell felt when Moore liberated him from

Bradley's 'Absolute Idealism' and from Bradley's downgrading of the everyday world to the mere realm of appearances: 'The world which had been thin and logical, suddenly became rich and varied and solid.'²⁰ There were times, moreover, when I felt that philosophical wonder of which you spoke so beautifully: 'the wonder that a world is worlding round us'. The world disclosed in, and to, and for (in some way that fused all these relations) Da-sein seemed a revelation; ordinary seeing seemed to be the fabric of a vision; or, at least, a mystery that was far from (and far above) the mechanistic world of interacting physical objects or the hermetically sealed world of subjective experiences in which I had once imagined myself confined as in a solipsist prison cell to which there was no key.

I shared, or felt I shared, the intuitions behind your arguments (or your assertions). Moreover, Herr Professor, your thoughts – by virtue of their very depth – were often a place of refuge from the burden of responsibility and the frustrations and angers and emptinesses of unhappy love and unhappy work and all the cares of ordinary life. The ideas seemed to run so deep, they not only solved the problems – of mind and matter, of the subject and the object – that I had felt to be connected most closely with them. They also seemed to promise to subvert, even to dissolve, the categories of thought, understanding, expectation, that had imprisoned me in a life I found less than satisfactory.

Yes, I too have felt the power of the magician in you, Herr Professor. For not only do you banish problems at a stroke, you also create a sense of impending further revelation. You awaken belief in the possibility of a different order of understanding. An order of understanding, which would open dormer windows on to unknown possibilities but which would nevertheless preserve the present order so that (in contrast to what religious 'awakenings' seem to require of one) there would be no discarding of meanings, no losses to be offset against the gains, no rejection of all that one had been, known, believed, understood hitherto. You offered an awakening into, or to, one's life, rather than an awakening out of it; yes, an awakening to one's life that celebrated it rather than downgraded it as a mere dream. On the edge of your thoughts was a revelation of immanence rather than of transcendence and with this came the promise of escaping (simply through being made aware of it) 'the being of everydayness' (BT 119), prescribed by the 'they' (that is, by everyone and no one), in which 'every mystery loses its power' (BT 119) and 'everything primordial is flattened down as something long since known' (BT 119).

Of course (and not entirely 'Alas!' – we philosophers do not always want our problems to yield to other people's solutions, just as we do not always want our children to grow up and make their own way in the world), your apparent resolution of the mind–matter problem was not the end of the story. After I had accepted your rejection of the epistemological problem as it had been formulated since at least Descartes, questions began to re-form. Or rather, the old puzzles – and occasionally the old terrors – woke me in the night and troubled my dawns and seemed not without validity.

First of all, your being-in-the-world of Da-sein reflects the unreflecting viewpoint of common sense. As you yourself emphasise, this unquestioning presupposition of a world is how the world is received in everydayness. But why should you expect us to accept everyday consciousness (or, if you don't like the word 'consciousness', as it already concedes too much to the Cartesian world picture, something like 'common sense') as the last word on the relationship between ourselves and the world in which we find ourselves? You see, you didn't really provide any arguments to support your view that being-in is constitutive of Da-sein and that objectively present things and isolated subjects are not primordial. You simply read off your anti-metaphysical ontology from what seems to correspond to ordinary awareness, or what seems to be the case to Da-sein in its 'average everydayness' – even if (as you again are at pains to point out) 'average everydayness' is aware of, or holds this, in an unthematic, pre-ontological way. I agree that, to an individual absorbed in daily activities – Da-sein in its 'average everydayness' – objects are not encountered, as they are in physics, as opaque blobs of matter; they are dissolved in a dense network or supersaturate of concerns, and stick out only when something jams or gets stuck or goes missing or breaks the flow of successful pursuit of goals. The precedence you give to 'average everydayness' reminds me a little of Austin's focusing on 'ordinary language' and ordinary usage as a way of helping one out of philosophical problems which may be regarded as, at least in part, the result of allowing language (to use Wittgenstein's phrase) to go 'on holiday'. However, is there not an argument for regarding that state – 'average everydayness', that is – as an unphilosophical stupor and for reminding ourselves that, when we wake up out of such a stupor, we may see things differently? We may, for example, note that we do not understand the huge, cooperative coming together that must underpin the infinitely extended, extraordinarily profound, wonderfully complex world of 'average everydayness'. Surely there is a philosophical case for looking

past or through average everydayness to ponder its origins – or the origin of what others have called intersubjective reality. Shouldn't philosophers try to dig beneath average everydayness if only to attempt to account for it? Must philosophy be merely descriptive rather than analytical? Should it not even attempt to be explanatory? Should we not try, therefore, to wake out of average everydayness – as I do now, Herr Professor? Is it not possible that when, to paraphrase Novalis, Descartes dreamed that he was dreaming, he was close to awakening? And while it may very well be the case that this philosophical conversation is putting me in an artificial state of awareness, I cannot duck certain difficulties in your account of the world that itself seems to solve so many difficulties. I cannot, as you do, simply bypass the problems that philosophers of the past have wrestled with, and I, too, have wrestled with. Let me explain why.

As it appears to me now, when I look up from the keyboard where this imaginary conversation is being woven – and with which I engage in a nexus of significance, a referential totality of signification, into which it dissolves as obedient tools do – I seem to see (material) objects 'over there' and to feel me (or my body) to be 'over here'. My eye lights upon a likely exemplar: that red waste-paper bin. Yes, of course, I might at any time incorporate it into a nexus of significance as, when, for example, I endeavour to dispose of a piece of paper in it. But, as things are at this moment, the waste-paper bin is not thus incorporated – or not completely so, anyway. Granted, it is not a neutral bit of matter: it has a certain aura of significance – beyond the temporary status it has as an exemplar in our conversation; that is to say, I make sense of it by recognising what it is for, and seeing how I might use it. But beyond this sense I make of it, it has its physical presence, its size, its shape, its colour, its solidity. And, under the terms of this physical presence, it is over there and I am over here. We – the waste-paper bin and I (I would not like to speculate on what it is that at present separates you and me) – are separated in space and I, through my body, am related to it in space. Granted, also, that physical space can be domesticated as egocentric space, as 'near to me', 'handy for me', 'just out of reach', 'just beyond my range of accurate throwing', but it is apt to submit to these domestications precisely because of the constraints imposed by physical space. Thus while the discourses of physics may not give us 'less handy' and 'more handy', physical space, in the sense understood and analysed by physics, underpins *ceteris paribus* the difference between 'less handy' and 'more handy'. Or, to take your favourite example, Herr Professor, the fact that the hammer is ready-to-

hand is predicated upon its being at a certain spatial distance from me – or at least from my body. Its being within reach is dependent upon a certain, easily described physical relationship between my body, the length of my arm and the distance of the hammer from me. Physical relationships – which can be captured in the language of quantitative science which deals with objective presences – underwrite practical, functional relationships: the space of ‘handiness’ is rooted in physical space. Additionally, the handiness of the hammer is predicated upon its being of a certain size and shape and upon its weight – describable in the terms of objective physical properties – relative to my size, my shape and my strength, the latter also describable in terms of objective physical properties. A ten ton, one mile-long hammer, for example, would not be handy or ‘ready-to-hand’ in the sense that you mean. Whereas I agree with you that ‘The structured nearness of useful things means that they do not simply have a place in space, objectively present somewhere ...’, I still maintain that they have to be close by in a physical, objective sense in order to be available to me, who, in the end, has some sort of irrevocable relationship with a body that is located in physical space. (I’ll come back to space – and to the body – in due course.)

What am I trying to argue? Simply this: that while your assumption or assertion of the priority, the primordially of Da-sein, of being-in-the-world over, say, the conscious subject or the physical object, and your replacement of the conscious-subject facing the unconscious physical object, is very comforting (and I took comfort and delight in it), it cannot in the end be accepted on the nod. Yes, there is a sense in which my seeing my red waste-paper bin as ‘an objective presence’ is the result of an artificial state of mind – a ‘rigid staring’ born of a theoretical stance – and it is arguable that seeing the bin thus is possible only against a background of a world in which objects are not seen in this way: the present-to-hand has, even requires, a background of the ready-to-hand. And there is an even stronger sense in which it is artificial to think of my own body – ‘over here’ – as an object encountering the objects of the world, among them the red waste-paper bin ‘over there’. Yes, I appreciate that my hands typing this sentence are far from being mere physical objects steered by objective, neutral physical forces through objective, neutral physical, even less Euclidean, space. *And yet they are that as well.* It is possible to describe both objects and forces in physical terms – the neutral terms utilised by physics – and thereby explain my success or failure in doing the things I want to do. Moreover, my body casts shadows – is this not, indeed, the basis of

the 'peasant's clock' of which we shall hear more presently? My body has to be transported to see things and do things; it has to be moved with more or less effort. The 'effort of doing' is more apparent when it is a sick body than when it is a well body, and when I am doing tasks badly than doing them well, when I am learning to do something than when I am sufficiently practised. But, even so, this effort, along with the associated mechanics, reveals some fundamental truths about my body, about me, and about the world in which I live and move and have my being.

I feel confident in insisting on this naivety which you may have thought you (and your unconscious soulmate and unconscious adversary Wittgenstein) had disposed of, or at least displaced from serious philosophical discussion, once and for all. There are several reasons for my obstinacy. One of the most important is the fact of death – something that so preoccupied you and which will find its place in our conversation. Another reason is the inescapable truth that the approach adopted by physical science to the universe – treating the world as if it were composed of 'objective presences' – has worked so well for us. This requires some explanation. The fact that physics accesses deep truths about how things really and fundamentally are is one such explanation. And then, finally, there is still the vexed question of the relationship between my brain and my consciousness of objects. Let me take these things in reverse order.

First, my brain and my consciousness. Although I have fought obstinately against the belief held by so many (including, in his callow youth, Raymond Tallis) that the activity of the human brain explains the miracle of the conscious human mind, I have never managed to persuade myself that the brain has nothing to do with human consciousness. Nor have I wanted to. My awareness of this red waste-paper bin – ready-to-hand as in real life, or merely present-to-hand as in philosophical contemplation or scientific investigation – does depend in some sense upon my brain being positioned in (physical) relation to it and being in a certain physical state. (If you don't accept that, then the conversation may as well come to a halt here and now.) Some of the most important conditions necessary for me to be aware of this bin are most plausibly described in terms that assume that I and the bin are physical objects which interact through energy exchanges that are transformed in my nervous system into nerve impulses. While the elements utilised in such a description would not (I maintain) provide the *sufficient* conditions of my being aware of the ready-to-hand, they would contribute to an understanding of those necessary conditions.²¹

The reasons why the bin would not be ready to hand if it were the other side of a brick wall or ten miles away are expressible in physical terms; or in terms that treat the body and the bin as physical objects which interact physically through energy exchanges that physics has captured in its laws.

Even if we are not entitled to conclude from what I have just said that the world of natural entities such as is described by the physical sciences is more fundamental than 'world' of Da-sein's being-in and that of the ready-to-hand, we are entitled at least to question, even to resist, the assumption, advanced so brilliantly in your writings, that the physical world of science, the world of extended natural objects presupposed in so much of the philosophy you reject, is a derivative world, an artificial world suitable for technological understanding but not fundamental. At the very least, we may see that the physical world and the world of the ready-to-hand, and their respective Euclidean or physical and egocentric and hodological spaces, have parity, are *equiprimordial*, neither trumping the other.

Since, with the rejection of the assumption that the ready-to-hand and being-in-the-world has priority over the subject and the physical object, all the problems you solved at a stroke return, you may, not unreasonably, require me to mobilise one or two more arguments before you concede any ground.

The first takes its rise from the brilliant achievements of physical science that deal in 'objective presences'. I am not talking here about advances in abstract understanding but about practical applications. If there is overwhelming evidence of the truth of science, that scientists have got some very important things right about the world in which we live, it must surely reside in the power science confers upon us to act out our wishes – to be warm, well-fed, safe, entertained, etc. The very fact that science (in the form of technology) feeds back so spectacularly into the world of the ready-to-hand itself demonstrates that the truths uncovered by scientists are not merely the local truths or quasi-truths of an artificial world of abstract and objective contemplation, of the disengaged consciousness, as opposed to the real world of the conscious, needing, active agent. However much you may regret it and the attitude towards being that you believe underpins it, you cannot, Herr Professor, overlook this success of science – so much greater than the success of unreformed Da-sein in its 'average everydayness' – nor can you account for it. And because you do not even try to make sense of this inexplicable success, you have bypassed rather than solved those questions that tormented Professor Husserl, to which we alluded

earlier: you cannot describe, let alone explain, the relationship between the world of fugitive impressions, of moment-to-moment experience, and the world of objective, scientific, logical truth; between what is revealed to Da-sein's 'average everydayness' and the cumulative body of knowledge that is the spectacular outcome of science and the finest product of mankind's peculiarly privileged consciousness; or indeed the relationship between the subjective, the intersubjective and the objective; or, to put it in its most general form, the relationship between personal experience and objective truth.

Granted, the scientific approach, which is founded upon the notion of being as 'objective presence', may not correspond with the world as it is revealed, worlded, or whatever, to Da-sein in its average everydayness; but this does not mean that it is untrue, that it adopts or fosters a distorted view of the world. Indeed, I would argue for precisely the opposite view and would insist, on the basis of the undubitable achievements of science, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of by Da-sein in its average everydayness or your philosophy of Da-sein-in-its-average-everydayness. (Or even in its authentic being-towards-death – of which more, presently.) And while it is important to separate the theoretical stance from the experience of the individual absorbed in daily living – not to do so is to commit the error I have described as 'The Fallacy of Misplaced Explicitness' and others have described as 'intellectualism' – this is not the end of the discussion: it remains important to consider when it is appropriate and when it is not appropriate to assume the viewpoint of average everydayness.

On this, permit me a small digression. The same question arises with respect to the use of, or appeal to, common sense in philosophy. There are times when common sense is a blessing, even a liberation – as in the case against postmodernists' Theorrhoea and against Absolute Idealism; and there are times when it is a curse, as when it blocks deep questions, dismisses profound doubts, blunts critical awareness with its ready-made answers, and inhibits the search for brighter wakefulness. And, while there are times when it is appropriate to appeal to Da-sein in its average everydayness as a guide to what is primordial, fundamental, real, there are other times when it is not appropriate: it is not easy to know which is which.

Consider, for example, your (absolutely fundamental) argument against Cartesian doubt and the Cartesian displacement of ontology by epistemology. Descartes argues that we cannot know for certain whether a world exists: we must therefore sort out the epistemology

and identify what we can know with certainty, before we start holding forth about ontology. You dismiss this and give priority to ontology. Knowledge, you insist, presupposes being-in-the-world: 'Knowing is a mode of Da-sein which is founded in being-in-the-world. Thus, being-in-the-world, as a fundamental constitution, requires a *prior* interpretation' (BT 58). Being-in-the-world is prior to knowledge, so there cannot be an epistemological problem of how we get to gain access to, or can be sure of the existence of, an outside world. Now this is, at first sight, an arresting argument. But it looks less decisive if one reflects that this assertion of the priority of being-in-the-world is asserted as *a matter of knowledge* about how things (actually) are. Then it seems distinctly vulnerable. If, on the other hand, one falls back to the position that you are not making assertions about how things actually are, but rather about how they are given to average unreflective everydayness, to pre-philosophical Da-sein, then the priority of ontology over epistemology, with the possible elimination of the problem of knowledge, is open to challenge. Admittedly, we are unthinkingly in-the-world before we think to question the reality of the external world but does this (chronological) priority give authority to the unthinking assumption that we are in an real external world? Do the unthinking assumptions of average everydayness have such authority that they count as the last word as well as the first? When the question is put in this way, the answer must be: No. After all, we do accept that it is possible to advance from pre-theoretic, unreflective understanding to a reformed, philosophical understanding. If we did not believe this, you and I, Herr Professor, we would not have wasted so many hours with our brows so deeply furrowed, thinking about fundamentals. Worse, we might find ourselves caught up in such a slop of relativism that we would end up having to grant the world picture of speechless infants an equal validity with that of adults, of scientists, of philosophers. Chronological priority of a mode of being, or even its greater continuity, does not confer primacy, priority, primordiality or privileged reality upon that which is revealed to that mode of being. Da-sein in its average everydayness – or, indeed in its authentic mode – may accept unquestioningly the reality of an outside world, but this does not dispose of the epistemological question or invalidate Descartes' dream.

End of digression. We shall return to the question (referred to before I interrupted myself) of the relationship between personal experience and objective truth in due course. The nature of truth itself will (you will not be surprised to learn) occupy an important place later in our conversation – if only because you had many interesting things to say

about this, the queen of philosophical questions. Let me, however, talk about death – for the first, but by no means the last, time in our conversation. You will not object to this switch of theme, I am sure, given that death was so central to your own thinking. Death provides my second argument in support of the primacy of objective presences over the ready-to-hand; or, at the least, the equiprimordiality of the ready-to-hand with the present at hand.

Death for you was our ‘ownmost’ thing because it is the one event in our lives at which no one can stand in for us. ‘Death is a possibility of being that Da-sein always has to take upon itself. With death, Da-sein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-of-being’ (BT 232). To be aware of this is to be aware of our ultimate solitude, of the solitude that, for all the crowded companionship of our days, pervades every moment of our life. Authentic living (of which more in due course) is being-towards-death because death cuts through that everyday being-there in which the self becomes ‘one’, anyone, acting as anyone would, filling its days with the kinds of chatter and preoccupations that capture the attention of anyone, getting lost in, fascinated by, the particulars of the world and saying, feeling, thinking and doing what ‘they’ think, say, feel or do. Facing, or facing up to, death we are reminded of our irreplaceability. Correspondingly, dying is a kind of awakening. It is a summons back from the state of being that ‘anyone’ of average everydayness whose decisions may be authorised and normalised by a free-floating ‘they’, to being the unique, responsible self one always has been in fact. Death, as it is realised in its Da-sein’s awareness of its own finitude, its sense of nothingness, summons Da-sein back from the ‘they-self’ to ‘its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self’ (BT 249). Everyone dies, but in dying (and whoever is born is old enough to die) we are not doing simply what ‘one’ does.

I am conscious that my summary is something of a popularisation and your views on this matter of death are much more complex than the revivalist notions I have just set out. (We shall, as I have indicated, return to the topic, at a more suitable depth, in due course.) But I hope I have understood you correctly, if incompletely. At any rate, it captures something of what your notion of authenticity and being-towards-death meant to me when I first read *Being and Time*. The reason I raise it here is that I want to reflect on the fact that death, or at least dying, is a physical process affecting material bodies, as well as being a philosophical category. We die because our bodies can no longer function. I would go further: our dying *is* the death of our body. The physical processes of dying can be understood in terms that physical science deploys. Our death, as our birth, proves – as does every

moment of conscious lives, actually – that we are inseparable from this physical body; that the realm of the ready-to-hand depends upon the presence of a functioning physical body. Death, Herr Professor, proves amongst other things that *Da-sein* requires certain physical conditions in order to be; in order to make things be there. For the dead body (as for the man in coma) there is no being-in-the-world, no ready-to-hand, just as there is no present-to-hand. And yet – I repeat – this process of dying, and the conditions that lead up to it, can be best understood in physical terms made comprehensible by the discoveries of science. My death may be my ‘ownmost’ thing; but the death that results from a road traffic accident or severe hyperkalaemia is an instance of a general type of event to be grasped in the terms that physiology and third-person science understands. It may be my ownmost possibility; but in order to be an ownmost, able to have possibilities, it is necessary for me to be biologically alive.

You are, of course, aware of this; so you try to pre-empt discussion by asserting that ‘the existential interpretation of death is prior to any biology and ontology of life’ (BT 229). There is a sense in which it is only a being whose being is an issue for itself who can die; and I agree with you that biology cannot explain *Da-sein*’s being such a being. There is no ‘Who’ in biology, not even in the most sophisticated neurobiology. But there is an equally strong case for saying that only a creature who is biologically alive can be a being whose being is an issue for itself – can be a human being. At the very least, you must concede that, while *Da-sein* is the condition for there being death in the existential sense, biological life (best understood in terms of objective science) is the condition for there being beings whose being is an issue for themselves – for individual *Da-seins*. In short, your thinking about death seems to have overlooked the body. But this forgetfulness of the body is a very big issue in your ontology and I shall return more than once to challenge you with it in due course.

Anyway, these reasons – the effectiveness of science, the biological basis of death – lead me to reject your attempt to assert the primacy of *Da-sein* and being-at-hand over ‘objective presences’. My rejection of this hierarchy goes beyond your ontology of beings to a rejection of your interpretation of the space in which they find themselves. Let me expound.

You dismiss the primacy of physical arrays in the constitution of space. To be honest, I sympathise with the intuitions behind the kind of argument you put forward on this topic:

‘Here’ and ‘over there’ are possible only in a ‘there’, that is when there is a being which has disclosed spatiality as the being of the

‘there’. This being bears in its ownmost being the character of not being closed. The expression ‘there’ means this essential disclosedness. Through disclosedness this being (Da-sein) is ‘there’ for itself together with the Da-sein of the world. (BT 125)

But I still feel that this gives only one side of the story. Certainly, what we might call the ‘deictic map’ of the world, which centres on an individualised ‘here’ surrounded by a layered ‘there’ (or ‘theres’), of the world of our living, the world of our preoccupations and doings and havings and sufferings, is founded in human Da-sein, and its spatiality is interpreted, experienced, initially in relation to this. The space of the nursery, of the office, of the lovers’ bed is not Cartesian or Euclidean. But ‘deictic’ space is not the entire map of our world, or necessarily the deepest account of our place in nature, or, indeed, of the determinants of our destiny. If ‘Da-sein brings its there along with it’ (BT 125) this may be because it is entirely its there, because ‘*Da-sein is its disclosure*’ (BT 125); but *what* it discloses and how completely it discloses the entities it discloses is another matter.

As things stand, Herr Professor, I have an uneasy feeling that you are in danger of being sealed in idealism, where not only the world-as-a-whole but also its components are the internal accusatives of Da-sein. In which case it will be difficult to account for the ‘thrownness’ of Da-sein in its ‘disclosive submission to the world’ (BT 129) – ‘the *facticity of its being delivered over*’ (BT 127). Submission to what? Delivery over to what? Submission, delivery, to itself?

Time for a pause and summary, before I step out to take what I am fond of calling ‘a breath of fresh air’ and we change our location. The ontology you advanced in *Being and Time* liberated me from several different kinds of prison of the mind. Your beginning not with mind-and-matter, nor with the subject and the object, but with Da-sein – that being whose being is an issue for itself, that being whose being is already ‘[out] in the world’ – was like the opening of a window from a stuffy, sound-proofed room on to a busy, sunlit street. Alas, however, I think that you have evaded the problems rather than solved them. Even so, something of profound value remains from the wreck of your system. And I guess that is going to be the story of our conversation: the solutions you seemed to bring to the old problems, the flaws in those solutions, and the immeasurable value of what, none the less, you have achieved.

A Breath of Fresh Air

Lichtung

I always believe myself when I say I'm going out for a walk to catch a breath of fresh air. Honestly, I do not intend that the walk should end where it usually ends up: in the kind of smoke-filled 'fresh air' of which I am sure you will not approve. A few glasses of locally fermented wine, the very child of the native soil you called your own, sitting in the open air with a few peasant farmers outside in a simple hostelry with bare scrubbed wooden floors and scrubbed wooden tables – this is more to your taste. Not this post-ontologically over-thematised techno-dwelling which stands as a monument to the 'forgetfulness of being' and deracinated modern man (for whom beings have been displaced by their symbols and even the symbols of being have become so shop-worn that they no longer symbolise anything) that is my local.

But this place is good enough for me and, as I am the only one of us who is not discarnate, I shall have the final say, and to Hell with whether I *should* find it good enough. 'The Governor's House' is one of my favourite pubs and not simply because the music is low and the barmaids wear gymslips and seem eager to serve you and there are non-smoking areas and innumerable nooks and crannies where you can be alone with yourself and a few portraits on a wall and they serve Stella Artois. But also because of the light.

The light, Herr Professor. I love pubs most of all for their light. (That, at any rate, is what I tell myself.) In the evening – and I don't drink before 6, so that I can believe that my attachment to Stella is not a 'drink problem' – the light pours through a large sash window into the large non-smoking room. You will be pleased to see that although the

room does not have scrubbed wooden floors, it has a threadbare carpet that does not entirely cover the polished brown floorboards, and large polished wooden tables and old-fashioned lyre-back chairs – though you will see at once that this style is a kind of quotation. How things are in this place is how they are styled to be rather than how they have turned out. But it is just the place for the evening light to be cherished, to be played with, to be enjoyed both in its local instances – that glimmer on the polished armrest, that glint in the empty glass, that asterisk in the gin and tonic; and in its general complexions – that tone of brightness on the exposed places on the floor, that reminds me of so much past, of hours of solitude in quiet rooms.

The other evening (I digress but I need a breathing space) I was reading a book here – your *Being and Time* as it happened. A man at another table, sitting between me and the long sash windows overlooking the beer garden with its striped, shaven lawns and its great beech trees – was eating a meal. Each time he leaned forward to load or to disencumber his fork, the evening sunlight was permitted to transilluminate my glass of Stella. A doubly joyful sunlight, with bubbles rising like happiness, was cast on to my page.

I imagine you becoming rather impatient with this gossip (there will be worse to come, I promise you) and suggesting somewhat tetchily that a) we get back to the matter in hand, and b) that I deny myself further intake of Stella. But this digression is not without its purpose. Before we become too deeply embroiled in polemics and technicalities, there are certain things that must be said. Certain thanks to be given.

For you, more than anyone, Herr Professor Heidegger, have spoken to my sense of wonder, have connected with whatever is most truly metaphysical in my distractible, incorrigibly shallow life. I owe more to you than to any other philosopher. Most of all, of course, through your own writings; but also through the writings of some of the many others influenced by you – among them one or two of whom, incidentally, you would have disapproved, not least (dare I say it) M. Sartre of *Being and Nothingness*. I have had moments when, celebrating your thoughts, I seem to have been celebrating the world, when in realising what you meant, I seemed to be coming closer to realising what the world meant – or at least close to seeing more clearly the realm of the real and the possible in which we are openly imprisoned, whose ultimate bounds we philosophers (I do not hesitate to employ the first person plural here) explore and try to press back. At such moments, I have never been sure whether to sing or to think, to write philosophy

or poetry, or simply to remain silent and harvest delight and awareness within myself rather than trying, somewhat inauthentically, to broadcast it among imaginary others.

You might object that a suburban pub is hardly the place where one should seek to undergo the Heideggerian experience; to translate into full consciousness the world-picture you have sketched; to endeavour to take 'the step over into the more wakeful glimpse of the wonder – the wonder that a world is worlding around us at all, that there are beings rather than nothing, that things are and we ourselves are in their midst, that we ourselves are and yet barely know who we are, and barely know that we do not know all this'.²² You may think this but – with all due respect – nothing could be further from the truth – from your truth. For what more brilliant epiphany could there be than this pub of the wonderful web of significance into which this Da-sein is inexplicably plunged?

Let me try your patience further with another digression and tell you about another epiphany which I was afforded one evening, a week or so ago, about a particularly poignant revelation of the web of significance that constitutes the being-in-the-world, the worldliness of the world, the world worlding around us. One of those sash windows at the end of this room was opened just a few inches. In the slit between the sash and the window sill I glimpsed the bare foot of a girl sitting at one of the tables on the lawn. She had just kicked off her shoes in celebration of the late spring evening – the first really warm evening of the year – and was wriggling her toes in the privileged air. This little epiphany stood for the whole evening and the season on whose threshold it stood: the freshness, the trees, the birdsong, the drinks on the terrace, the dancing in the open air, the delights and sorrows of the summer of evenings to come. And in the wake of this epiphany came a rather obvious but none the less wonderful thought: that I am this being among these other beings, not as a chair is in a room, but gathered up in a boundless nexus of immense, complex depths, whose horizon opened on to endless beyonds. In the beauty of her bared foot, and the fallen shoe next to it, was revealed the primordial totality of relevance which lets presence speak its truth, and the universe which talks in and through me. (I shall call the young lady, for reasons that may become apparent, *Aletheia*.) This, at any rate, is my version of your peasant's shoes, the painting by van Gogh revealing a world of work, of suffering, of the splendours and miseries of Da-sein.

There are other places where I have been afforded, or attempted to receive, the deeper Heideggerian revelation and I shall come to those

in due course. In the meantime, thank you Herr Professor for the gift of your wonderful philosophical imagination, for your luminous attention to the ordinary world that was once around you and is still around me. The true miracle of your mind is that, despite the enormous weight of your erudition, you were able to look at the world that lay immediately to hand, and to think on that borderland between questioning and wondering, between argument and astonishment, where great philosophy is done or happens.

Let me also say this: notwithstanding what careless readers say about you, and despite the sometimes rebarbative prose in which your vision is expressed, your philosophising has the simplicity that is the mark of both truth and true greatness. Your language is closer, as Gilbert Ryle once said in a not entirely unsympathetic review of *Being and Time*, to the nursery than to conventional philosophical discourse. And this genuinely reflects its closeness to the fundamental questions and wonder of a child; and the fact that all the sources of its wonder – and of the wonder you afford those who read you in the way you are meant to be read – lie immediately around, as for the wondering child in the nursery.

So thanks, Herr Professor. And try to relax in these humble surroundings, this ordinary suburban pub. Look at it with the eyes of the philosopher and artist for whom an old pair of boots is a revelation of the world, a tor on the endless plain of Da-sein's average everydayness!

Enter – our subject!

Da-sein

This is the heart of the matter isn't it? To talk to you, to try to see what your thoughts amounted to, to try to see past you, and not to address this central concept head on, would be absurd. At the risk of boring you, I shall try to set out what most people ('one', 'they') see as the meaning of this term to you.

We have already observed how your giving Da-sein a central role in your thinking is connected with your resurrection of the Question of Being which, you felt, had been lost sight of since the pre-Socratics. According to your interpretation, Plato and his successors thought of being as a property or essence permanently present in things. They subscribed to the 'metaphysics of presence', which overlooks being in favour of beings and in accordance with which beings are primarily 'objective presences', self-subsistent, enduring substances. As for being itself, they saw it as a kind of given which one can take for granted.

However, the *givenness* of being *cannot* itself be taken for granted. A true understanding of the Question of Being would be founded on the recognition that we have also to take note of the conditions that permit entities to become encounterable and to be important – to *be*. As I have argued elsewhere (probably, as I only half-realised at the time, under your influence), we have to take note of the unaccountable fact that beings are made explicit and this explicitness cannot be derived from anything else. The Question of Being incorporates the question of what it is that makes beings visible and intelligible; what it is that makes them be *there* – to be encountered either as useful tools, or neutral bits of matter, as threats or promises or as lumps and bumps.

The answer to the question of what it is that makes being be there is: Da-sein. Da-sein, being there, is that in virtue of which things are there and being *is* – in the form of determinate entities with distinctive meanings and significances. It is Da-sein that makes the world exist in the explicit way it does for us humans and, in this sense, it is prior to the material world that is revealed in science; or to the revelation of what is there as a material world. (Though it is importantly *not* prior to the world that is thus revealed. Thereby hangs a tale, as we shall see.) Without Da-sein's pre-theoretic revelation of being as existence, as being-there, not only would there be no (relatively) cosy world of tools and their readiness to hand, there wouldn't be a cold world of neutral matter, either. It is Da-sein that opens up a 'clearing' in which entities can be revealed as lumps of matter, or mental events, or tools, or Higg's bosons. As you put it, in that section of *Being and Time* in which you try to explain the relationship between 'practical circumspect handling' and 'theoretical investigation' and try to show how the latter arose out of the former, 'the thematization of innerworldly beings presupposes being-in-the-world as the fundamental constitution of Da-sein' (BT 332).

That, so far as I understand it, was how Da-sein came to occupy the central place in your thoughts and your ontology. The fundamental question for philosophy is the Question of Being and this is a question that can be approached only through the (human) being, through (human) Da-sein, in virtue of which being is intelligible, visible, meaningful, meaningless, useful, neutral, remote, near, etc. (We shall come to question this later: it seems to me to be the faulty cornerstone of your entire system of thought.) Da-sein is that in virtue of which Being becomes present (but primarily as the ready-to-hand, rather than as an objective presence); and that presence is meaningful because Da-sein is 'that being whose being is an issue for itself'. Da-sein, we might say

(though *you* would most certainly have not put it like that), is that in virtue of which there is value in the universe. Because Da-sein is that in virtue of which beings have value, determinate significance, even a nature, Da-sein does not itself have such a nature: it is not condemned to act out a pre-formed essence or to express fixed properties: it can make of itself what it wants. At any rate, we constitute our own identity through what we choose to do. Or, to put it in terms closer to those you would approve of: Da-sein is being-ahead-of-itself that creates possibilities-for-itself.

How often have I imagined Da-sein! I have thought of it in different ways and each, at the time, has seemed to capture its (pardon the expression) essence, only for it to seem to escape. You have been quite clear what Da-sein is not. It is not, for example, 'substantial': it does not 'have the kind of being of what is merely objectively present in the world' (BT 40). It 'always defines itself in terms of a possibility which it *is* and somehow understands in its being' (BT 41). But if it lacks substance and essence, what *is* it?

At times, I have seen Da-sein in Sartrean terms as a kind of hollow in the plenum of being: as a being that lacks full being and itself becomes a lack of being – a lack *in* Being. Indeed, you have licensed that vision. Did you not speak of the call of conscience '*summoning* Da-sein to its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self, by summoning it to its ownmost quality of being a lack' (BT 249)? And of Da-sein as 'the null ground of its nullity'? (BT 283). (More of this to come in the Black Forest.) For Sartre – and for me, at the time when I read and believed him – Da-sein is the nothingness in virtue of which Being achieves sufficient distance from itself to be able to be presented to itself as a collection of determinate, meaningful things. In such cases, it is free-floating, locationless, almost a category rather than an entity. At other times, I have related it more closely to individual consciousnesses, so Da-sein seems to be tethered to a particular entity – perhaps my body – that makes its revelation of *a* world, makes it seem to be a viewpoint. As such, it has a personal history and reaches into a personal future. I have toyed with other ways of envisaging Da-sein, but they will be of even less interest to you.

All of my ways of imagining Da-sein have highlighted Da-sein's role as that which makes disclosure possible; that in virtue of which being is disclosed as a world, and as having value. In that sense I have remained faithful to your vision: Da-sein as 'disclosedness'. I have sat and stared at objects around me and thought: 'Da-sein is that in virtue of which these things are present to me.' At such moments – when I am perhaps too close to 'detached contemplation' and 'rigid staring' – I

have found myself loving the world – the everyday world of ordinary, shop-soiled things in daily light – with a greater intensity. I have even enjoyed what might be called ‘intellectual love’ of myself – myself seen as an exemplar of the kind of being through whom the world is revealed. (A harmless, impersonal form of self-love because we are all such exemplars.)

But I have problems with Da-sein and your world picture. In a sense, it was Sartre’s Hegelianisation of your existential interpretation of Da-sein in his *Being and Nothingness* that made the problems with that interpretation clearer to me. Of course you rejected Sartre’s masterpiece because it was humanistic, human-centred in a way that you felt ontology should not be. Sartre had taken your question and your answer and subordinated them to a system of thought that, you believed, was just as forgetful of being as those of the thinkers from whom you had thought to awaken Western philosophy. Even so, there was enough of your thought in Sartre’s *oeuvre* for the latter (inadvertently) to expose the difficulties inherent in your ideas to brighter light. However, I shall refrain from upsetting you by talking any more about M. Sartre. (For the present, anyway.)

It will be obvious by now what lies at the heart of my reservation about Da-sein – and about the central part it plays in your system of thought: it is that, while I know what Da-sein is *not* (it isn’t a substance, it isn’t a thing, it doesn’t have an essence, etc.), I don’t know what Da-sein *is*. All your commentators are agreed on this: it is a kind of being, but it is not an object. I don’t, however, think this gets us very far, except to rule out the notion I alluded to earlier that it is a mere *category* – like Being or Mind (or even the ‘explicitness’ which occupies a central place in my own critique of contemporary materialism and, in particular, its account of human consciousness). (Not that it rules out completely the notion that Da-sein is a category – or a stuff, as we shall see. This is an issue that will come back to haunt our conversation again and again ... and again) It doesn’t, for example, answer this question (not at all frivolous, or merely literal-minded, by the way):

How many Da-seins are there?

You may think you have anticipated and headed off that question by stating that Da-sein is not an object; but you haven’t, because you then go on to assert that Da-sein is the ‘happening’ of the life-course ‘stretched out between life and death’. It is not unreasonable to point out that there is more than one life-course – indeed, there is one for each life, one for each person. Or, more fundamentally, while you emphasise that Da-sein is an ‘existential’ not a ‘category’ (in the rather

special sense in which you use this word), you do so in order to point out that it is a *who*, not a *what*. And while this enables you to set aside the notion that Da-sein is something merely objectively present, it does, rather awkwardly for you it seems, suggest that there is a connection not merely between Da-sein and the general category of humanity or humankind, but between Da-sein and individual human beings. We are not merely tempted, therefore, we are licensed, indeed obliged, to think of Da-sein as if it were somehow distributed over all the millions of individual human beings who have lived – perhaps even with a quota of one Da-sein per human being.

At any rate, any temptation to think of Da-sein as a mere category or as some sort of stuff (the referent of what grammarians call ‘mass nouns’) is immediately extinguished by your talking of Da-sein being ‘entangled’, in the sense of having to live out its own life in a specific, concrete context:

Idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity characterise the way in which Da-sein is its ‘there’, the disclosedness of being-in-the-world, in an everyday way ... In them and in the connectedness of their being, a basic kind of the being of everydayness reveals itself, which we call the *entanglement* of Da-sein ... (BT 164)

This entangling context will be different for different individuals, from which it follows that there will be different happenings, different life-courses, corresponding to different Da-seins. It looks, after all, as if the question ‘How many Da-seins are there?’ is not only *not* frivolous or over literal-minded but also has a precise answer: one Da-sein per life, one Da-sein per human being. And, finally, you write that

Da-sein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself. Da-sein has either chosen these possibilities itself, stumbled upon them, or in each instance already grown up in them. Existence is decided only by each Da-sein itself in the manner of neglecting or seizing upon or neglecting such possibilities. (BT 10)

‘Each Da-sein itself’: Does this not answer my question?

One could be forgiven, therefore, for thinking that you’re a Da-sein (or were a Da-sein) and I’m a Da-sein and so is Aunt Mary – though in her case the condition of Da-sein is somewhat pre-theoretic.

You deny this, of course. You specifically dismiss the notion of Da-sein as ‘an isolated I-subject, as a self-point’ (BT 167), reiterating that

Da-sein is constitutively *being-in-the-world* (BT 167), but this seems to me to be mere insistence rather than argument. For if there are different Da-seins – approximately one per human being who has ever lived – then Da-sein comes perilously close to being something like an individual consciousness – an ‘I-subject’, a ‘self-point’. Even if it is not identical with consciousness, or individual consciousnesses, it is close enough to this to inherit all the latter’s problems. For example, we will have to think again about Da-sein’s relationship to an individual body – the largest element of the concrete context in which its happening happens. You assert that ‘The existential analytic of Da-sein is *prior* to any psychology, anthropology, and especially biology’ (BT 42). Well, you would say that, wouldn’t you? And, of course, it makes a kind of sense for you to say it: ontological investigation – the enquiry at the most fundamental (the deepest, the most general) level as to the nature of Being, as to what kinds of things there are – must in some sense be prior to specific investigations of certain kinds of beings. But this does not help us to understand the relationship between Da-sein and the overwhelmingly important ‘given’ which a human being operates with, lives inside, enacts, lives out – namely his or her body.

This massive given emphasises the extent to which this ‘happening’, this ‘stretch of life’ that is Da-sein, is not made by it but also *suffered* by it. The body, in whose fate the individual Da-sein seems to be caught up, has certain properties that Da-sein cannot choose; and these turn into needs Da-sein cannot choose; and those needs translate into sensations, experience and, dare one say it, values, that Da-sein is not at liberty to choose (or not choose). Of all the ‘entanglements’ (to use your lovely word) of Da-sein, the body seems to be its master-entanglement. Moreover, this body also has a certain location in space and time that Da-sein is not able freely to choose or unchoose: Martin Heidegger’s body cannot choose that it lived in the twentieth and not the twenty-third century and at any given time its location is inherited from what has preceded. It is this location that supplies the content of its ‘stretch of life’.

If all this is conceded, we are confronted with a new question: By what means does Da-sein illuminate both its body and its world so that that body can engage successfully and intelligibly with the world and, at the same time, survive and enjoy and be the material substrate of the deliberately chosen and the involuntarily suffered life? Before you can say Jack Robinson or ‘*das Nichts selbst nichtet*’, the question about the relationship between body and mind, or even mind and matter, has sneaked back on to the agenda through the question of the relationship between the individual Da-sein and the (its) individual body.

And that's not the end of your troubles. Once we agree that there is such a relationship between an individual Da-sein and an individual body, then we are entitled to entertain the notion that the body itself is caught up in a causal net of physical events and that these, to a considerable extent, form the contents of its consciousness. To put this in a slightly different way: The world that physically surrounds me, that physically encloses my body, is to a very important degree the world that my consciousness is conscious of. Is this to be regarded as being identical with the 'disclosed being' that the 'clearing' of Da-sein makes visible? If it is, then Da-sein is caught up in the physical world in precisely the way that the consciousness you hoped it would supplant is also caught up in this way; and so it is the entangled (that lovely word again; actually, it is your English translator's version of your *Verfangnis*) with all the problems that the conventional philosophy of mind and of subject and object has agonised over without finding any solutions.

I know I shall return again and again to this question of how many Da-seins there are and the linked question of the relationship between 'individual' Da-sein(s) and the body. It is absolutely pivotal to any assessment of the robustness of the solution you seemed to provide to the question that first brought me into contact with your work and made you the central philosopher of my life. But for the present I'd like to summarise, if I may Herr Professor. (I always liked your use of summaries: your repetitions, your recapitulations, demonstrate that you were a great teacher as well as a magician.) If Da-sein is not a category like Being or Mind but a general term for a type of entity which has numerous instances, then we have to think about the relationship between the various Da-seins and the individual lives they connect with and the individual trajectories of the bodies through which those lives are lived. This brings Da-sein close enough to individual consciousness to inherit all its problems. Thus the story so far. But – as if that were not bad enough – Da-sein has additional problems of its own. Let me explain.

Da-sein is a being, or a kind of being, or a class of beings. Although it is 'a being that does not simply occur among other beings' (BT 10), it does, crucially, have characteristics of its own: it understands itself in terms of its existence, it chooses possibilities, it is concerned about its very being. As you expressed it, 'It is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned *about* its very being' (BT 10). And, although it does not have a fixed essence – because it understands itself in terms of its existence and the latter is decided only by each Da-sein 'in the manner of seizing upon or neglecting ... possibilities'

(BT 10) – it does have this distinctive, general propensity or capacity which it appears to exercise. All of which challenges us, Herr Professor, to try to imagine or to visualise Da-sein.

The temptation to think of Da-sein as a kind of light that plays upon things in the world, illuminating, disclosing them or not according as its needs come and go, is to be resisted. After all, a mere light, and certainly the kind of non-physical light in question here, would find it difficult to be the bearer of needs and to make choices, to realise possibilities, on the basis of them. Equally to be resisted is the Sartrean image of Da-sein as a kind of ethereal gas, the ultimate yeast in the dough of Being-in-itself, in the ‘plenum’ of Being, an ingredient that creates spaces within (material) being in virtue of which it is able to encounter itself and to be known – as the possibilities of Da-sein. Seemingly less vulnerable is the notion that Da-sein is a kind of non-physical *space* inserted into the solidity of things that permits beings or Being to encounter themselves or itself. All of these images will undermine your original position; for it will make Da-sein a bridge to restoring the subject–object divide and the division between the knower and the known – precisely those categories that you wished to set aside as being non-primordial and ‘too late’ to figure in the kind of ontological inquiry you are pursuing. And exactly those things I was grateful to you for abolishing.

I have tried to refrain from referring again to your *bête noir* M. Sartre – the humaniser and vulgariser of your ontology – but I cannot resist doing so here; for the most pitilessly elaborated caricature of Da-sein is Sartre’s notion of it as Nothingness. (He did not intend it to be a caricature, of course: he was deadly serious.) This equating of Da-sein with Nothingness is not entirely unjustified, either. Sartre spoke of Nothingness – or as he also called it, the for-itself – ‘sacrificing itself’ in the revelation of the Being or beings it is itself not. And, as I have already mentioned, you said something similar, thought somewhat in an aside:

Da-sein is initially and for the most part *together with* the ‘world’ that it takes care of ... As an authentic potentiality for being a self, Da-sein has initially always already fallen away from itself and fallen prey to the ‘world’. Falling prey to the ‘world’ means being absorbed in being-with-one-another as it is guided by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity ... Not-being-itself functions as a *positive* possibility of beings which are absorbed in a world, essentially taking care of that world. This *nonbeing* must be conceived of as the kind of being of

Da-sein nearest to it and in which it mostly maintains itself.
(BT 164)

Arguably, Sartre's Nothingness is *not* identical with your Da-sein; indeed, it too is a derivative, secondary, coming into the world by courtesy of Being-for-itself. The latter is what Sartre called 'the nihilation' of Being-in-itself. Nihilation is a property of consciousness: consciousness exists as consciousness by inserting a nothingness between it and the object of consciousness. By importing Nothingness into Being – encasing beings in a shell of non-being – Being-for-itself can stand out from Being and judge other beings by knowing them as what it (itself) is not. Nothingness 'is the recoil from fullness of self-contained Being which allows consciousness to exist'. But Being seems to have to exist first; Nothingness does not have the primordality you ascribe to Da-sein. If, however, your Da-sein is in some sense human being (understood as a conscious existing person), then Da-sein will be in important respects coterminous with Sartre's Nothingness. Indeed, the passage I have quoted just now from your masterwork would suggest that an individual with normal vision would be hard put to tell M. Sartre's Nothingness from your Da-sein on a dark night. Perhaps that is why you disliked his work so much: to be slightly misread is more threatening than being completely misconstrued.

Nothingness as 'a *pitiless* caricature' of Da-sein, though? Am I not being a little harsh on the Frenchman? Reading Sartre many years ago, I could not shake off the image of Nothingness as a kind of gas so ethereal that it was able to introduce space between Being and Being without introducing any substance but thereby allowing Being to give birth to determinate beings. I suspect my equation of Sartreism and gaseosity will afford you a little pleasure! Anyway, I felt even more strongly when I encountered his system than when I encountered yours – though his system cast an unflattering light on yours – a difficulty in locating his different categories, his ontological elements, in the tough old physical world in which we live our lives and the world described by science.

All of this stumbling around between images (entirely misconceived, I know) must be irritating you even more than the piped music which seems to have got a little louder and the smoke that is drifting towards us from that man who has taken up his station on the very edge of the non-smoking area. (As someone once said, designating part of a room as a non-smoking area is like designating part of a swimming pool as a no pissing area.) The fact is, Herr Professor, your elusive notion of Da-sein actually invites such images: conceptually, it is an empty hole,

aching for completion, into which the images pour. If Da-sein inherits not only the problems of the consciousness you refuse to acknowledge as primordial, but also problems of its own, this is at least in part because, according to your account of it, it is so *active*: as we have already discussed, Da-sein is an issue for itself, it chooses possibilities, etc. Thus described, it appears to be considerably more muscular than ordinary consciousness, which seems merely to be an abstraction from awareness and experience. If it is to flex its muscles, however, it seems as if it has to be *a kind of stuff* – hence all the feeble and childish analogies I have been boring or irritating you with over the last several minutes.²³ Surely you, too, have difficulty with the notion of an active nothingness? When you notoriously asserted that ‘*das Nichts selbst nichtet*’ (‘nothingness itself nothings’ or ‘The nothing itself nihilates’) – and conferred upon nothing such a central role, namely the tricky job of actively noth-ing (or ‘doing nothing’ – which I, of course, realise is not the same as doing nothing, being idle, hanging about) – you were, one might say, asking for it. And, when all is said and done, it was you, not Sartre, who asserted that ‘Being is itself essentially finite and reveals itself only in the transcendence of Da-sein which is held out into the nothing’²⁴ and opined that ‘Without the original revelation of nothing’, there would be ‘no self and no freedom’.²⁵ The enigmatic, even ludicrous, muscular nothing or nothingness – less than a gas, less than light, less than space – that is the condition and/or the intrinsic stuff of consciousness and self-consciousness, that is a product of Da-sein and identical with it, has deserved at least some of the execration heaped upon it since Carnap’s famous and devastating attack upon your thought.

A conversation with an empty chair

And yet, and yet. Devastating but not in the end decisive. Devastating but not, in the last analysis, deserved. You were, after all, trying to get hold of something that Professor Carnap and his colleagues had overlooked, had not even noticed. That is why their philosophy, for all its rigour, is empty. For you pose, and never forget, the questions that one hopes all philosophers will pose and never forget. You are preoccupied with the kinds of things that philosophers should be preoccupied with. And your preoccupations are close to the surface, not buried beneath six feet of technical dissent from arguments and counter-arguments echoing across scholarly journals, and the muffled asides in their foot-

notes. You did not end your days arguing over ‘singular predictive inference’ and striving for a logical definition of ‘c(h,e)’, like your old adversary Herr Carnap. There is a light of inquiry in you that answers to the deepest glimmers of uncertainty and revelation in myself. I echo the delight of one of your listeners:

When I left the auditorium, I was speechless. For a brief moment, I felt as if I had had a glimpse into the ground and foundation of the world. In my inner being, something was touched that had been asleep for a long time. Heidegger awakened it with his question, ‘Why are there beings rather than nothing?’²⁶

And did you not once say (unforgettably): the task of philosophy is

somehow to jolt human beings out of their laziness and in a certain sense back into the rigor of their destiny using only the works of the mind.²⁷

Like Novalis, you believed that ‘to philosophise is to dephlegmatise, to make alive’. Most importantly, with you, philosophy is about the here and now; it can be unpacked from the contents of the most ordinary moments addressed by a fully concentrated mind; and those ordinary moments are thereby celebrated. This moment, for example, as I sit alone in this pub lounge regretting that I have so upset your ghost, looking at an empty chair.

It is one of my favourite hours: early evening in ‘The Governor’s House’, with the first pint of Stella catching the evening light in its light amber and reflecting a spring beech tree which has just acquired leaves and learned to swish again. Across the floor is an empty table and a conference of chairs. The one I have singled out is a brown, polished, high-back chair, with nice curved armrests: an ideal native of this evening moment. It is pulled back from the polished oval table, as if it has withdrawn a little to contemplate the story so far. If it wore glasses, it would have taken them off to rub its eyes and would be doing what I am so often criticised for – sucking one of the stems while drifting between what has just been said, what it is going to say in reply, the pleasure of the light, and the pleasure of the things in the light. But of course, you – Chair – do not wear glasses because you have no eyesight; and you do not contemplate the story so far because you do not think. You are not, that is to say, sentient. That is what I want to talk to you about: our difference.

Unlike me, Herr Stuhl, you are not a Da-sein, you do not have the capability of making other things 'be there'; your being is not an issue for itself. (*Roughly* how these two aspects of Da-sein are connected is fairly clear; *exactly* how they are connected is not.) There is an asymmetry in our relationship. I make you be there, but you do not make me be there: you are there for me and you exist, are located, have a use, in my world; but I do not exist in your world. For you do not have a world: I am worlded and you are not. You are an inner-worldly being in my world and I am not an innerworldly thing in yours. Nothing exists for you, Herr Stuhl, not even yourself, not even nothing. You are not the being that you are in the way that I *am* the being that I am. And it is not just a question of my having an explicit past and future and explicit purposes rooted in both, while you have none of these things; it goes deeper than that.

You won't like this, Herr Heidegger (to bring you back and include you in this little conversation between myself and this empty chair) but I still believe Sartre captured best this difference between me and the chair. Expropriating Hegel's terminology, Sartre described entities like the chair as having only a Being-in-itself, whereas entities like me have both a Being-for-itself and a Being-in-itself – along with the givenness that is the facticity that constitutes the being we have to be. This difference is profound and extraordinary and it illuminates not only my extraordinariness but also your mystery, Herr Stuhl. It is your mystery that I wish to focus on at present.

What are you? An all-too-readily available description is that you are 'a piece of matter', with certain 'material properties', shaped into an artefact to serve a certain human need – the need of tired humans to be relieved of the burden of the upright position, a burden that follows from the fact that we humans are physical objects, too, and subject to the influence of gravity. At this stage, Herr Professor, you will hardly be able to restrain yourself from jumping in: 'Have you learned nothing? Did I not remind you that terms like "matter" are not primitives but late derivatives? That objects – least of all artefactual objects designed for use – are not just or primarily or in themselves pieces of matter, lumps of the merely present-at-hand, "objective presences". Nor are they initially pieces of matter and then (shaped into) useful forms. On the contrary, they are primordially revealed to Da-sein (who "lets them be") as parts of nexuses of meaning, webs of significance that open on to a boundless human world. This is their immediate and natural meaning and this meaning has not been irreversibly subverted, never mind transcended by the quasi-scientific account implicit in your

description of the chair as “a piece of matter”. The true nature of the chair is revealed when we see it for the purposes it serves, and the world on to which it opens: the table, the room, the needs of tired people, the notion of a place where people meet and talk ...’

And so you remonstrate. But I have to ask you to restrain yourself, Herr Professor. You are but a guest in this conversation between Herr Stuhl and myself. After all, you had your say – all 100 volumes of it – between 1889 and 1976. As you know from what we have said already, there is a real problem – or I have a real problem, anyway – with your seeming to give priority to Da-sein and the way its pre-scientific, its pre-ontological, its pre-theoretic ‘average everydayness’ sees things. I have explored some of those problems but there are plenty more and, with your permission, and the implicit permission of this beautiful chair in which so much evening light and so much *temps vécu* come-together, I shall address some of these.

Your emphasis on the world as a nexus of the ready-to-hand, a web of significances, rather than as a huge array of material objects set out in space, is (as I have already had occasion to remark) rather cosy – as one might expect of a world-picture that aims to recapture and give priority to the actual experience of Da-sein in its average everydayness. It liberates us from the gloomy universe in which we are set down by the terminally disenchanted world picture of physical science. Indeed, some of your ontology could be regarded as a mighty gloss on Paul Valéry’s famous retort to Pascal. In response to the tortured mathematician’s doleful admission that ‘the eternal silence of those infinite spaces terrifies me’, with its implication that it should terrify everyone else as well, Valéry retorted: ‘the hubbub in the corner comforts me’. To give significance priority over insignificance, to give human meanings as revealed through Da-sein’s sense of possibility priority over the meaninglessness of the physical universe referred to in science (to the point where science itself is assimilated into the human meanings, not only as a project but with respect to its findings), certainly respects daily life and ordinary preoccupation, where the hubbub in the corner drowns out the eternal silence of the infinite spaces. And it certainly deals with the problem that the scientific world picture always leaves us with. Let us have a quick glance at that problem now.

If we begin, as physical science would have us begin, with atoms and the void, or a seething cauldron of photons, or whatever, we are left unable to account for the emergence of values, or of creatures such as ourselves for whom things matter; for suffering and taking pleasure and wanting and delighting and worrying. There is nothing in the

materialist's account of the (material) universe that explains why matter should matter, how mattering arose in the heart of matter. So you deal with this problem. But you do so by bypassing it. And this means that you inescapably run very close to indulging in magic thinking in which the universe encountered by us is enclosed by Da-sein.

I am not, of course, denying that that chair over there is saturated in meaning. Or that I encounter it most naturally as a node in a nexus of possibilities-for-me or possibilities-for-someone: possibilities for the *they* 'which supplies the answer to the *who* of everyday Da-sein ... the *nobody* to whom everyday Da-sein has always already surrendered itself, in its being-among-one-another' (BT 120), the *they* that '*belongs as a primordial phenomenon to the positive constitution of Da-sein*'. (For the 'everyday possibilities of Da-sein are at the disposal of the whims of the others. These others are not *definite* others' (BT 118). They are examples of the general anyone – but that's another story, to be visited when we examine 'they' from the haughty heights of Todtnauberg.) However, the meaning-saturated chair as a ready-to-hand available to meet the everyday possibilities of the Da-sein as they-self is not the end of the story. The chair has all sorts of properties that are only indirectly, if at all, connected with its being a node in a nexus of possibilities. It has weight, opacity, tensile strength. All of these may be regarded as necessary for it to serve its function as a chair supporting human bodies blessed or burdened with a wide range of *avoirdupois*, of many instances of the *they* variously embodied. These are, of course, relational properties: 'heavy for me', 'impossible for me to see through', 'tough when encountered', etc. They are what we in the Anglo-Saxon tradition call secondary qualities. But these relational properties, these possibilities-for-me are dependent upon a micro-structure which, although underpinning its weight, opacity and tensile strength, are hardly, or incompletely, assimilable into Da-sein's world of possibility – in either its average everydayness or its more authentic mode of being (of which more in due course).

Ultimately, the chair, like any other material object, is *inscrutable*; or, at least incompletely scrutable. There is a residue of intrinsic being within it that cannot be dissolved without remainder into Da-sein's various projects. This is hinted at when we encounter the chair in ways that have no relationship to our projects; as when, for example, I trip over the chair on my way out of the pub – when it acquires (to use again your lovely expression that always makes me smile) that 'conspicuousness which presents the thing at hand in a certain unhandiness' (BT 73). The material properties of the chair which may be

necessary for one project, licensing certain possibilities, also abide beyond that project and continue independently of the possibilities entertained by Da-sein. (It is this that enables the ready-to-hand to be ready-to-different-hands with different projects; that enables it to be used and re-used.)

You yourself acknowledged this, Herr Professor, when you spoke of the way the present-to-hand might crystallise out of the warm bath of the ready-to-hand. Your examples, however, tended to be fairly domestic: broken hammers, etc. But the present-to-hand is less domestic than this; and less local. It exists not as a mere trickle of being through small rents in the seamless fabric of the ready-to-hand by frustrated projects and obstructed possibility. It is everywhere, even in the heart of the objects that are exploited in our projects. I wouldn't want to be accused of belittling the ready-to-hand – least of all you, Herr Stuhl – but, seen aright, the ready-to-hand is a small spot, lit up by our projects, in a boundless array of things, some sensed, some outside our sensory field, and some forever unknown to anyone and everyone, in a limitless spread of the unhandy present-at-hand and the not present-at-hand.

Da-sein's world, in other words, is embedded in a much greater universe – a universe whose history and laws (largely unknown to us) are highly relevant to our welfare and, indeed, to our projects. Da-sein may create possibilities but the realisation of them lies at least in part outside Da-sein's jurisdiction: possibilities on the way to Da-sein form outside its present field of possibilities. More than anything, the science that deals with 'objective presences' is an investigation and uncovering of the most general conditions under which our projects may be realised or frustrated, under which possibilities may be actualised or not. The truths it uncovers go far beyond – and I would submit, Herr Professor, *dig far beneath* – the understanding immediately available to 'average everydayness' and to Da-sein with its cosy world of ready-to-hands. For example, without the causal laws that science uncovers, it would not be possible for us to walk towards this chair and sit down on it.

Da-sein – in its average everydayness or in its authentic-being-toward-death (*vide infra*) – does not know the whole story of the things through which it realises the possibilities it projects for itself. I therefore believe that I am entitled to think of this chair as a piece of matter and to regard this materialist way of thinking about the world around us as capturing a fundamental truth that cannot be trumped by Da-sein in its 'average everydayness' – or in any other version of its immediacy. This also respects what you and I both know about the

chair: that it is only partially scrutable; that it has an interior, a structure, laws of existence, most of which are not available to the person who uses it to relieve himself of the burden of the standing position, as that rather overweight (and 'over there') man is doing now, extinguishing at this moment those wonderful flecks and glimmers of light that, as a poet summarising Paris in a few words, just now gathered up the evening in a few metonymic hints.

Good evening, Herr Stuhl.

Magic thinking

I think that what I was trying to say earlier, when we were in 'The Governor's House', was that, for all your hard-headedness and all your talk (which we shall come to in due course) of Da-sein's authentic being-towards-death in a world without God, you (and many of those who have been influenced by you) are prone to magic thinking. You may be shocked by this charge. What, after all, is a philosopher but someone who combines the toughest, clearest sense of reality with the most tingling sense of possibility? But it is true. And, ironically, it is made even more apparent in the development (you would say distortion) of your thought by that would-be hard-headed thinker, M. Sartre. (I'm sorry that he keeps popping up like this, but he is very much to the point. The flaws of his system are the weaknesses in yours writ large.)

Sartre's For-itself – a bit like your Da-sein and a bit like Nothingness – seems to live in a world of meaning and possibility that it has itself created by being the bearer of Nothingness in the world. Surely, we may argue, the For-itself cannot create and inhabit just *any* old world that it wishes; after all, it is embedded in the given, the most crucial element of which is the body that sustains the For-itself, which is a crucial determinant of the content of most of its consciousness and dictates most of the For-itself's projects through bodily needs. It comes to be in, it happens in and upon, a world that already exists. Not at all, says Sartre. This facticity, this necessary connection with the In-itself, with a world and its own past – which allows us to say that the For-itself *is*, that it has an identity – is not a limit to its freedom. For there is a facticity of freedom, which is that freedom is not able to be not free. 'Not able to be not free'!? Surely we do not freely choose our pains? Surely, being tetraplegic is a limit to freedom? Surely confession under torture is not freely given? Sartre has a response to all these examples. We do not choose the sensations we call pain but the For-

itself confers value upon them: it is this that makes them unpleasant, even unbearably so. Being tetraplegic may stop us climbing a cliff but it is we, instances of the For-itself, who determine that this shall count as a limitation to our freedom because it is we who have generated those projects, such as cliff-climbing, which tetraplegia will frustrate. Even torture does not dispossess us of our freedom, Sartre argues, because when we give in, we do so freely: it is we who decide that confession is less unbearable than submitting to continuing torture.

Even if one accepts those dubious Sartrean responses – dubious because they wipe out the real distinctions between freedom and unfreedom, all the distinctions that seem to matter in human life and all the things worth fighting for and against – one might still argue that, surely, other people are a limit to my freedom. Others after all are able to impose values on the world, even on me, and these values will be in potential conflict with the values, the projects, the possibilities I wish to impose. At first Sartre seems to agree to this:

as soon as a freedom other than mine arises confronting me ... it is not a question of my conferring a meaning on brute existents or of accepting responsibility on my own account for the meaning which Others have conferred on certain objects. It is I myself who see a meaning conferred upon me.²⁸

Where the meaning conferred upon me is the status, for example of someone who is a pariah, 'I encounter a total alienation of my person: I am something which I have not chosen to be' (*Being and Nothingness*, *ibid.*). This, Sartre says, is 'a real limit to freedom – that is, a way of being which is imposed on us without our freedom being its foundation' (*ibid.*). But then magic thinking returns and he takes it back:

only my freedom can limit my freedom; we see now, when we include the Other's existence in our considerations, that my freedom on this new level finds its limits in the existence also of the Other's freedom. Thus on whatever level we place ourselves, the only limits which a freedom can encounter are found in freedom. (*ibid.*, p. 524)

Why am I pestering you with this man who, you believed, partly expropriated and partly traduced your ideas? Because his manifestly magic thinking exposes the more subtle magic thinking implicit in your ontology. Pre-Marxist Sartre's blithe disregard of the genuine constraints upon our freedom – Who chooses the pain of toothache in the

way he chooses the pleasure of going to the cinema? Who chooses to continue in a coma? Who chooses all or even most of the circumstances in which she lives (for example, the epoch into which she has been born)? – is based upon the kinds of argument that are at the centre of your own position. If you reject the notion that we are in some fundamental sense physical objects interacting with other physical objects (though I am not denying that we are, of course, much more than that), then you are opening the way either to idealism or to the kind of magic thinking according to which the world we live in, wherein we are being-in-the-world, is a free revelation of entities subsumed under possibilities we have ourselves postulated. And as one who died, I presume involuntarily, in 1976, you would, were you still a Da-sein, be burdensomely aware of that.

Materialism's difficulties

It is because you are dead, however, that I am obliged to be even more scrupulously even-handed than I would naturally incline to be. (There is something about argument that brings out the dishonest politician in all of us, even in genuine seekers after truth.) And it therefore falls to me to return to the problems experienced by anyone who rejects your ontology and, in particular, rejects the primacy that you grant within it to human being or Da-sein. Suppose we begin from the (now orthodox) standpoint of materialism:

There is only one sort of stuff, namely *matter* – the physical stuff of physics, chemistry and physiology – and the mind is somehow nothing but a physical phenomenon. In short, the mind is the brain ... we can (in principle!) account for every mental phenomenon using the same physical principles, laws and raw materials that suffice to explain radioactivity, continental drift, photosynthesis, reproduction, nutrition and growth.²⁹

If we adopt this viewpoint, which sees our being in the world as essentially that of a material body among material bodies, then we soon run into difficulties. I shall cite a few of these difficulties to keep you happy – or at least to retain your confidence in me as someone worth engaging in conversation.

First, there is the problem of how it is we get to be *with* – to know, to act upon, knowingly to act upon – the objects that surround us and constitute our world. If Da-sein's being-in-the-world or something like it is not presupposed as *constitutive* of our being, as something given

with it, rather than constructed by it, and if we also reject idealism and its in-law phenomenism, then we may be faced with something like this: that there is myself, an embodied subject, over here; and there is that thing, an object, such as a chair, over there. The two are separated by physical space. The question then arises as to how the former is aware of the latter: how the space between them is, as it were, crossed. This is a huge question, but I want to show you that I am cognisant of the difficulties that you have bypassed, if not solved, by choosing to begin with *Da-sein* and *being-in-the-world*.

If the object out there is outside of me in the way that one object (such as a chair) is outside another object (such as a table) and both objects are seen primarily as portions of matter, there is a no way of arriving at an understanding of how the first object (my body) is aware of the second object (e.g. the chair). Trying to explain this by reference to the special material properties of my body simply won't work, as I have already mentioned.

Everything I have written in the philosophy of mind has been published after your death but I have shown to my own satisfaction in rather too many chapters and articles and books that the propensity the human brain has to produce nerve impulses in response to energy impinging on the body from objects outside of it in no way explains how the brain, the body, or yours truly, is aware of, amidst of, *with* objects. There is nothing in the brain to explain the presence of one thing to another or the 'disclosedness' of things in the world – either as the web of significances that constitutes the unified world of things that are ready-to-hand or even as the objective presence of the merely present-to-hand. There is absolutely nothing in the properties of nerve impulses, for example, to make them plausible agents of the mysterious process by which – if we begin with material objects such as human bodies and their objects of perception – one object is disclosed to another. There is, equally, nothing in these impulses to account for the fact that the body is, to a greater or lesser degree, disclosed to itself and constitutes the embodiment of 'me', 'the subject', 'the mind', 'consciousness' or whatever. In short, human bodies, human brains or nerve impulses in brains do not seem to have characteristics that explain how there are subjects, or how these subjects discover themselves as embodied in particular objects. Disclosedness, which belongs to being-with and which lies at the root of understanding – 'a primordial existential kind of being which first makes knowledge and cognition possible' (BT 116) – cannot, in other words, be derived from events in certain objects such as human bodies or their brains.

Not only does starting from material objects (including the human body) and their properties leave us unable to explain how I (bodily here) am aware of external objects over there but also (and *a fortiori* – to revert to your old mentor Husserl’s most abiding worry) it fails to explain how I share a common world with my conspecifics and how our collective experience builds up into the reliable objective knowledge uncovered by the activity of the scientists. The properties of material objects such as brains also fail to offer any explanation of how it is that what I am actually aware of (the content of my consciousness) relates, truthfully or otherwise, to the object itself. For example, I am not too sure whether the handsome chair that attracted so much of my attention when we talked together in ‘The Governor’s House’ really had, in itself, those properties for which I valued it. Let me dwell on this for a while.

Purely external objects, pieces of matter, objects as viewed by science, have primary qualities, but there is some doubt whether they have secondary qualities. (They certainly don’t have even ‘higher level’ qualities, such as being pleasure-giving or painful or beautiful.) And if objects are not in themselves coloured, or hard, and the light that lights them up is not in itself bright (never mind beautiful), what was it that I was perceiving when I admired this beautiful old brown chair in the evening light? Where do the secondary qualities come from? This is a question that has taxed many philosophers and I shall eventually return to it when I am seated in my ownmost place, enjoying, and meditating on, the feeling of sunlight on my arm; for I believe passionately that it is central to the unresolved issues in your philosophy and my not-quite-philosophy – what I might call my ‘casting about’.

And here is another problem that has troubled many philosophers. If we really are just physical objects interacting with other physical objects, how do we carve human agency out of a sea of physical causation? This is an old chestnut but it has gained urgency as physiologists, cognitive psychologists, neuropharmacologists and others have shown – or think they have shown – in increasingly precise detail the involuntary mechanisms that seem to underpin our voluntary behaviour. Our willed actions, all the things that make up our ordinary responsible days, are merely the topmost, visible elements of innumerable interacting hierarchical pyramids of programmes, tropisms, preformed sequences – in short, mechanisms. Earlier, when we were in the pub, I was fidgeting with the Stella beer mat in precisely the kind of way that would I know have irritated you and earned me a scorching rebuke had you been alive. Suddenly, I flipped it off the table. Before I knew what

had happened, I had reached down and caught it – an act based upon numerous implicit judgements of distance, speed, hand aperture, prehensile force, etc. Did I do this seemingly voluntary action; or did it simply happen within me? And what about all of the things that I manifestly have not chosen? Under this heading, I include not merely the facticity that is the sum of my having-been but the immediate and remote context of my actions: the body in which they are located and its properties and mechanisms; the geographical, historical, social and cultural context which shapes them and the choices behind them; the physical constraints of the world in which my body is located; etc.

You avoid all materialism's troubles because you begin with a *Da-sein* that seems to be a point of origin, an independent source of meaning and initiative, a creator of its own projects, happy possessor of its 'ownmost' possibilities. That is why (once again) I embraced your philosophy so joyfully all those years ago. And yet you do not elude them entirely; for the 'ownmost' possibility of an individual *Da-sein* turns out, as we shall see, when we consider *Da-sein* at its most free (when it is 'authentic' rather than 'everyday' *Da-sein*) to be somewhat limited, even empty. *Da-sein*'s postulation of possibilities, which is the framework that turns event into actions, does not provide such a wide margin of actual freedom as might at first seem. The introduction of value, meaning and purpose into the world of matter by *Da-sein* or something like it seems like the creation of limitless freedom only so long as one does not think of the actual conditions under which purposes are pursued, the very limited extent to which meanings are chosen by, say, a living body, the limited degree to which the valuing of pleasurable stimuli over painful ones is freely adopted and the extent, likewise, to which we are free to act on these valuations. Then *Da-sein*'s freedom to choose itself seems a rather restricted, not to say contentless, freedom.

Herr Professor, I am in a muddle. I don't know whose side wins the least sympathy from me: yours, which seems to give *Da-sein* almost magic powers to choose, indeed create, the world in which it lives, while at the same time it seems at liberty to choose only itself; or that of the materialist philosophers who assimilate us into the material world and consequently cannot account for the fact that there is choosing, that there is an entity that chooses in the light of possibilities it postulates in the world it discloses.

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Intermezzo

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Where did our conversation go astray? I think it was somewhere between the second and third pint. That was when I felt it was losing its direction. Worse, losing its *sense* of direction. Worse still, losing its feeling of urgency and the corresponding feeling of hope. It was not only that we had opened up a whole new seam – a whole new sea – of questions, subjects perhaps of future conversations, so that (to borrow Rilke's words) the 'hardly achieved too little / veered into the empty too much'. But, more than that: we seemed to lose sight of the beginning. And, as you said so often, true philosophy has great beginnings and it stays with its beginnings to the very end: a beginning is not a starting point that is left behind: 'it does not stand *behind* us, as something that was a long time ago, but stands *before* us'.³⁰ Yes, you taught me that, Herr Professor. We had fallen away from the beginning into the conventional agenda or curriculum of philosophy.

And so I wanted to go back to the beginning; and I could not imagine doing that in the increasingly noisy, increasingly smoky, spaces of 'The Governor's House', where there was an added distraction arising from the excitement focused on the European Cup Final and that Treble which 'they', 'one', 'Man' (Man. United, even), Da-sein in its most average everydayness, its least authentic mode, want Manchester United to win. If they do win, this night – Wednesday, 26 May 1999 – will, we are told, go down in history (do not ask 'The history of what?') and enter the collective amnesia forever. And there will be dancing in the streets. But we shall not be dancing with them; for we dance to a different tune (not that you are entirely a stranger to mob rule and the sense of destiny that drives mobs to their most extreme expressions of collective will). And we shall not see them dancing, for we shall be walking on the high paths winding between the trees in the Black Forest: I in my imagination and you in your nothing, a nothing that no longer noths – in my imagination also. We shall talk, as we walk away from the bruit of this Wednesday evening towards the forest and the deep quiet of the mountain hut your loving anti-Semitic wife, Elfride (who watched over your every need and so worsened everything that was foolish in you) had had built for you. And since we seem to be talking about painful matters, I would be inclined to say that she, more than anyone, assisted at your tragedy, at the 'mistakes' (so soon after *Being and Time*!) that soiled your reputation and darkened the last forty or more years of your life. Though I am more inclined to reserve the word 'tragedy' for the children orphaned, starved, kicked, punched, spat on, imprisoned, tortured, gassed and incinerated in the name of ideas that your wife, and possi-

bly you also, embraced with such enthusiasm and (much worse) never fully and frankly admitted and repudiated. Besides, you had enough peasant cunning and ruthlessness to espouse the expedient ideas for yourself – and what could have been more expedient than anti-Semitism when Hitler came to power?

I promised to set aside your politics, but there are times when I cannot help recalling how you also chose to set them aside, or at least to forget them: I am thinking of the thirty years of your life after the war when, so long as you were not lying about your ‘non-involvement’ with Nazism, you simply pretended that it had not happened or that the concentration camps were no great deal – simply a consequence of a technology-driven society and rather similar to the industrialisation of agriculture.³¹ I somehow think that the last, or least important, charge that one would lay against a guard who smashed a rifle butt in the face of a terrified, grief-stricken four-year-old chasing after his mother who is being marched off to the gas chambers, would be Forgetfulness of Being.

And so I mount the moral high ground; I, a child of peace, who have never been tested in the way that you and all of your contemporaries were tested. Such censoriousness is not my usual style at all. But I am frustrated by a sense of your impenetrability, your deep refusal of engagement, your almost malicious delight in withdrawing into the bunker of your enigmatic presence. You are, I feel, despising me: for my inability to escape the old, pre-Heideggerian philosophical agenda, with its stale problems; for my vulgar love of plastic pubs; for my imprisonment in the idle talk beloved of ‘average everydayness’.

The other day, I read this about you (it was written by your erstwhile pupil and disciple, Karl Löwith):

It is rather difficult to describe Heidegger’s face because he could never look straight into one’s eyes for long. His natural expression revealed a reflective brow, an inscrutable countenance, and down-cast eyes, which now and again would cast a quick glance to assess the situation. Forced, in conversation, to look one straight in the face, he would appear reserved and insecure, for he lacked the gift of candid communication with other people. Hence his natural expression was one of cautious, peasant-sly mistrust.³²

‘Peasant-sly mistrust’. So we are back on that again. And it is time to leave it alone. For there are many peasants and doubtless many of them are (probably for good reasons) somewhat mistrustful and a pro-

portion of them will be sly; but there are very few Martin Heideggers. Indeed, I would venture to say, there is only one Martin Heidegger. And it is this one and only Martin Heidegger, in his ownmost, that I wish to engage with; not the calculating, ruthless man who trimmed and lied like so many others and whose agrarian reactionary conservatism and misplaced sense of his own destiny led him to behave and speak so disgustingly; rather, the philosopher who thought like no other. The Da-sein who is with me in dialogue is the Great Philosopher, not the Little Man. (That is why your books retain their place on my shelves long after I have removed your portrait from my wall.)

And this is where our conversation has taken us, Herr Professor: that I can see why you adopted the ontology that you did; that I do not accept it; but that those of us who live after you need to take account of your insights, if only so that we may look past you – the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century – in order to start the arguments of the century to come. But before we plunge into a new set of arguments, we should listen; we should pause between arguments and allow visions, astonishment and wonder to grow. For this we need a quiet place where we might sit side by side, where we may listen to the silence while contemplating the mystery of presence. Spiritually side by side, at any rate; for even if you were able to return to earth, we would prefer different places. You the silence of the paths between the trees of your familiar Black Forest and I the sea – the cold turbulent sea of north Cornwall, or the warm, gently lapping Mediterranean overheard from pine woods where the wind-brushed silence might be mistaken for the beating of my heart.

Wayfaring

Between the forest trees: concerning space, etc.

Our high path is between great trees. They bend a little in the breeze. The air and the leaves teach each other to talk and we cannot say whose voice is whose – whether it is the leaves that speak or the air. The leaf-strewn path is wonderfully dry on this sunny, late September day. From time to time, the trees part and we enjoy a prospect of rolling hills, small fields, farmhouses, copses and hedges and even a little road whose traffic is sufficiently infrequent and sufficiently remote not to obtrude upon your meditations and alter your mode of attunement to the world for the worse. In this wide space, I want to talk again about space itself.

Let us pause between these trees and, listening into the silence placed in italics by the soft rustling of the leaves, look at those sturdy, grey and brown trunks. The trees are over there and I am over here. I am among the trees. I stand here and they stand there. We are outside of one another. Something has to come from the trees for me to know of them.

Etc.

This, Herr Professor, is precisely the ‘rigid staring’, the artificial state, that you believe has generated the conventional problem of knowledge and the epistemological difficulties that philosophers have agonised over since Descartes. If (you believe) we give up this rigid staring and see how things truly are, then we shall see things differently. For a start (and most fundamentally) ‘here’ and ‘there’ will take on quite a different character, as we noted earlier:

‘Here’ and ‘over there’ are possible only in a ‘there’, that is when there is a being which has disclosed spatiality as the being of the ‘there’. This being bears in its ownmost being the character of not

being closed. The expression 'there' means this essential disclosedness. Through disclosedness this being (Da-sein) is 'there' for itself together with the Da-sein of the world. (BT 125)

In other words, 'here' and 'there' are not external to one another and the tree and I (the latter misunderstood either as a self or an I-thing encumbered with a body) are not encountering each other as two objective presences or one objective presence (the tree) encountering a localised subject (myself). The sense then that I want to cultivate, by the side of your ghost, of being a thing among things, is a mis-sense. Being-in-the-world is not like this and beings in the world are 'inner-worldly' (to use your precise term) not simply 'in the world' in the way that this tree is in the forest that surrounds it. And this seems to solve not only the epistemological problem – how is it that I over here know the tree over there? – but also the axiological one.

Let me dwell on this latter claim for a moment. If we start with 'material thingliness' as a basic 'world-stuff', we cannot explain why these things are *valued*; or why some things are valued by some other things – namely human beings. Value has to be present in the initial revelation of the thing – hence revelation by Da-sein, 'that being whose being is an issue for itself', for whom the world is primordially composed of ready-to-hand entities that are related, or potentially related to, its projects. 'Relevance is the being of innerworldly beings, for which they are always already freed' (BT 78).

And now, Herr Professor, we may resume our conversation in earnest, by returning to the question we have already touched upon, that of the nature of space. Let us begin by considering again the question of the relative priorities of objective presence and the ready-to-hand. It is a question you yourself pose:

Handiness is the ontological categorial definition of beings as they are 'in themselves'. But 'there are' handy things, after all, only on the basis of what is objectively present. Admitting this thesis, does it then follow that handiness is ontologically founded in objective presence? (BT 67)

What evidence is there that being-at-hand is the primordial mode of being? None, it would seem. Indeed, we have earlier argued to the contrary, citing the truth of science and the biological reality of death as our witnesses. Your further questioning therefore seems entirely justified:

But if, in our continuing ontological interpretation, handiness proves to be the kind of being of beings first discovered within the world, if its primordially can ever be demonstrated over and against pure objective presence, does what we have explained up to now contribute in the least to an ontological understanding of the phenomenon of the world? We have, after all, always 'presupposed' world in our interpretation of these innerworldly beings. Joining these beings together does not result as a sum in something like 'world'. Is there any path leading from the being of these beings to showing the phenomenon of the world? (BT 67)

You do not answer your own question. Nor at any stage do you convincingly demonstrate the primacy of being-ready-at-hand over 'objective presence' or being-present-at-hand. You merely assert – and re-assert – these views. And yet they are both absolutely central to your arguments; moreover, they are vulnerable because they leave much unexplained. Da-sein may well be that in virtue of which being is opened up, is disclosed and is available to be encountered –

Da-sein is the ontic condition of the possibility of the disclosure of beings encountered in the mode of being of relevance (handiness) in a world that can thus make themselves known in their in-itself. (BT 81)

– so that beings that are ready-to-hand are primordial in Da-sein's world; but it does not follow from this that readiness to hand is primordial in itself. Nor does it explain how Da-sein has this facility, how it arose and what it arose from. It may be that these questions, being extra-worldly, are inadmissible, but this too has to be demonstrated and I do not see your demonstration. Have I missed it? I think not.

The suspicion dawns on me that your masterpiece is a huge tautology, an expression of precisely the circularity that you defended so robustly (*vide infra*, Herr Professor) which, however, I fear may not get us very far. The circle is tethered to certain founding assertions that are never given any support other than ever more emphatic repetition: a tentative assertion becomes an accepted truth, somehow reinforced by being used as a building block upon which other to-be-accepted truths are erected.³³

The need to answer the question that you posed regarding the primordially of the ready-to-hand and Da-sein with its free being-in-the-world and I pose again now is underlined by this passage:

The foregoing analysis already makes it clear that the being-in-itself of innerworldly beings is ontologically comprehensible only on the basis of the phenomenon of the world. (BT 71)

In other words, for your system to hold up, you have to be given – free of charge – that which others strive to derive, put together, construct: the world. Now this given may be provided free of charge to Da-sein in its average everydayness – unastonishable, unreflective dim old Da-sein – but Da-sein in its average everydayness is not doing philosophy and is not a philosopher. It is not good enough simply to assert that

The world is always already ‘there’ in all things at hand. World is already discovered [cleared] beforehand together with everything encountered, although not thematically ... World is that in terms of which things at hand are at hand for us. (BT 77)

Because that is – well, just circular. The circularity becomes increasingly evident:

But now what does that mean, to say that for which innerworldly beings are freed must previously be disclosed? An understanding of being belongs to the being of Da-sein. Understanding has its being in an act of understanding. If the kind of being of being-in-the-world essentially belongs to Da-sein, then the understanding of being-in-the-world belongs to the essential content of its understanding of being. The previous disclosure of that for which the freeing of things encountered in the world ensues is none other than the understanding of the world to which Da-sein is always already related. (BT 80)

As that for which one lets beings encountered in the kind of being of relevance, the wherein of self-referential understanding is the phenomenon of the world. And the structure of that to which Da-sein is referred is what constitutes the worldliness of the world. (BT 80–1)

You are, of course, aware of this. Do you not speak of the ‘self-referral of Da-sein’, when you are talking of Da-sein’s understanding (and I presume disclosure) of the world (BT 87)? And you speak also of the various relations of ‘for’, ‘what-for’, ‘reference’ and ‘relevance’ as being ‘interlocked among themselves as a primordial totality’ (BT 81).

It is difficult, very difficult, to see how, out of the charmed circle of Da-sein (whose world seems increasingly its own internal accusative) – so that the externality of the world corresponds to the internality of Da-sein (‘In that it *is*, Da-sein has always already referred itself to an encounter with a “world”. This *dependency of being referred belongs essen-*

tially to its being', BT 81) – the objective presence, or 'the ontological orientation towards being as constant objective presence which mathematical knowledge is exceptionally well suited to grasp' (BT 89), which science investigates and unpacks so fruitfully, could ever have emerged out of the ready-to-hand.

It is starting to seem as if you may have made a fundamental error in enclosing the question of being in what being is for Da-sein – that being who shows forth being. This is most evident in your handling of space: this space that surrounds me and seems to transcend me; this space uttered on my cooling skin by the breeze that makes the trees in front of us speak and shakes the far hedges bordering that distant field where farness is blue-tinged and distance, assisted by a faint smokiness whose originating fire is lost, thickens a little to mistance.

Space. How long have I thought of space as something I, along with other bodies, am inserted into! My warm sentient body, these cool, insentient trees, the remote sun that illuminates our days, setting my timetables and feeding the trees, are, I have thought, inserted into same physical space, which pre-exists and transcends any one of these things. Out of my experience of these things set out in space, I (though not the trees nor the sun) construct a world; but this constructed world is embedded in, or predicated upon, or derived from the world of objects set out in physical space. 'Not so,' you say. 'You have got things the wrong way round.'

[T]he aroundness of the surrounding world, the specific spatiality of the beings encountered in the surrounding world is grounded in the worldliness of the world, and not the other way round, that is, we cannot say that the world in its turn is objectively present in space. (BT 94)

So that's clear enough: the aroundness of the world is not composed of an array of objectively present physical entities set out in pre-existing physical space. 'The worldliness of the world' is prior to extended space. This is serious; for "'Worldliness" ... designates the structure of a constitutive factor of being-in-the-world' (BT 60). As for 'world', it is 'ontologically not a determination of *those* beings which Da-sein essentially is *not*' (such as, for example, the objective presences revealed to science) 'but rather a characteristic of Da-sein itself' (BT 60). And, just in case the message is not clear: objective presence 'is the mode of being of beings unlike Da-sein' (BT 108).

Space, then, is not primordially the neutral, value-free, viewpoint-free space of physics; it is grounded in the worldliness of the ready-to-hand:

The things at hand of everyday association have the character of *nearness* ... The structured nearness of useful things means that they do not simply have a place in space, objectively present somewhere ... (BT 95)

There is never a three-dimensional multiplicity of possible positions ... which is then filled out with objectively present things. (BT 96)

Regions are not first formed by things objectively present together, but are always already at hand in individual places. The places themselves are assigned to what is at hand in the circumspection of taking care of things, or else we come across them. (BT 96)

The 'surrounding world' does not arrange itself in a previously given space, but rather its specific worldliness articulates in its significance the relevant context of an actual totality of places circumspectly referred to each other. (BT 97)

As for Da-sein,

it is 'in' the world in the sense of a familiar and heedful association with the beings encountered within the world. Thus when spatiality is attributed to it in some way, this is possible only on the basis of this being-in. But the spatiality of being-in shows the character of *de-distancing* and *directionality* ... Da-sein is essential de-distancing. As the being that it is, it lets beings be encountered in nearness. (BT 97)

What is at hand in the surrounding world is, after all, not objectively present for an eternal spectator exempt from Da-sein, but is encountered in the heedful everydayness of Da-sein. (BT 98)

The circumspect de-distancing of everyday Da-sein discovers the being-in-itself of the 'true' world, of beings with which Da-sein as existing is always already together. (BT 99)

And – as if you were anticipating my gesture of reaching towards the tree to demonstrate that, in order to touch it and make it even readier to hand, I need to propel my (material) body across (physical) space – you cut me off at the pass:

Bringing near is not orientated toward the I-thing encumbered with a body, but rather toward heedful being in the world, that is, what that being-in-the-world initially encounters. (BT 100)

And so you go on:

The essential disclosure of space lies in the significance with which Da-sein as heedful being-in is familiar. (BT 102)

Space is neither in the subject nor is the world in space. Rather, space is 'in' the world since the being-in-the-world constitutive for Da-sein has disclosed space. Space is not in the subject, nor does the subject observe the world 'as if' it were in space. Rather, the 'subject' correctly understood ontologically, Da-sein, is spatial in a primordial sense. (BT 103)

And on:

Where space is discovered non-circumspectly by just looking at it, the regions of the surrounding world get neutralized to pure dimensions. (BT 104)

It is only in this highly artificial situation that

'The world' as a totality of useful things at hand is spatialized to become a connection of extended things which are merely objectively present. The homogeneous space of nature shows itself only when the beings we encounter are discovered in such a way that the worldly character of what is at hand gets specifically deprived of its worldliness. (BT 104)

And on:

Spatiality can be discovered in general only on the basis of world in such a way that space, after all, *also* constitutes the world in accordance with the essential spatiality of Da-sein itself with regard to its fundamental constitution of being-in-the- world. (BT 105)

All right, message received and understood. Let us now pause and reflect. Reflect, Herr Professor, in particular, on the fact that, in order for objects to be ready-to-hand even in your anthropocentric (or Da-sein-ocentric) sense, the objects have to be near in a purely physico-spatial sense. To be encountered, the object has to be objectively near the (physical) body. Or, as in the case of visible objects such as the sun, accessible (for physical reasons) to the senses. In order to be ready-to-hand, the object has to be (objectively) present-at-hand – even if (as in

the case of the many things we ignore or overlook) being present-at-hand is not enough to ensure being ready-to-hand.

You will recall, here in the silence between the trees, where we pause and listen and look (but do not rigidly stare), how I made this very point amid the calm of my study when we talked about my red waste-paper bin and in slightly more soiled bruit of the 'The Governor's House', when we talked about hammers, etc. I cannot, you see, let go of the notion that physical space and physical objects have a primordial reality. And I feel that you, after all, have a lingering suspicion that they are in some sense inescapably fundamental; though you try to evade the issue. *Do you not admit that 'spatialization of Da-sein in its "corporeality" ... contains a problematic of its own' (BT 101) – though it is 'not to be discussed here ...' (?) 'A problematic of its own' – you bet! And you do not, so far as I know, discuss it anywhere. (I will, depend on it.)*

There is a general point here, Herr Professor Heidegger. Perhaps I am getting tired (you are walking too fast for this city boy), but it seems to me that too often you simply push aside problems by so re-describing the world that the problems seem irrelevant. If being-in-the-world is *constitutive* of Da-sein and the objects in the world are the ready-to-hands that Da-sein reveals in its heedful caring, then there simply cannot be a problem of how it is that Da-sein breaks out of itself and gains access to the objects in the world. It is only 'objective presences', things like material objects, that are other than Da-sein; and these are the product of unnatural ways of looking ('rigid staring') or of late modes of understanding ('physical science'). There is Da-sein, disclosedness, which belongs to being-with and which lies at the root of understanding – 'a primordially existential kind of being which first makes knowledge and cognition possible' (BT 116). That is how it was that you managed to kiss goodbye to the mind-body problem and bade farewell to all those terrible enigmas that Husserl crucified his mind upon over so many years of thought: the relationship between subjective experience and objective scientific knowledge and all the rest.

Farewell – and Hail! For the problems return exacerbated, not solved. Let us suppose I agree with you that there really is no philosophical conundrum of how it is we know things other than ourselves, such as material objects or other minds. Suppose I accept your analysis: that being-with is constitutive of Da-sein's world; that we don't start as isolated subjects, corporealised minds, which then somehow have to make sense of the world, put it together and identify within that world creatures like ourselves who are conscious of the world we share. And supposing also that I concede that, from the beginning, 'The world of

Da-sein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *being-with* others. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is a *Mitda-sein*' (BT 112). That may be all very well ontologically, but it has serious deficiencies as an account of the world we actually live in and the experience of living in it.

Most importantly it fails – as I have expressed already – to explain our specific knowledge and ignorance of the world and of others in the world and of the fact that we add to our knowledge as we go along. This pattern of knowledge and ignorance – which is the fundamental fact of our life – is, it seems to me, best explained by (or at least it is what motivates our belief that) the assumption that we are somehow *viewpoints*, which are to a lesser or greater degree distinct from the world, and have limited access to it, rather than being utterly given over to and dissolved into it. The monadic, Cartesian or idealistic account of our relationship to the world may exaggerate this isolation but it reflects something fundamental in our condition that you seem to have overlooked or set aside.

You know, one could be forgiven for concluding that your Da-sein is omniscient – after all it *is* disclosedness and it lives in a world of objects that are ontologically identical with what it is that Da-sein discloses. In short, a bit like an alumnus of my old teaching hospital, St. Thomas': you can always tell a Da-sein because you can't tell it anything. The world of painfully acquired knowledge and understanding, and of painfully experienced ignorance and misunderstanding, is not the world of your Da-sein. It could never learn anything because the world it encounters is primordially not a world of opaque and at times inscrutable, often material, entities; but a world of beings that belong within the being-in-the-world that is constitutive of Da-sein itself. The world it inhabits, suffers, cares for, lives in heedful being-along-with, or whatever, is the world it itself lights up in disclosedness; the world is that light; nothing is hidden or undisclosed.

Of course you do not believe that, Herr Professor. After all you believe in *projects* in which Da-sein pursues possibilities for itself. And this implies the not-yet and the undisclosed. And you believe in death – and this implies the hidden and the undisclosed. But there is, it seems, nothing in your system to make room for these things. Da-sein, in short, has no outside. Whether you recognise it or not, by abolishing the neutral 'outside' that was created (you would have us believe) when ontology was displaced successively by metaphysics and epistemology – opaque matter, hidden minds, value-free objective presences, a world that lives beyond and before it – you have also abolished the outside that gives our lives (our average everydayness) their direction:

you have eliminated the very incompleteness that leads us on from moment to moment. The fact that I do not know what that person over there is thinking or what will come out of the blue, or how anybody will react to that event, or what the outcome of this plan will be: Is this not the very world-stuff out of which our lives are woven? Even the project-shaped, value-infused *Mitda-sein* (being-with-others) is interstitched with ignorance and uncertainty and opacity which can be explained only by the world-pictures that you have set aside. (I suddenly see yet another connection with your polar opposite and deep soulmate Ludwig Wittgenstein and I want to say to both of you: 'If "nothing is hidden" why do I not know what that woman sitting opposite to me is thinking, when it matters so much to me?')

I could express my reservations in terms that might be more deeply in tune with your fundamental intuitions: your ontology does not permit us to derive the particular (unpredictable) ontic truths by which we live.³⁴ Indeed, it does not make room for particular truths at all. (As for *The Truth* – we shall come to that presently. Indeed we shall.) Your account of Being, as it is revealed in that being whose being is an issue for itself – Da-sein – does not make contact with the particular facts, or indeed the general structures – more precisely, the general constraints, conditions and possibilities – of our lives.

So, while at the ontological level, you seem to have successfully eluded the problems in which those like myself from another tradition are entangled, at the level of actual life, you seem to have missed the point, or left the problems intact. Your repeated assertions – for example, that being-in-the-world is constitutive of Da-sein – sweep up the problems at the ontological level into an unexplained and beautiful mystery (for which many, many thanks). But the ontical specifics are left unexplained – even underived. (If we settle for an undifferentiated mystery encompassing the ontological and the ontical, we may as well not bother philosophising.)

Dealing with Da-sein at the most general level does not merely *not* help us to think about the problems of individual Da-seins – the kinds of things that have histories, and individual consciousnesses and even individual minds – and your ontology of Da-sein not only merely fails to account for the specifics of ordinary life, it actually blocks understanding ... (Perhaps this is not entirely surprising. Why should ontology carry ontical responsibilities? It cannot even explain, after all, how it is that there onticalities.)

Nor does it enable us to ask the fundamental question of what it is that Da-sein makes be 'there', what it makes explicit – namely, what it

is that that which is made explicit *is*, independently of being made to be there. And, whereas we may agree that there is nothing corresponding to a *world* in the absence of Da-sein, there must be *something* and Da-sein's 'freeing of beings for a totality of relevance' must free something. As I say this, I have a sense of stumbling into a kind of clearing.

Shall we walk on, now Herr Professor? I have a little idea about how, and where, we may continue our conversation. I would like, if I may, to move a little way from your preoccupations to mine. I want to talk about truth – and disclosedness. 'Right up my street' you may think. But I don't think you will approve of the direction we shall take; even less the way we shall take it. Never mind. This was never going to be an easy discussion.

In the glade: truth as disclosure

Even exercising the utmost caution and resorting to all sorts of conspiratorial tactics with Hannah's willing and understanding help, Martin Heidegger put his marriage and career at risk.³⁵

'And now' (I am tempted to say) 'the real dialogue begins'. For we going to discuss problems that not only have engaged us both – and in my case have fed into and grown out of my deepest intuitions, have their roots in and articulate my most truly 'metaphysical' moments – but also have grown out of those places where, in part unconsciously, I have been most influenced by and, perhaps, have struggled most strongly against, yourself. For this reason, I shall balance the fact that we are in your kind of place – a glade in a forest, a thwaite, a clearing, a *Lichtung* – by introducing a third party: a woman.

I can see your thin lips, glossed by a shy man's flick of the tongue, crimp with disapproval. Fear not, she will not speak. She is asleep: she will add to our dialogue only the soft rhythm of her 'tender-taken' breath. After all, in those years when your relationship with her was at its most passionate, she was your student and you were the great Herr Professor; so she mostly listened, while you spoke, sharing your great thoughts, your frustrations (but not your aching ambitions) with her. Only later did she find her own voice; and then she spoke on a world stage. She became a great thinker in her own right and you found it 'intolerable'.³⁶ For the present, she belongs to those very rare, occasional moments of perfect peace that I imagine you must have known in the years when she was an inspiration, if not the muse behind *Being and Time*, helping you to complete this intractable masterpiece: the

glade of quiescence between the ferocities of desire and the moment of reawakening to 'average everydayness' – in your case, a waking into shame, or at least anxiety, into *Sorge*, care, and all the fussy details of dressing and mutual inspection for signs of love-making. So you lie, next to Hannah – *Aletheia* – 'the entirely beautiful'. (And she was beautiful in her gaunt, tall, large-eyed way.)

I permit myself a little fictional reconstruction – of the kind you would have found disgusting, not only because it is mere *Rede* – gassing, chatter – but also because it is intrusive and dwells on the things that you most dearly wanted to conceal, things so totally at odds with your dignity as a professor and your highmindedness as a philosopher.

The sun, at the end of this perfect sunny summer day, has slipped down the sky to the point where it is touching the top storeys of the full-leaved trees. The forest around you is illuminated in a thousand unexpected spots. Small, almost interior, tableaux: dazzled grass seeds, fallen tree trunks, their crevices picked out, a few champions, dancing troupes of flies. There is brilliance round the ankles of the trees and bushes. And *Aletheia* is lightly asleep, at peace, unaware of all this: she seems part of it, its breathing heart. The squirrel, on footsteps light as fog, skips from tuft to tuft, and then pauses in surprise at the man looking at her, elevates her plume-of-smoke tail, and then leaps onto a branch, with an effortlessness that suggests weightlessness, sending a tiny birch leaf spiralling down to land in *Aletheia*'s hair. You look at her bare foot poking out from beneath the blanket she had brought along. You feel for her vulnerability and attracted by the minute cluck in her throat as she swallows and sighs, and murmurs to herself, note with a pang how much fuller her full lips seems in the repose of sleep. You feel a return of desire and look across the glade to the forest and, far away, the gleam of the far fields where the blackbird sings his last songs on the great deciduous trees – the 'green senators' cradling the cool shadows of evening in their odorous shades.

How beautiful she looks. I want to say, Herr Professor, that 'Beauty is the revelation of Being', to dress up a rather simple feeling in technical, quasi-philosophical discourse that you, of all people, should see through. You cover her bare foot because you don't want the cold to wake her and The Moment – 'the resolute raptness of Da-sein' (BT 311) – to be lost; The Moment when 'the third constitutive factor of care: entangled being-together-with' (BT 301) transcends itself; the Moment when Da-sein, thrown back 'to the pure That of one's ownmost, individuated thrownness' (BT 315) achieves itself in the ecstatic unity of tem-

porality. In that bare foot – its shameless exposure a metonym for her loving, knowing, reticent, yielding presence – there is revealed the primordial totality of relevance that is a world, which lets presence speak its truth. Such beauty is being's clearest self-utterance and hence truth; a truth, however, not of what, of *quidditas*, but of this, of *haecceitas* – to borrow the distinctions so wonderfully explored by that least scholastic of the scholastics, the subject of your apprentice work, Duns Scotus.

Beauty, Herr Professor, is a *tor on Being*, is it not? And even human beauty, the beauty of the body offered in sexual delight, is an unveiling that 'sets truth itself to work' and 'opens up in its own way the Being of beings'.³⁷

You keep your counsel. So, instead of dwelling on this, and reducing your hard-won insights to *Gerede*, I shall invite you to consider the arguments you put forward in one of the most remarkable topoi of your masterwork: section 44, 'Da-sein, Disclosedness, and Truth'. Permit me, Herr Professor, to take you through your own arguments – at the risk of exposing you to the torment of one who can no longer speak hearing others speak for him, and attributing to you thoughts somewhat at an angle, I suspect, to those you struggled so hard to express. Meanwhile, *Aletheia* herself may sleep.

To begin where you begin. The traditional concept of truth, you say, has forgotten what the pre-Socratics knew (just as the metaphysician's approach to philosophy has forgotten being, focusing instead on beings). And what was it that those great beginners knew? That truth 'has a primordial connection with *being*' (BT 197). Since Plato and Aristotle, truth has been mislocated in *judgements* and *propositions* and the essence of truth has been consequently misunderstood as residing in 'agreement' – between, for example, 'knowledge and its object' or *intellectus* and *res*. The *surface* problem with this account is that it is difficult to see how there could be 'agreement' between such disparate things as 'knowledge' (a psychological entity) and 'objects' (typically thought of as material objects or states of affairs).³⁸ If one suggests that the agreement that constitutes truth is actually between two rather similar, intra-psychic, entities – the ideal content of judgement and a perception that is about the object of judgement – then another problem arises: How is it possible that there should be a relationship between an ideal being – 'the ideal content of judgement' – and a real thing objectively present – least of all a relationship of correspondence based upon similarity – and one captured in the real psychical procedure of judging? This surface problem – with which philosophers have 'not made any headway for more than two thousand years' (BT 200) –

will never be resolved, you argue, because it is symptomatic of a deeper failure: to examine the primordial phenomenon of truth, its ontological and existential meaning. The traditional concept of truth, with all its problems, is *derivative*.

So what, then, do you believe the essential nature of truth to be? You remind us what happens when we confirm the truth of a statement:

What is to be demonstrated is not an agreement of knowing with its object, still less something psychical with something physical, but neither is it an agreement between 'the contents of consciousness' among themselves ... *Confirmation means the being's showing itself in its self-sameness* ... That is possible only in that the knowing that asserts itself and is confirmed is itself a *discovering being towards* real beings in its ontological meaning. (BT 201)

In short, 'Being-true (truth) means to-be-discovering' (BT 201). The being-true of the *logos* is *aletheia*, unconcealment, discoveredness. It is this that is the primordial phenomenon of truth.

But that is not the whole story: the investigation of truth takes us deeper into the nature of the world. For

Discovering is a way of being of being-in-the-world. Taking care of things, whether in circumspection or in looking in a leisurely way, discovers innerworldly beings. The latter become what is discovered. They are 'true' in a secondary sense. Primarily 'true', that is, discovering, is Da-sein. (BT 203)

And here the pace of argument quickens, as you scent the goal towards which you have been aiming:

disclosedness is the basic character of Da-sein in accordance with which it is there. Disclosedness ... pertains equiprimordially to the world, being-in, and the self. The structure of care as *being-ahead-of-itself* – already-being-in-a-world – as being together with innerworldly beings contains the disclosedness of Da-sein. *With* and *through* it is discoveredness; thus only with the disclosedness of Da-sein is the *most primordial* phenomenon of truth attained. (BT 203)

To grasp the essence of truth, it is necessary to see that it is grounded in Da-sein – and vice versa: '*Disclosedness in general* belongs essentially to the constitution of the being of Da-sein' (BT 203). And so you

permit yourself to turn the traditional concept of truth on its head: 'the roots of the truth of statement reach back to the disclosedness of understanding' (BT 205):

The statement is not the primary 'locus' of truth, but *the other way round*, the statement as a mode of appropriation of discoveredness and as a way of being-in-the-world is based in discovering, or in the *disclosedness* of Da-sein. (BT 207–8)

Even more boldly, you assert that

The being of truth stands in a primordial connection with Da-sein. And only because Da-sein exists as constituted by disclosedness (that is by understanding) can something like being be understood, only so is an understanding of being possible at all.

A pause for a moment of delight, that the concept of truth has been restored to the deep places to which it truly belongs. And to restore the blanket over Aletheia's little foot, disclosed uncovered again, and at risk of getting cold, as she mutters a little in her sleep. Just now a bird startled us as it exploded out of the tree tops: a wood pigeon breaking out of the foliage with violent wing-claps. And another sound, louder in the quiet than it should be, disturbed us: the hop-hopping of a wren exploring the small places of the earth in the service of the small cares of its life. Beyond the edge of the forest, I can see a huge moon, risen above the green field nursing the last of the daylight, its brightness enhanced by the accelerated dusk of the between-trees. A Samuel Palmer moon. For this once it is you, the magician of Messkirch, in this enchanted forest, who are the one who is spellbound. Your irritable, moody, controlling Da-sein is at rest, at bay, at peace, your clenched soul relaxed.

But listen, you have problems, *mein Alte*, Herr Professor. In this very moment of truth, here and now, there is falsehood; in this world of disclosedness, there is the hidden, the undisclosed, the inscrutable. What is she dreaming of now, Aletheia, in the dusk? What is it that you want from her? What is it that she wants from you? Or needs from you? How will it all come out? Where will the lies, the evasions, the obliquities, the miscommunications end? Granted, these are merely onticalities; but they point to ontological problems, ones to which, if you knew where I was starting from, you would also know I was especially sensitive. I feel these problems with your notion of truth precisely because I share so many of your intuitions. Whether or not I am

a worthy critic of your masterwork, I know that to be such a critic one should at least have experienced, suffered and delighted in the intuitions that lie behind its arguments and the position those arguments gradually stretch towards. Here, then, as the moon rising over the meadow beyond the tree slims from a hot air balloon to a beach ball, are my thoughts.

Like you, I agree that the philosophical discussion of the nature of truth – particularly over the last century – has started too far down the track. Indeed, I used those very same words in an essay I wrote not so long ago. (I wrote it so recently that I am still in agreement with it!) In that essay, I argued that in recent times the philosophical discussion of the nature of truth has often been too narrowly focused on the criteria for differentiating truth from falsehood – and, in particular, true assertions (statements, sentences, propositions) from false ones. (I was particularly referring to the analytical tradition, which I still regard as my home base.) I argued that an adequate account of the nature of truth needs to describe, and account for, not only the difference between truth and falsehood but explain the fact that there is such a thing as ‘truth’ (and falsehood). ‘Truth and falsehood,’ I said:

both depend upon an act of making-explicit and any account of truth that does not include this is incomplete and consequently liable – as in the case of Tarski’s Semantic Theory of Truth – to shrink towards a truism or even a tautology. We need to expand the concept of truth conditions to encompass the conditions under which both truth and falsehood emerge as well as the conditions that distinguish truth from falsehood. Truth and falsehood share *existence conditions*: the explicitness that creates possibilities and makes the actual, the existent into truth conditions, the possibilities that are actualised. It is by transforming the existent into a realised possibility – and so distancing it from itself – that explicitness creates the conditions for the emergence of truth.³⁹

(I trust you will forgive the small vanity of self-citation. Actually, it is closer to idleness than vanity: I just couldn’t think how to rephrase what I have already expressed in the recent past.)

For you, Herr Professor, modern (or, indeed, post-Aristotelian) philosophy has focused on a derivative concept of truth: on the agreement between statement and things or the adequation of *intellectus* to *res*. Both of us accept that something has to come first before it is possible to differentiate truth from falsehood and philosophers start trying to

identify general criteria by which this might be done. For me, this primordial thing is explicitness, which is the existence condition of both truth and falsehood. For you, it is 'disclosedness in general', which 'belongs essentially to the constitution of being of Da-sein'. And, although I don't think you would approve of the way I express it, we share a conclusion that follows from this: truth and falsehood are born twins; the existence condition for there being such a thing as 'truth' is also the existence condition for there being such a thing as 'untruth'.

But this is where we part company; for you seem to sail past the problems that I see looming regarding the relativity, or subjectivity, of truth. (Not that I know how to solve them.) Connected with this is the fact that you are – or so it seems – rather indecisive on the 'equiprimordiality' of truth and falsehood. We are back with what we were disagreeing over before; namely the fact that Da-sein, as you seem to see it, is the kind of being, to whom, (as I said before) like an alumnus of my old teaching hospital St. Thomas' Hospital, you can't tell anything because this being knows it all already. So allow me, Herr Professor, while the rising full moon continues its crash diet and slims from a beach ball to a tennis ball, and the last of the birdsong fades into the same quietness and peace out of which is fashioned Aletheia's soft breathing, to address each of these points and, in the time-honoured mode of pedants, deal with them in reverse order.

Let us therefore begin, as the blackbird's song breaks up into sporadic cheeps and occasional cries of alarm, to examine what you have to say (and not say) about the 'equiprimordiality' of truth and falsehood. You see, Herr Professor, it at first looks as if Da-sein has got it made: not only has it privileged access to the truth; it also it *dwells* inescapably in the truth. Let us listen together to some of the things that you said on this matter:

only with the disclosedness of Da-sein is the *most primordial* phenomenon of truth attained. (BT 203)

the existential constitution of the there ... pertains to nothing other than the most primordial phenomenon of truth. (BT 203)

The structure of care as *being-ahead-of-itself* – already being-in-a-world – as being together with innerworldly beings contains the disclosedness of Da-sein. (BT 203)

In that Da-sein essentially *is* its disclosedness, and, as disclosed, discloses and discovers, it is essentially 'true'. Da-sein *is 'in the truth'*. (BT 203)

Lucky old Da-sein! Not only does it have privileged access to the truth (indeed dwells in it), it has a monopoly of truth, as well:

Before there was any Da-sein, there was no truth; nor will there be any after Da-sein is no more. For in such a case truth as disclosedness, discovering, and discoveredness *cannot* be. (BT 208)

And later, when you are exhorting your Da-sein readers to anticipatory resoluteness, you assert that

disclosedness [is] interpreted existentially as *primordial truth*. This is not primarily a quality of ‘judgement’ or of any particular mode of behaviour, but an essential constituent of being-in-the-world as such. (BT 273)

It all seems pretty clear, doesn’t it? Da-sein’s very fabric is truth.

However, there is the bit where you say it and the bit where you take it back – indeed, the bit where you take it back comes on the very next page:

The full existential and ontological meaning of the statement ‘Da-sein is in the truth’ also says equiprimordially that ‘Da-sein is in untruth’. (BT 204)

In case that is not clear enough, you inform your readers that ‘Da-sein is always already both in the truth and the untruth’ (BT 205), that ‘Da-sein is equiprimordially in truth and untruth’ (BT 205), ‘Disclosed in its “there”, [Da-sein] stays equiprimordially in truth and untruth’ (BT 275) and, even, that ‘being-in-untruth constitutes an essential determination of being-in-the-world’ (BT 204). And while, admittedly, this rather less euphoric account of our relationship to truth seems a somewhat more plausible story about how things are with us than the notion that we are somehow imprisoned in the truth (inasmuch as it is woven out of the existential fabric of our being and our being is woven out of the disclosedness that is the truth), it still seems that you have quite a bit of explaining to do. Such explanation as you do offer seems not entirely adequate.

‘Initially and for the most part’, you assert, ‘Da-sein is lost in its “world”’ (BT 204). It is a *thrown project* which gets absorbed in ‘public interpretedness’, so that what is discovered and disclosed is ‘disguised and closed off by idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity’. As a consequence, beings show themselves – but ‘in the mode of illusion’ (BT 204).

'Because it essentially falls prey to the world, Da-sein is in "untruth" in accordance with its constitution of being' (BT 204). The truth is disclosed by and to and within a Da-sein that is already prey to a world in which a version of the truth has been developed in idle talk, etc. 'Discoveredness is appropriated to a large extent not by one's own discovering, but by hearsay of what has been said. Absorption in what has been said belongs to the kind of being of the they' (BT 206). The world of Da-sein in its average everydayness is a world that has been processed: Da-sein does not encounter the world anew, alone or in an unmediated fashion.⁴⁰

That, then, is how Da-sein falls from its primordial state of being-in-the-truth.⁴¹ It is worth exploring what is unsatisfactory about your explanation of the origin of untruth because it connects with something that seems to me profoundly amiss with your entire system; something unresolved at the heart of your concept of Da-sein. I have touched on it more than once but I need to visit it again and again, if only because it is so difficult to dig down to the level at which it should be addressed. I have already posed the question in this rather simplistic way: when we are talking about Da-sein, are we talking about a category of being (as we are when we talk about 'Mind') or about a certain number of individuals (as we are when we talk about Martin's mind and Raymond's mind)? If we are talking about a category or type of being, then Da-sein seems to be infallible: the truth is the being-in-the-world that Da-sein discloses. Without Da-sein there is no such thing as truth and Da-sein must therefore be the sole dwelling place of truth; moreover, Da-sein is 'condemned' to be in truth because it is the revelation of truth – truth is the sole dwelling-place of Da-sein. The sum total of Da-sein and the sum total of truth are internally related: it is the sum total of (the) 'There' which seems to coincide with the sum total of being as 'the given'. If, on the other hand, we are talking about a certain (very large number) of individuals (the sum total of those human beings who have existed since humanity first appeared on the face of the earth), then Da-sein encounters a world that is the product of the cooperative effort of a collective of Da-seins. Since that world is not the internal accusative of a particular Da-sein, individual Da-seins can get things wrong and the collective – the product of the interaction of large numbers of Da-seins – can also get things wrong; it is able to live in untruth as well as in truth. Under the second interpretation, Da-seins, as individuals, are latecomers in a world that is (to use your favourite phrase) 'always already'. The apprehensions and the misapprehensions of the collective, of the boundless society of Da-seins,

evolved over a long history, provide the opacity that enables Da-sein to be in untruth as well as truth.

The reason why you shrink from the second interpretation – even though you do at times explicitly equate human being with Da-sein (e.g. BT 53: ‘Because being-in-the-world belongs essentially to Da-sein, its being towards the world is essentially taking care. Human being here equated with Da-sein’) – is the danger that you would run if you unequivocally equated your Da-seins with *individual* human beings.

I have already alluded to this: Da-seins might look rather similar to the ‘I-things encumbered with bodies’ that you rejected and, rejecting which, enabled you to bypass a very large number of problems. If Da-sein is not a category or a kind of stuff but a determinate number of individuals, existing at certain points in space and time, and living in those periods of space and over those periods of time, then all these problems return. Da-sein could be interpreted as a mere viewpoint on the world, making a particular region, picked out by the location of its body, be there, as its world. So while this interpretation would certainly enable Da-sein to exist in untruth as well as truth – because there are things that are visible, things that are known, from a particular viewpoint and others that are not, since a viewpoint is almost by definition a locus of incomplete knowledge and so capable of illusion, misunderstanding, etc. – it would also make of Da-sein an entity rather too similar to the knowing subject faced with objective presences that you have set aside: a discrete subject with its perceptions and mental acts and intentionality that you dismissed (with a certain amount of parricidal contempt) in Husserl’s phenomenology. And once Da-sein is interpreted in this way, there also lies rather too conveniently to hand a means of connecting the need to account for the pattern of truths and untruths available to a particular viewpoint with the need to confer identity (continuity and distinctiveness) on that viewpoint: it is to root the viewpoint in a body, a living body, yes, but one that can also be understood as an objective presence whose constancy and unity are inherent and independent of Da-sein.

So it is very prudent of you to be persistently ambivalent about the nature of Da-sein – as to whether it should be seen as discrete, countable, denumerable individuals or as an ontological category; as a number of beings or a type of being. But once this ambivalence has been noticed, it is hard not to be aware of it all the time, for it to nag and nag, and for the suspicion to grow slowly that your entire ontology – which seems to identify the nature of being with what being is when it is present to Da-sein – offers not solutions, only re-descriptions.

This becomes especially evident when you address the age-old problem of the relativity, or otherwise, of truth. It is one in which I have a particularly keen interest, because it is an unsolved difficulty in my own notion of explicitness as the basis for both truth and falsehood. I hope you will therefore forgive a brief digression.⁴²

For me, *making explicit* is the fundamental characteristic of human consciousness – indeed, of human being. The world we encounter is one that we make explicit: at the lowest level in sensation and perception; at a higher level in ordinary discourse; and at a higher level still in meta-linguistic discourse about discourse. (If I were a Hegelian, I would postulate a highest level of all in which Being becomes Knowledge – the site of this final transformation being my own philosophical thought.) In sensation, (material) being becomes inchoate presence, which is more fully developed in perception; perception itself becomes the basis of truth and falsehood through language. Language makes *how things are experienced* into assertions *that* these things are thus (and not otherwise).

The problem of this way of seeing things is that it leaves unresolved, indeed unspecified, what it is that is made explicit: whether there is a pre-existing X (for example, ‘matter’) that is transformed into *That* X, in which case explicitness is a kind of literal transcription or iteration of pre-human, pre-conscious being; or whether explicitness *transforms* what is there as it makes it *what is there from the viewpoint of a particular (embodied) consciousness*. The former account confines explicitness to truth – that which is made explicit is that which exists prior to explicitness: nothing has been changed or distorted. Like your ontology, Herr Professor, it seems to offer no explanation of falsehood. The latter account threatens to open the way to a kind of relativity which would bring in its train two further problems. Either there would be an anarchic mêlée of worlds of things-made-explicit (sustained by something like an indefinite number of monads) that had no contact with each other; or there would be a commitment, on the part of each explicitness, to a singular world that was its own internal accusative. That which is made explicit would become the sum total of what it is that the explicit-making consciousness has to suffer, take account of, live under, live out or live by. In either case, there would be no outside-of-explicitness and explicitness would be imprisoned in the truth.

Your ontology labours under the same problem, but you are – dare I say it? – less honest about it. This is what you said:

In accordance with the essential kind of being appropriate to Da-sein, all truth is relative to the being of Da-sein. Is this relativity tantamount to

saying that all truth is 'subjective'? If one interprets 'subjective' to mean 'left to the arbitrariness of the subject', then certainly not. For in accordance with its very meaning, discovering exempts statements from the province of 'subjective' arbitrariness and brings discovering Da-sein before beings themselves. And only *because* 'truth', as discovering, *is a kind of being of Da-sein*, can it be removed from the arbitrariness of Da-sein. The 'universal validity' of truth, too, is rooted solely in the fact that Da-sein can discover and free beings in themselves. (BT 208–9)

A word of explanation is in order here. A couple of pages earlier in *Being and Time*, you contrasted your own account of truth with the traditional conception of truth as the agreement between statements on the one hand and the states of affairs they describe on the other. This notion of truth, you argued, and as I have already reported, was derivative: 'the roots of the truth of statements reach back to the disclosedness of understanding' (BT 205). What statements do is to 'preserve discoveredness' in what is expressed. 'What is expressed becomes ... an inner-worldly thing at hand that can be taken up and spoken about further' (BT 205–6). It is this, I think, that 'exempts statements from the province of subjective arbitrariness': they are discoverednesses made visible, stabilised and given status as inner-worldly beings in their own right; in short, in statements, discoveredness is made objective, a thing at hand. It is as if 'There' is deposited in discourse and so becomes open to development and an accumulated heap of thus deposited 'theres' creates the opacity that makes ignorance possible. To quote again this key passage:

Discoveredness is appropriated to a large extent not by one's own discovering, but by hearsay of what has been said. Absorption in what has been said belongs to the kind of being of the they. (BT 206)

Da-sein does not, therefore, confront the world either as a category or as an isolated, ahistorical, asocial individual stretch of sentience. The problem of the relativity of truth to individuals (individual Da-seins) recedes even if that of relativity to Da-sein as a whole does not (so that our vulnerability and collective ignorance and partial knowledge is unexplained). Or does it? If being-in-the-world is inseparable from Da-sein, is it not the case that the world of an individual Da-sein is the world *it* lights up – the 'there' it posits – and the 'there' is

resorbed back into Da-sein. The world is the lit world and the world from which the world worlds is the lit world. This is the world worlding itself. It is as if this moonlit scene that encloses us were made of moonlight and we for whom this scene is set out were also ourselves moonlight. And worse: it is as if the scene were different for each of us and yet the scene were none the less of a coherent, common world: all the theres cooperating in the production of a single there through a nexus of statements that makes the there the internal accusative of average everydayness, the there of 'they'.

To say, in this cooling moonlit night, that this does not stack up, Herr Professor, would be the understatement of the (last) century. And, as I speak, I see how so many things do not add up and how only by gliding over numerous uncertainties and ambiguities could you have kept the sense of explanation going. You cannot deal with the issue of relativity without losing Da-sein's ability to be in untruth as well as in truth; nor can you cope with the fact that truth is local, incomplete and progressively uncovered by individuals and by the collective effort of humanity; and you cannot deal with untruth without Da-sein's breaking up into atomic individuals whose worlds would be as difficult to weld together into 'the world' as were the worlds of Husserl's transcendental consciousnesses. And, noticing this, I can't help also noticing, that while Da-sein lets there be a 'there', a 'world' of 'being-in-the-world', the world itself worlds: the world is worlding. Here in the moonlight, so much is dissolving, Herr Professor. It is time, I think, that we turned our attention to Aletheia.

Verklärte Nacht

Supposing that truth is a woman – what then?
Nietzsche⁴³

How beautiful she looks, as she lies there, asleep in the moonlight, oblivious of all the *Sorge* that is to come, breathing so softly that you have to hold your hand in front of her mouth to be sure she is alive. Her face above the blanket so vulnerable in the moonlight, open like a daytime flower and yet closed like a flower at evening, repose making her full mouth yet more full: 'mysterious your mouth's red stillness'. I quote from one of your most visited poets – Georg Trakl, that tragic genius who, faced in the field hospital where he worked as an orderly with so many desparately wounded men after the Battle of Grodek, killed himself at the age of 27.

The blanket. Was that not brave to bring it along to your walk? Such a bold gesture for a young pupil to make to her famous teacher, the magician at the height of his powers? 'Aware of his allure to both male and female students and of his power over their minds, Heidegger purposely kept his distance, intensifying the mystique, the awe, the reverence.'⁴⁴ This was a time, Aletheia later wrote, when your name travelled across Germany 'like the rumor of a secret king'.⁴⁵ Again and again, she took risks. And it was always she, and not you, secret king, who took the risks. The blanket was a risk – she did not know how you would respond; who knows, you might see her as cheap, as ready-to-hand; but it was also thoughtful, like the picnic basket full of things she had learned (by who knows what route, what *Rede*) that you liked. She looked after you: a proper little housewife.

No phrase could be more ill-judged, for this tall, sad-looking, elegant young woman, this passionate student of philosophy, of your thoughts, of the world, this vulnerable girl who looked to you as a *thought-father*, and who none the less taught you 'how to love ardently and not to feel it a sin'.⁴⁶ You promised 'to love her for ever, to help and guide her'. In return, this fatherless young student told you about herself: about the terrors of her girlhood and early childhood. About her father, who died of syphilis when she was seven, at the same time as she was bereaved of her beloved grandfather. How she was neglected by her mother who was often away taking 'cures', and who remarried when Aletheia was thirteen. And how Aletheia was then passed over in preference to her loathed step-sisters. Little wonder, then, that she subordinated her life to yours in those early passionate years of your relationship.

And as for you, Herr Professor, 35 years old, married and the father of two sons, carving the granite of your masterwork, morose, irritable, prone to depressions, you needed her. You needed this woman – with whom you shared your thoughts and ambitions and your love of music and literature and poetry – in order 'to breathe fully and deeply, to enjoy being alive'; or, as you put it rather clumsily in one of your letters, to have her as 'a simulating force' in your life. Your relationship with Aletheia was 'to shatter for many years the established order of your existence', although it was always on your terms: you summoned her, specifying the place and time, down to the nearest minute, of the assignation, and she came; you talked and she listened, submissive and silent. 'Not so much a teaching as an intangling', as Milton said of the teaching of Christ.⁴⁷

Far, then, from 'a proper little housewife'. No, that was Elfride – your beloved, feared Elfride, '*Der alte Stum, die alte Muh!*' – who attended to

your every need and, as a supreme act of self-sacrifice, had had built for you a wooden hut deep in the Black Forest, where you could think undisturbed by the cares and interruptions of family life. Elfride, whom Aletheia never sought to displace, of whom she spoke always with respect (and of whom she rarely spoke, out of deeper respect). Elfride, an ideal wife and virulent anti-Semite, who used the Jewess Aletheia in the end to help her beloved Martin wriggle off the many hooks she had, through her wicked views, helped to hang him on.

But all that tonight, in 1925, lies in the unimaginable future: your international fame; your rise to power, the Rector and the Führer, the Rector as Führer; your vile treatment of Husserl (to whom you had dedicated your masterwork 'in admiration and friendship'); persecution of Jewish colleagues; your absence from Husserl's funeral; the trimming and the silence; the revelations about the extermination camps; your de-Nazification; your lying and manipulation; and yet more silence – your terrible refusal to condemn clearly and unequivocally what had been perhaps the greatest abomination in the history of Da-sein. On this moonlit night, next to this sleeping woman, it all lies in the distant, unimaginable future.

She sleeps because she is tired. She sleeps because she is at peace. She sleeps because she fears to wake, to wake out of those supreme moments of *Mitda-sein*, of care as entangled-being-with, to lose that place where she could believe that she is loved by you, her idol, and so is permitted to love herself, so unloved in her childhood, and to sleep the sleep of the justified.

Lovemaking, delight without shame. She had taught you that physical tenderness was possible, that out of it may come an intimate understanding. She took the risks and now she is at peace, and so are you. Truth as disclosure, as uncoveredness, disclosedness, unclothedness. The strange scents of another unclothed and close up, no longer closed up. To enter another, to abandon oneself, willing *falling prey*, thrownness, entanglement, fascination: to fall outwards and inwards at the same time, to slip between her cries and her engulfing softness, to sheathe your fearful delight in hers, self to self, to enter her inwardness and reach back into your own. To discover that to desire is to know what one truly is, to find truth in the supreme self-remembrance of the sexual climax.

What is this self that each reaches out for? 'The existential question of the Who of Da-sein':

Da-sein is a being which I myself am, its being is in each case mine. (BT 108)

This world is always already from the outset my own. (BT 111)

Do we therefore reach into each other to escape this solitude, this *ipse solus* that is our permanent condition? Not so:

A mere subject without a world 'is' not initially and also never given. (BT 109)

The world of Da-sein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *being-with* others. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is *Mitda-sein*. (BT 112)

This I-here does not mean an eminent point of an I-thing, but as being-in is to be understood in terms of the over there of the world at hand where Da-sein dwells in *taking care*. (BT 112)

And so 'I' dissolves into the world? As each reaches for the other, nothing clutches at nothing?

If Da-sein is always only its self in *existing*, the constancy of the self, as well as its possible 'inconstancy' requires an existential-ontological kind of questioning ...

But if the self is conceived 'only' as a way of being of this being, then that seems tantamount to volatilizing the true 'core' of Da-sein. But such fears are nourished by the incorrect preconception that the being in question really has, after all, the kind of being of something objectively present, even if one avoids attributing to it the massive element of a corporeal thing. However, the '*substance*' of human being is not ... the synthesis of body and soul, but *existence*. (BT 110)

Each Da-sein is only in so far as it exists, is thrown into its being-in-the-world, in the average everydayness of being-there, in its engagement with projects. 'It is existentially that which it is *not yet* in its potentiality of being' (BT 136):

Da-sein is a being which is concerned in its being about that being. The 'is concerned about ...' has become clearer in the constitution of being of understanding as self-projective being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-being. (BT 179)

This 'ownmost potentiality-for-being' is not fore-prescribed. And so we always, frustratingly, elude ourselves, notwithstanding that 'This

structure of being of the essential “being-concerned about” we formulate as the *being-ahead-of-itself* of Da-sein’ (BT 179). If we are ahead of ourself, we are also behind ourself; at any rate, we are not able (to borrow M. Sartre’s phrase) to ‘coincide’ with ourself. There is, therefore, no essential self for us to discover. The truth of uncoveredness is only a relative truth: the clearing in the forest, between the thickets, has its own darkness.

In sexual delight, we pass from darkness through darkness to another kind of darkness. And yet nothing is hidden: how complex the vagina, with its out-turned lips, its secret inner places that are outer to her as well as to him. Only when it, she, is entered does this inwardness have shape, does it exist: it exists to become you-shaped, as you feel yourself become me-shaped.

‘The world of Da-sein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *being-with* others. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is *Mitda-sein*’ (BT 112). Unconcealment is more complex than mere revelation of what is, or always was, already there. Is the entry into the secret places of the other, therefore, only a journey along a *Holzweg*, a woodland path that comes to a halt in tangled undergrowth, in ‘entangled being-with’ that is inauthentic being-there?

In this dappled moonlight we can see the truth about truth and falsehood: if there were no opacity, if there were nothing hidden, there would be nothing to see, nothing to be revealed, no revelation.

She wakes, startled, puzzled, anxious. Dazzled by the moon on her moonlit face. Where am I? Who am I? And then she smiles. I am with you. I am your lover. I am *here*. Da-sein discovers itself as Fort-sein. ‘To let it presence in its truth.’ ‘Moon’, she murmurs in the twilight of her consciousness, ‘Moon’. Language is the dwelling place of being; we are the shepherds of being. ‘Look at the moon.’ How beautiful the moon. How beautiful he makes this moonlit place. How beautiful she looks. ‘*Verklärte nacht*’, she says, coming closer to you, for warmth, for togetherness. At such a moment, the self ceases to be a kind of emptiness flavoured to capture the taste and destiny of this body, an ontic hollowness. There is a fullness: a oneness. All is one. Disclosure of the world; self-disclosure; presence of the other are all one.

‘I am humbled by not knowing what it is like to be you, Aletheia; by an uncertainty that reaches deeper than the official uncertainties of my profession; beyond “our knowledge of other minds” to what it is like to be you in pain, or hungry or beautiful or weighed down with those breasts. To be that beautiful creature that is you and enclosing me in the smile of your body.’

[The] kind of being of the existence of the others encountered within the surrounding world is distinct from handiness and objective presence. (BT 111)

But

The world of Da-sein is a *with-world*. Being-in is *being-with* others. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is *Mitda-sein*. (BT 112)

Here is a mystery, Aletheia: there is nothing in material objects that seems to account for their disclosure. There is nothing in the interaction between objects that explains how one is disclosed, or present, to another. He understood this, your Herr Professor, and saw (this is his fundamental insight) that it was therefore mistaken to begin with objective presences. In our search for being, we must begin with that being that has an understanding of being, with Da-sein: that being whose being is an issue for itself – so that there are things ‘there’ that are an issue for it. And here is another mystery (as he once again pulls the blanket down to cover your darling foot): how it is that the tuned, worlded and enworlding living body is still able to have properties, presences and preoccupations of its own; that it is not merely a transparent faculty of disclosure or revelation but asserts its own presence in pleasure, in appetite, in warmth and cold; or in the pains, nausea and seizures in which it asserts its presence as alien. He has taught, or tried to persuade, both of us that that mystery is the wrong one. That we should not begin from there: from I-things encumbered with bodies encountering objective presences.

And yet, and yet ... For there are *bodies* ... In our *Mitda-sein*, in the entangled being-with that is constitutive of care, we touch each other. Warm hand touches warm hand, warm body lies next to warm body, limbs become entangled with limbs and being presences itself in truth. The caress, where Aletheia uncovers and is uncovered, where discoveredness discovers discoveredness. (Let us never forget the warmth as well as the words that passed between us over those years ...)

But it is time now to go home, Aletheia. Gather up the things – the blanket, the picnic basket, the little book of poetry he asked you to bring, your essay, every sentence of which was written in awareness of his judgement, which he did not, after all, find time to read. It is time to comb your hair, check your clothes for stains of the forest, of love-making, and all of this while he watches you impatiently, a professor kept waiting by his pupil, a magician whose reputation is at risk, thinking of the story he will tell Elfride.

Soon there will be the long parting, the estrangement, the different towns, the coming of the Führer and the Professor's brief and disastrous self-apotheosis as academic Führer, as philosopher-king, his woeful indifference to the horrors visited on your race, the rifle butt in the child's face ...

What can one say, Herr Professor? Only that you were as evil as the century whose greatest philosopher you were. Or, if that is excessive (as I think it probably is), that you were averagely evil when one might have expected more of you, philosophers reputedly being exceptionally wise as well as exceptionally clever?

Better, perhaps, to say nothing. Judge not. Instead wind back the clock for a moment. Again you are asleep, cradled in your own arms and he is watching tenderly:

Lay your sleeping head, my love,
Human on my faithless arm ...

At peace, as a slight breeze silks the softness of the leaves. The silence commends the organ roar of fact to pause, to listen into glades of quiet for the *pianissimo* notes: the seedlings of Perhaps, paraesthesiae of possibility. You hear things in this place, at this Moment of 'the resolute raptness of Da-sein', as one sitting quietly in an empty church overhears the ordinary sounds of the day, cherished from a place that is distant from them: the crows building in the trees, the traffic of the streets, the children's cries in the playground. And the trees themselves, broadcasting in the stillness they brush, Rilke's 'endless message arising out of silence', refuting what another poet said so beautifully of the tree at his window:

Not all your light tongues talking aloud
Could be profound

All things – the voice of 'average everydayness' – becoming their antipodes, and seeming suddenly beautiful and sad, as if you were listening to them from outside of your life and thinking to yourself: these are the sounds that filled our hours when we were alive.

As once more, against your better judgement, you draw the blanket more closely around her, you are aware in her dear, earnest, loving face of a tenderness that might lie beyond or beneath the *logomachy* that fills your days, the poisonous ache of ambition, the desire for conquest that occupies your clenched waking hours, the war of all things with

all things that Heracleitus rejoiced in and which was shouted out in the blood and mud and howling misery of the Great War that so humiliated your country, so far fallen from greatness, 'too late for the Gods and too early for Being'.

There are different sorts of greatness, that you, when, later you were a fallen hero, recognised. There is a special unshouted greatness in this limitless evening that caresses little things: hopes the size of nests, worlds scoped by candlelight, the toy behind the chair, laughter in the cot, the hand laid gently on the shoulder, frail words and the gleam of glances in the gloom. And in the unwall'd outside, in the hills beyond this glade, and these woods, the treble of a knock-kneed lamb disclosing the vastness of a valley between the hills, articulating the space between the mountains and the stars, between the stars and yet more stars.

Time to go home, now Aletheia ...

As if this Moment were not home and all else a foreign land!

We are homeless: too late for the Gods and too early for being. And, meanwhile, the Philosopher, who would lead being out of unconcealment, but who at this moment is in the grip of average everydayness, is breaking into a trot because he is late back from the assignation and there is awaiting him his Nemesis: Elfride, with her questions, her suspicions, her knowledge and her judgement.

Concerning time

We have got a little ahead of ourselves. Perhaps one should expect this of a being such as Da-sein that is, by its very constitution, 'ahead-of-itself'. However, there are specific ahead(s)-of-ourselves that are remedial rather than constitutive. I am thinking, for example, about the references I made to the Moment. And we have accepted without further analysis your concern with time, understood in the 'vulgar' sense, 'innerworldly time', 'the within-timeness of things' – gathered up in the gaze of awaiting Elfride, to whom it is fatally easy for your shallow interlocutor, Herr Professor, to attribute folded arms and compressed lips. At the very least, the notion of 'awaiting' (the characteristic of 'the inauthentic future') needs to be clarified.

To have said little or nothing so far about time, Herr Professor, is no small omission considering that Time shares joint top billing with Being in the title of your masterpiece and not by accident, either. So the moment has come to repair this omission, especially as it helps me to get a hold on what is amiss with your entire system of thought. For

the present, you are busy hurrying back to Elfride, with your prepared stories, so I shall excuse your absence, noting only that you believe that we must approach time through *care* – which is constitutive of Da-sein.

‘Da-sein is a being which is concerned in its being about that being’: it is *essentially* care. Care is ‘the existential meaning of Da-sein’ (BT 37). ‘Because being-in-the-world belongs essentially to Da-sein, its being towards the world is essentially taking care’ (BT 53). What is care? It is ‘self-projective being towards its ownmost potentiality-for-being’ (BT 179). Care is ‘being-ahead-of-oneself-already-being-in (a world) as being-together-with (innerworldly beings encountered)’ (BT 292). For all its bewildering density, Herr Professor, this last definition seems to me to be most useful, for it shows at a glance how care encompasses all three aspects of time: the future (being-ahead-of-oneself), the present (being-together-with innerworldly beings) and the past (already-being-in-the-world). Indeed, care lies at the heart of temporality and temporality is the essence of Da-sein and its world.

The account of care shows how the three aspects of time – past, present and future, which are separated in the ‘vulgar’ understanding – are a unity: ‘The unity of the horizontal schemata of the future, having-been, and the present is grounded in the ecstatic unity of temporality’ (BT 334). ‘Ecstatic’ as you use it here is not as exciting as it sounds; you mean it in a technical sense and, as such, it refers as much to the mode of being of Da-sein in its post-tryst *tristesse* as to its mode of being at the height of the raptness and raptures of its entangled being-with. It is meant to capture Da-sein’s essential condition of *being outside-of-itself*. This being-outside-of-itself constitutes the unity of temporality with respect to which separated future, past and present are derivative. The future ‘does not mean a now that is *not yet* become “actual” and that sometime *will be* for the first time, but the coming in which Da-sein comes toward itself in its ownmost-potentiality-of-being’ (BT 299). The past is the having-been of Da-sein, which is expressed in its facticity, its already being in a world. And the present is making entities present, allowing things to present themselves to us, to unconceal themselves. On the basis of this ‘horizontal constitution of the ecstatic unity of temporality, something like a disclosed world belongs to the being that is always its There’ (BT 334). ‘The world is neither objectively present nor at hand, but temporalizes itself in temporality. It “is” “there” together with the outside-itself of ecstasies. If no Da-sein exists, no world is “there” either’ (BT 334). Finally, you note that

The relations of significance that determine the structure of the world are thus not a network of forms that is imposed upon some

material by a worldless subject. Rather, factual Da-sein, ecstatically understanding itself and its world in the unity of the There comes back from these horizons to the beings encountered in them. Coming back to these beings understandingly is the existential meaning of letting them be encountered in making them present; for this reason they are called innerworldly. (BT 334–5)

‘Temporality’ also ‘reveals itself as the meaning of authentic care’ (BT 300). Authentic care is a special form of care (as we shall discuss later), in which being-ahead-of-itself is oriented towards the death after which there is no ‘ahead-of-itself’ and Da-sein achieves a kind of totality in its no longer being. ‘Futurally coming back to itself, resoluteness brings itself to the situation in making it present’ (BT 300). ‘Authentically futural, Da-sein is authentically *having-been*’ (BT 300). But having-been in turn arises only from the future – but ‘only *as present*’ (BT 300). This present that ‘is held in authentic temporality’ (BT 311) you call ‘the Moment’ – ‘the resolute raptness of Da-sein’ (BT 310). Whether there were such Moments with Aletheia, as I rather kitschly-coyly suggested just before, or only (lower case) moments, I do not know.

For you, time is not first a feature of the physical universe which is then – mysteriously, inexplicably – captured by Da-sein for its world as a result of the Da-sein’s experiencing the physical universe. On the contrary, time is rooted in temporalisation of Da-sein: that ‘being that, in its being is concerned *about* that being itself’ (BT 373). *Care* is the being of Da-sein; as such, Da-sein is *being-ahead-of-itself*; or, more precisely, ‘being-ahead-of-itself-already-being-in’. In care, future, past and present are one: ‘the unified phenomenon of the future that makes present in the process of having been’ (BT 300). It is this that is *temporality*. ‘Temporality temporalizes itself as a future that makes present, in the process of having-been’ (BT 321).

So, according to you Herr Professor, Da-sein’s temporality is primordial time while both ‘objective time’ (of things in the world) and subjective time-consciousness (and the sense of time as a succession of ‘nows’) are derivative, belonging to the vulgar notion of time. These are bold claims and they seem to illustrate again your wish to undermine the scientific world picture; or to subordinate the truths of science to the existential truths of your analytic of Da-sein. I want to take issue with these claims. But before I do I ought, in fairness, to place your arguments for the derivative nature of objective time in the best possible light.

You move from the Da-sein that temporalises towards ‘the taking care of time that we know as astronomical and calendrical *time-*

reckoning' (BT 378) via the notion of 'datability', which you arrive at as follows. Taking care 'always temporalizes itself in a unity with awaiting and retaining, even if these are modified into a forgetting that does not await' (BT 374). Awaiting and retaining connect terms such as 'on that former occasion', 'then', and 'now' with terms such as 'earlier', 'later on' and 'today'. This 'seemingly self-evidential relational structure of the "now", "on that former occasion", and "then"' is what you call '*datability*' (BT 374). It seems as if, by this means, you are able to connect McTaggart's 'A' series of 'past, present and future' with his 'B' series of 'earlier than' and 'later than'. This in itself is profoundly dodgy, Herr Professor, and there are excellent proofs of the impossibility of this.⁴⁸ But I am less concerned with the questionability of this move than with your sliding from '*datability*', which is still rooted in Da-sein – indeed, it is 'the *reflex* of the *ecstatic* constitution of temporality' (BT 375) – and which is still fairly homely, even deictic, to 'the taking care of time that we know as astronomical and calendrical *time-reckoning*' (BT 378). The steps by which you do this are not entirely clear, but there seem to be two stages of the journey from '*datability*' to the time frame of physics.

The first stage is the transition to public time. This is relatively easy:

Since Da-sein essentially exists entangled as thrown, it interprets its time heedfully by way of a reckoning with time. *In this reckoning*, the 'real' *making public* of time temporalizes itself so that we must say that *the thrownness of Da-sein is the reason why 'there is' public time*. (BT 378)

Public time is '*the time "in which" innerworldly things at hand and objectively present are encountered*'. (BT 378). If we accept that Da-sein in its average everydayness is a 'they-self', we may let this go 'on the nod'. If, on the other hand, we remember Professor Husserl's problems and remain concerned about the origin of intersubjective reality (if we assume a multiplicity of Da-seins, i.e. of something like subjects), and even more the transition from subjective experience to objective knowledge, then we cannot let it pass in this way. Let it, however, pass and let us move on to the second stage of the journey from Da-sein's temporality to the 'objective time of physics' and consider how this public time connects with '*astronomical and calendrical time-reckoning*'.

This, too, is possible, you say, because of the being of Da-sein as care, which exists entangled as thrown. Thrown being '*reckons with and on whatever is in eminent relevance for the sake of potentiality-of-*

being' (BT 379). And this leads, Herr Professor, to an unexpectedly homely argument about the conditions under which Da-sein can care for itself:

Everyday, *circumspect* being-in-the-world needs *the possibility-of-sight*, that is, brightness if it is to take care of things at hand within what is objectively present. (BT 379)

Day, with its brightness, gives this possibility of sight and night takes it away. If you can't see what you are doing, you can't do it. Da-sein is thereby linked, through its projects, with the alternation of day and night and hence inserted into astronomical and calendrical time, out of which are ultimately derived all sorts of instruments – clocks – for reckoning with time. But time still remains rooted in Da-sein: 'The sun dates the time interpreted in taking care' (BT 379); '*datability* is grounded in the ecstatic constitution of temporality' (BT 387); 'Temporality is the reason for the clock' (BT 380); time reckoning 'has its existential and ontological necessity in the fundamental constitution of Da-sein as care' (BT 378).

Thus do you satisfy yourself that the datability, spannedness, publicness and worldliness of time are rooted in Da-sein as care. Time as 'a succession of nows' and 'the continuity of something present' and as 'infinite' are derivative modes and the belief that they, instead of Da-sein's temporality, are primordial belongs to the vulgar notion of time. (A vulgarity you see as reaching its final expression in Hegel's interpretation of the relation between time and spirit: thus do you, to some the greatest philosopher and to others the greatest philosophical charlatan of the twentieth century, see off the to some the greatest philosopher and to others the greatest philosophical charlatan of the nineteenth!) But there are problems, big, big problems, with this scheme that wraps up time within Da-sein by rooting time in the temporality which makes the 'factically thrown existence' of Dasein 'primordially possible' (BT 396).

For a start, as you yourself point out, Da-sein has to take account of the coming and going of the sun in its circumspect being-in-the-world, because it needs, as you say, *possibility of sight*. Is the sun, its light and the fluctuations of its beneficence, not an example of an objective presence? Does it not follow, therefore, that this first step, from temporality to measured time, seems to lift time outside of the reach of Da-sein? Does it not then become something that Da-sein seems to be at the mercy of? Da-sein can pursue its projects, or pursue itself through

(external) projects, only courtesy of this particular set of conditions – the presence of daylight. The necessity for Da-sein to be daylit in order to fulfil its projects is, surely, a mighty exemplar of the physical conditions which determine, condition, permit or obstruct the completion of projects as well as determining some of the projects that *need* to be completed. ‘No projects addressed to the physical world without care’, we might say; but we could equally well say: ‘There is no expression of this care that is not conditioned through and through by the physical conditions – the objective presences – that constitute the beings in the world in which Da-sein has its being.’

Second, if temporality is inseparable from care, that is to say from Da-sein, and if temporality is primordial time, then all time is embedded in, rooted in, inextricably linked with, Da-sein and its care. But the sun, and indeed the rest of the universe, has antedated the emergence of life, and in particular human life, on planet earth. (And this cannot be reduced to a fact that belongs to a derivative realm of objective presences.) There must be a sense, therefore, in which astronomical time antedates Da-sein. From this it follows that the time of ‘objective presences’ must be independent of the temporality which Da-sein alone can bring into the order of things. Describing such a view as ‘vulgar’ is not a compelling argument against it. While *time measurement* may be ‘grounded in the *temporality* of Da-sein and [be] a quite definite temporalizing of that temporality’ (BT 381), the time that is measured is arguably independent of Da-sein. If, however, the time of physics antedates the temporality of Da-sein, it is difficult to see how the latter can be validly characterised as ‘primordial’, with the implication that physical time is merely derivative.

I would argue that, while the divisions of time – seconds, minutes, even days – are clearly internal to Da-sein (at any rate, in so far as they are elements of a notational system that is evidently human in origin), time itself is not. The universe evolves over time independently of the temporalisations of Da-sein. Furthermore, even those divisions depend upon something that lies outside of Da-sein, as you inadvertently betray, Herr Professor. You point out that time measurement needs a clock to measure time. And for you, the first clock is the naturally occurring one of the movement of the earth round the sun:

This means that with the temporality of Da-sein as thrown, delivered over to the world, and giving itself time, something like a ‘clock’ is also discovered, that is, a handy thing that has become accessible in its regular recurrence in a making present that awaits ... (BT 380)

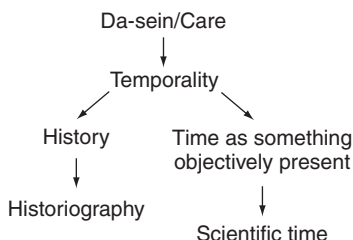
The key (and betraying) word here is 'regular'. In order that things that occur in time can be *timed*, certain types of events need to show a fixed periodicity: these are clocks. In other words, the emergence of timing from Da-sein's temporality requires events that are objectively regular in their recurrence, that is to say, they have an objective temporal regularity! Need I say more?

Well, I do say more; for I do not think I have been entirely fair. I have exposed the problems in your thought but not the problems in the place from which my questioning arises. Even so, you must agree that we have a problem here, *which recurs every time (that word again!)* we consider the respective priority of the world of 'objective presences' – the world most elaborately and consummately disclosed in and to scientific enquiry – and the world of the ready-to-hand, of being-in-the-world disclosed to Da-sein in its average everydayness. The notion of objective time, of the within-timeness of physical events (such as the coming and going of sunlight), of time based upon location and motion, is, you believe, a 'vulgar concept' – or at least a derivative one – which overlooks primordial time grounded in Da-sein as care, in temporality, which is 'the primordial structure of the totality of being of Da-sein' (BT 397), that which 'constitutes the disclosedness of the There' (BT 333). Presumably you would wish us to conclude from this that without Da-sein, without the 'ahead-of-oneself-already-in (the-world) as being-together-with (innerworldly beings encountered)' (BT 180), there would be no time.

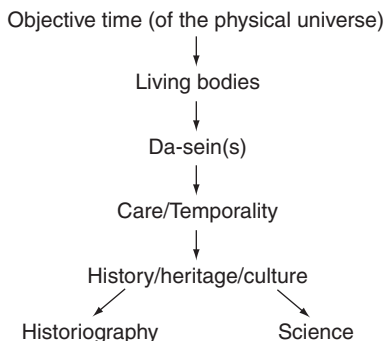
It is possible that for you there would be no beings, either. For it is arguable that time is not only the basis of Da-sein's being and Da-sein's understanding of being, but perhaps of the emergence of (distinct) beings out of (the mass of) Being. This interpretation would certainly gain a lot of credence from a study of the first few pages of *Being and Time* where you seem to argue that the very emergence of beings out of being is Da-sein-dependent: that is why the question of being can be conflated with that of the meaning of being. It is a plausible interpretation of your views, Herr Professor, that suggests that Da-sein is not only that which makes possible an *understanding* of beings in general – no great surprise as it is that in virtue of which there is an understanding of being, though we shall come back to this – but beings *tout court*. As one of your commentators has summarised your view: 'Time makes it possible to grasp beings in terms of their Being. Time is the origin of the ontological difference between beings and Being – a distinction so crucial to us that, as Heidegger now says, "existence means, as it were, 'to be in performance of this distinction'".'⁴⁹ This raises the whole question of whether there can

be beings (as opposed to Being) independent of Da-sein. Much, therefore, follows from your belief that primordial time is the temporality that is the essence of care.

This radical consequence should prompt this reflection, Herr Professor: that, if Da-sein for you means 'human beings' (plausible interpretation), Da-sein must depend for its being able to care upon its being located in a (living) body and this body must come into being in something like the objective time of the calendar, history, science. This is how you see things:

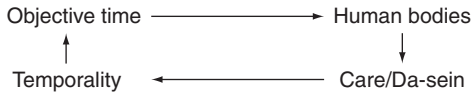


But it is possible to see things somewhat the other way round:



In accordance with this latter way of seeing things, the objective time into which human bodies emerge is the necessary condition, the primordial basis, the condition of possibility or whatever, for the emergence of Da-sein and its present reaching into futurity on the basis of a past it has experienced. In other words, the ecstatic unity of past, present and future in temporality depends upon the objective time of physics.

I am not too sure what my own view on this matter is. I seem to be caught up in an endless carousel or an Escher staircase in which everything seems to be the condition of emergence of everything else:



If we accept that time is neither objective nor subjective but that it is rooted in the taking care that is Da-sein, are we not then prevented from asserting that there are things that *precede* Da-sein and things that *succeed* Da-sein and that Da-sein is inserted into the series? Are we not denied an understanding of our human bodies and their lives which must enter the physical world at a certain point in its history?

At any rate, once you see Da-sein as a collection of individuals rather than as a free-floating category – that ambiguity again! it touches on everything – Da-sein comes down to earth (via the body which it must have in order to locate and individuate it and its needs or ‘issues’) with a bump. And it *needs* to come down to earth because (and one cannot say this too often) without a (needing) body, Da-sein would have nothing to care for; there would be no issues for it to worry itself over; and the ready-to-hand would be neither ready nor handy. Without a body and its needs, it is difficult to see how matter could ‘matter’; more precisely, how there could be differentiated mattering, so that one entity mattered more than, or in a different way from, another. For example, that entangled-being-with Aletheia that got you into so much trouble. It is not for nothing that our bodies cast shadows. And not simply to help us tell the time on the single-handed peasant’s clock, either!

You will recognise in this last a reference to your reflection on the rather beautiful fact that the shadows cast by bodies may be used to mark time, liberating Da-sein from having to read off time from the sky. You speak about ‘the ancient “peasant’s clock”’:

In the shadow that constantly accompanies everyone, we encounter the sun with respect to its changing presence at different places. The various lengths of the shadow during the day can be paced off ‘at any time’ ... Thus, for example, when one takes care of making an appointment, one designates the time publicly by saying: ‘When the

shadow is of so many feet long, we will meet each other there' ...
 Da-sein does not even need to wear this clock, it is it in a way itself.
 (BT 382)

Or designated privately, when you and Aletheia arranged a tryst: the public shadow marks the moment when to meet to exchange and explore private shadows – of the mind and the body. And her little foot could measure the time. The time that (to use the vulgar parlance) 'passed away'.

Was there a Moment between you which temporalised itself 'fateful as a whole, stretching along in the sense of the authentic, historical *constancy* of the self' (BT 377)? Or does such authenticity belong to a time that is even more private than the time of the deeply private entangled-being-with of your love for each other? Or was it the case that the observation that Da-sein, existing 'factically in the mode of *being-with* the others', always 'keeps itself in a public, average intelligibility' (BT 377)? How shall we know?

There is much more to be said on Da-sein and bodies and what it is that Da-sein actually cares about, and we shall return to this theme yet again in due course. But – now you have returned from your difficult encounter with Elfride, and the understanding of being that you and she will have distilled from your *Mitda-sein* – there is something else that I want to discuss with you: that of 'authentic being-toward-death'. It has come out of my gossipy interest in your love for Aletheia. But for this part of our conversation we need another change of location.

Darkness in Todtnauberg

Well, *mein Alte*, my Herr Professor Martin Heidegger, magician of Messkirch, we are nearing the end of our conversation, and, in view of the 'turn', the *Kehre*, our conversation took when I introduced Aletheia, you will not, I am sure, be sorry about this. Notwithstanding your repeated protestations that you did not mean to use the expression 'idle talk' in a 'disparaging sense' (e.g. BT 157), you did also describe it as 'the possibility of understanding everything without any previous appropriation of the matter' (BT 158) and this would certainly be true of the kind of 'gossip' I forced us to indulge earlier, in the glade. In the end,

it is the business of philosophy to protect the *power of the most elemental words* in which Da-sein expresses itself from being flattened by a common understanding to the point of unintelligibility, which in its turn functions as a source for illusory problems. (BT 202)

Believe me, Herr Professor, on this you and I are of one mind. Whatever our differences (and what profoundly different cultures we come from, what utterly different lives we have led), perhaps, on this, one of the deepest things in each of us (if Da-sein is allowed depths), we are utterly convergent. I, too, want to wake up from pre-ontological average everydayness, to hear words and their meanings as if they are being uttered for the first time, to catch the scent of the primordial mystery of our being. It is just that we pursue our aims in a different way. For you, gossip is an appropriate object of philosophical enquiry: it is part of the mystery by which Da-sein reduces everything to the always already, to the known, the taken-for-granted, the plains of ordinariness. It is this for me, as well; but it is also something that philosophy has to incorporate within itself. In this regard, I am closer to Sartre

– with his ‘shop-girls’ talk philosophy’ (as Lévi-Strauss described it) – than to yourself. But before I leave you (or attempt to leave you) to follow my own agenda, as you left Husserl to follow yours, let me allow you your last unimpeded say in your ownmost place.

For I am aware that our previous location, in the glade, was at least as much my place as yours – I appropriated it for my purposes – and you felt extremely ill-at-ease there. Now, however, we move entirely to your place; for, after our walk through the forest, we arrive finally at your wooden cabin, here in Todtnauberg.

‘This hut,’ your adoring disciple Heinrich Petzet said, ‘can be as little separated from his life as the course of his thinking.’ And he cites another thinker who said that ‘we cannot know who Heidegger the thinker and the man is unless we see the “hut”’.⁵⁰ That’s as may be; but this ‘ascetic dwelling place for thinking’, ‘a simple, wooden structure without any interior or exterior decoration’ where you spent nearly half of most years,⁵¹ and where much of *Being and Time* was composed, is, without doubt, your ‘ownmost’ place. Here is the scene of your deepest solitude, here the place of fiercest and longest struggles with all those things – tiredness, distraction, idleness, stupidity, preconceived ideas, fluency, loneliness, boredom, appetite – that prevent thinkers from thinking at the depth, and with the intensity, that makes thought truly the articulation of wakefulness rather than a mere reaction of words to other words. (How slight, Herr Professor, is the difference between really thinking and chattering to oneself or to a page. And how vast!)

I pause at the threshold of your study, with its ‘monk-like furnishings’, where ‘nothing that would delight the eye was to be found in the thinker’s proximity’: ‘Its meagreness works like ice,’ you said. (I imagine there would be no mirror in your study to reply to your presence.) I inhale the scent of bare wood and think back along the echoes of our footsteps. I shall go no further, disinclined to enter a space that reverberated for so long with your self-talk, with all the decades of lonely communion, all the insights, all the drafts and failures, all the excuses, all the self-exculpatory lies. It was not fun, you said, ‘to live up here and to sit alone behind this desk in winter, when the timber creaks in the storm and loneliness creeps through every hole!’ I am afraid that I might smell the staleness of effort, the stink of cowardice, not the cool of ordinary understanding. And I am afraid that I should be unwelcome.

I pause at the threshold and content myself with imagining the hours you spent glancing at, and seeing and not seeing, the view from your window as you looked down the sloping meadows. On the left

there is the tall fir tree with the water trough next to it into which splashes spring water through a wooden pipe – an element that perhaps seemed more elementally itself in the quiet freshness, remote from the city. (Except in so far as you carried the city within you, in your clothes and books and thoughts and ambitions.) On the right, you can just glimpse, without breaking off from the thoughts that are engaging you, branches of deciduous trees. And between, beyond the meadow slope, a vista of pine trees fading into the mist of forever.

It was here, more than anywhere, that you, a fallen creature, struggled to understand the epoch that you so unforgettably and yet enigmatically described as ‘too late for the Gods and too early for Being’.

In the shadowy echoiness of the vestibule to your study, it seems appropriate to recite the great opening of Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*:

Who, if I cried, would hear me among the angelic
orders? and even if one of them suddenly
pressed me against his heart, I should fade in the strength of his
stronger existence. For Beauty’s nothing
but beginning of Terror we’re still just able to bear,
and why we adore it so is because it serenely
disdains to destroy us. Every angel is terrible.
And so I repress myself and swallow the call-note
of depth-dark sobbing. Alas, who is there
we can make use of? Not angels, not men;
and even the noticing beasts are aware
that we don’t feel securely at home
in this interpreted world. There remains, perhaps,
some tree on a slope, to be looked at day after day,
there remains for us yesterday’s walk and the pampered loyalty
of a habit that liked us and never gave notice.
Oh, and there’s Night, there’s Night, when wind full of cosmic space
feeds on our faces: for whom would she not remain,
longed for, mild disenchantress, painfully there
for the lonely heart to achieve.⁵²

Here, then, in ‘the mountain hut’, where you came closest to yourself: to that condition of authenticity, that being-towards-death, which is most associated with your name and which mocks and is mocked by the shifty opportunism, the unsleeping ambitiousness of your professional life, I shall leave you to your solitude and take a seat outside in the garden, wonderfully sunlit between showers, and listen to the rain

dripping off the trees – doubly fresh in this cool Black Forest upland – and the blackbird's glistening song and think about authenticity and Being-towards-death.

We begin, do we not, Herr Professor, with an intuition rather than an argument, an intuition about the kind of thing that I am, that *Da-sein* is. (Note the important shift from 'I' to 'Da-sein' and then, shiftily, move on.) What most of all strikes me, when I dismount from my many fascinating projects and concerns and hungers, is that I elude myself: I am the kind of being that I cannot get hold of. Of course, you have repeatedly emphasised that *Da-sein* is not a thing: '*Da-sein* is in principle different from everything objectively present and real' (BT 281). It is not in any way substantial: 'the selfhood of *Da-sein* [is] defined formally as a *way of existing* ... not as a being objectively present' (BT 247). This being is Care: '*Da-sein* is a being which is concerned in its being about that being' (BT 179). Concern is 'self-projective being towards its ownmost possibility' (BT 179). As such, it is always 'ahead of itself' and 'always lags behind its possibilities' (BT 262). Like an unfolding melody, it seems always to be scurrying after itself in order to be itself:

The being of *Da-sein* means being-ahead-of-oneself- already-in (the world) as being-together-with (innerworldly beings encountered). This being fills in the significance of the term *care*... (BT 180)

And always dying away into and from itself. Ahead of and behind itself, it never, as we have noted, *coincides* with itself; it never *is* itself.

This rather glum thought is true in two senses. First, *Da-sein* is somewhat nothingy: 'the null ground of its nullity' (BT 283). Second, what quasi-substance it has is not quite, or not distinctly, and certainly not uniquely, its very own. For 'in being-ahead-of-itself, the "self" actually means the self in the sense of the they-self' (BT 180). Let us talk first about the they-self.

While it is true that '*Da-sein* is a being which I myself am, its being in each case is mine' (BT 108), it is equally true that *Da-sein* is not like an isolated and independent subject, inserted into or entering the world as it were from the outside. 'The world of *Da-sein* is a *with-world*, Being-in is *being-with* others. The innerworldly being-in-itself of others is *Mitda-sein*' (BT 112). And who are these others? They are not specific others; they are all others; they are 'the they':

'The others', whom one designates as such in order to cover over one's own essential belonging to them, are those who *are there* ini-

tially and for the most part in everyday being-with-one-another. The who is not this one and not that one, not oneself and not some and not the sum of them all. The who is the neuter, *the they*. (BT 118–19)

In so far as *Da-sein* has any kind of substance, its substance is comprised of the they:

The they, which is nothing definite and which all are, though not as a sum, prescribes the kind of being of everydayness. (BT 119)

'The they is an existential and belongs as a primordial phenomenon to the positive constitution of Da-sein' (BT 121). *Da-sein* is thrown into the world. This 'thrownness is *the facticity of its being delivered over to the world*' (BT 127). It is *moods* that disclose '*Da-sein in its thrownness and for the most part in the mode of evasive turning away*' (BT 128) – as the 'they' – and this is the basic state of *Da-sein*, constitutive of its engagement with the world in the projects which express its being-as-care.

There is, however, one condition in which *Da-sein* is extracted from the they-self of its being-in-the-world: death. No one can stand proxy for *Da-sein* in its death. Death, however, is not a merely accidental feature of *Da-sein*, or an accident that happens to it, a consequence of the contingent condition of (biological) lives having finite duration. No, death is in a sense a completion of *Da-sein*; and, for this reason, 'Death is the *ownmost* possibility of *Da-sein*' (BT 243). Or, as you have put it elsewhere, it is 'an eminent possibility of *Da-sein*' (BT 241). Your argument, notwithstanding the rather dismal conclusion towards which it leads, is an engaging one. It goes as follows. Care is the being of *Da-sein*; but care is always 'ahead of itself'. So long as *Da-sein* exists, it exists as incomplete, in pursuit of itself. There is always something 'outstanding'; there is always something lacking. So long as this lack persists, *Da-sein* cannot achieve wholeness. Wholeness can be achieved only when there is nothing more outstanding, when there is no more care, when, that is to say, that being whose being is an issue for itself has no more issues; when, in short, *Da-sein* is no longer: when it is dead. Of course, this wholeness cannot be enjoyed:

When *Da-sein* reaches its wholeness in death, it simultaneously loses the being of the there. (BT 221)

It ceases to be.

But if '*Da-sein* always already exists in such a way that its not-yet *belongs to it*' (BT 226) how can death, in which its not-yet, its 'there', is taken from it, be its ownmost-potentiality-for-being?

The argument here, Herr Professor, seems from the viewpoint of one sitting outside the privileged silence of your study, to be a little dodgy, not to say, inauthentic. If, in death, 'Da-sein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-of-being' (BT 232), this is presumably because death closes the lack that characterises care, closes off the ahead-of-itself that is constitutive of Da-sein. If we think of Da-sein as openness towards the future, towards unrealised but realisable possibilities, death, which takes away the future, is the point at which the lack, the incompleteness, that is Da-sein collapses, is wiped out. Death closes off possibility and in so doing completes, and at the same time, deletes Da-sein. Since death is 'the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there' (BT 232), it is 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein' (BT 232). But how does *this* become the *ownmost* possibility of Da-sein? The fact that no one can stand in for someone else when it comes to dying – so that one's dying cannot be handed over to the 'they' and cannot be a property of the 'they-self' – doesn't seem enough to justify according death this privileged status. After all, 'they' cannot suffer my toothache or undergo my surgical operation or, come to that, go to the toilet for me.

Your argument about death doesn't, however, depend entirely on the fact that only I can undergo my own death. Additionally (and perhaps crucially), you argue that death 'reveals itself as the *ownmost nonrelational possibility not to be by-passed*' and, as such, 'it is an *eminent imminence*' (BT 232):

Its existential possibility is grounded in the fact that Da-sein is essentially disclosed to itself, in the way of being-ahead-of-itself. This structural fact of care has its most primordial concretion in being-towards-death. Being-towards-the-end becomes phenomenally clearer as being toward the eminent possibility of Da-sein which we have characterized. (BT 232)

Dying, you claim, is grounded in care and 'care is the ontological term for the wholeness of the structural totality of Da-sein' (BT 233):

As thrown-being-in-the-world, Da-sein is always already delivered over to its death. Being toward its death, it dies factually and constantly as long as it has not reached its demise. (BT 239).

Being-toward-death is the anticipation of a potentiality-of-being of *that* being whose kind of being is anticipation itself. (BT 242)

The argument is confused, not to say contradictory. But you do, at first, seem to draw inspiring conclusions from it:

*Anticipation reveals to Da-sein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility to be itself, primarily unsupported by concern taking care of things, but to be itself in passionate anxious **freedom toward death** which is free of the illusions of the they, factual, and certain of itself. (BT 245)*

And you go on to talk at length about the call of conscience that ‘calls the self of Da-sein forth from its lostness in the they’ (BT 253), that summons one to ‘one’s own self’ (BT 252), by which ‘the they-self is summoned to the self’ (BT 252). Facing up to one’s own death, as the theme of the call of conscience, awakens Da-sein to the unoccasioned singularity of its existence (my phrase, not yours, Herr Professor, but I think you would approve of it). Through the call, whose characteristic mood is *Angst*, ‘uncanniness pursues Da-sein and threatens its self-forgetful lostness’ (BT 256).

But none of this adds up, Herr Professor. Did you not, after all, describe Da-sein as ‘the null ground of its nullity’ (BT 263)? And you frankly admit that ‘the self summoned’ by the call of conscience ‘remains indifferent and empty in its what’ (BT 253). As if that were not clear enough, you tell us that

In its who, the caller is definable by *nothing* ‘worldly’. It is Da-sein in its uncanniness, primordially thrown being-in-the-world, as not-at-home, the naked ‘that’ in the nothingness of the world. (BT 255)

Not much, in short, to hang your hat on. And for good reason. As Sartre has pointed out, it is the essence of bad faith (his vulgarisation of your ‘inauthenticity’) for the for-itself (his nearest equivalent to your Da-sein) to try to identify itself with a definite object, to pretend that it is an objective presence, a piece of the in-itself. That is how it comes about that the only reward of authenticity is to discover one’s essential guilt – guilt at ‘being-the-ground for a being which is determined by a not – that is, *being-the-ground of a nullity*’ (BT 261). It is all very rousing saying that, in understanding the call, ‘*Da-sein listens to its ownmost possibility of existence*. It has chosen itself’ (BT 265), but it is difficult to see how nothing could choose even the nothing that it is. More specifically:

- a) how it could choose one particular nothing – out of all the nothings (Da-seins and other nothings) there are – its *own self*;

- b) and what would be the basis, within nothing, of the distinction between the chooser, the chosen and the act of choice?

Regarding a), you state, quite baldly, that 'Understanding the call discloses one's own Da-sein in the uncanniness of its individuation' (BT 272). I would like to know how nullity is individuated in this way, never mind how it encounters itself in such a way as to disclose the uncanniness of its individuation. Even if this were conceivable, I am still doubtful that it is legitimate to use words like 'choice' at this (ontological) level. Choice, which typically implies the pursuit of one particular goal in one particular way, rather than another goal in another way, surely belongs to the ontic rather than the ontological realm. The circularity of Da-sein's choosing itself ('*Da-sein listens to its ownmost possibility of existence*. It has chosen itself', BT 265) can therefore be accepted without challenge only in so far as Da-sein, and its choices, are contentless. (Compare our earlier discussion, Herr Professor, of M. Sartre.) In the circle of Da-sein's choosing itself, choice, choosing and chosen seem to be either utterly general or null. Or they seem general to the point of nullity: choosing without choosing anything in particular; or choosing a particular that is totally empty. And this brings us to b): there is no way of differentiating the chooser, the choosing and the chosen from one another.

The truth is that some of the thoughts that you promulgated in your masterpiece are almost unthinkable and, if not actually unthinkable, impossible to act upon. When you urged authentic being-towards-death upon your disciples, how did you imagine they might act? What actual behaviour might flow from these observations:

We shall call the eminent, authentic disclosedness attested in Da-sein itself by its conscience – the *reticent projecting oneself upon one's ownmost being-guilty which is ready for Angst – resoluteness*. (BT 273)

Resolutely, Da-sein takes over authentically in its existence the fact that it is the null ground of its nullity (BT 283)

No behaviour at all, you would reply. The call of conscience which 'has the character of *summoning* Da-sein to its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self, by summoning it to its ownmost quality of being a lack' (BT 249), does not result in specific behavioural changes: the existential project of 'an authentic being-toward-death' does not 'detach Da-sein from its world, nor does it isolate it as free-floating ego' (BT 274);

instead, 'resoluteness brings the self right into its being together with things at hand, actually taking care of them, and pushes it toward concerned being-with the others' (BT 274). This sounds very much like business as usual. Everything has changed – Da-sein chooses itself (and, presumably its world); and nothing has changed – Da-sein carries on as before.

It is not even clear that Da-sein's relationship to the despised 'they' has changed. This may be because you never made up your mind whether the 'they' is constitutive of *any* mode of Da-sein or just of a degraded version of Da-sein in its 'average everydayness' – in the way that Being-in-the-world is. There is a similar uncertainty as to whether 'thrownness', 'entangled being-with' and even 'inauthenticity' are remediable faults or inescapable, being constitutive of Da-sein. Whether for you, in the end, as for the sociologist, the 'they' is written into the very tissues of the self; whether I is another – a crowd of others – so that individuation is merely a node of the nexus that is 'they'. Under this interpretation, Da-sein would be always 'their' possibility; and the world that is always mine would be always theirs as well. If this were the case, then we could disburden ourselves of 'they' only by becoming a contentless, empty tautology – which is exactly what seems to happen when Da-sein, in anticipatory resoluteness, is summoned to its ownmost possibility of being.

What I am trying to say, in short, Herr Professor, is that there seems to be something deeply incoherent, not to say inauthentic, in your talk of authentic being-towards-death. The inauthenticity, the incoherence, lies in the discrepancy between the use of glamorous terms, such as 'anticipatory resoluteness' and 'authenticity' and the frustrating lack of specific or concrete consequences they carry. Like a mischievous, even wicked, Zen master – truly the magician of Messkirch – you set your disciples impossible homework, which would leave nothing changed in their lives.

Or *everything* changed – as a result of which the changes are invisible. The truth is I am sympathetic to what you are trying to say and what you are trying to do through your words. When, for example, you state that 'Resoluteness means: letting oneself be called forth to one's ownmost *being-guilty*' (BT 283), that 'Being-guilty belongs to Da-sein and means: null *being* the ground of a nullity' (BT 282) and that, finally, 'Resolutely, Da-sein takes over authentically in its existence the fact that it *is* the null ground of nullity' (BT 283), I seem to hear echoes of some of my own thoughts – as set out in *The Explicit Animal* – and the edges of certain of my intuitions reflected back to me. (Since I read

Being and Time long before I wrote *The Explicit Animal*, but brought to my reading certain inchoate intuitions – most fully expressed as dizzinesses and terrors – the question of priority and intellectual property may seem a delicate one.)

I am thinking, in particular, of your assertion (in the passage which I cited earlier in defending you against my own charge of ‘magic thinking’) that ‘as long as it is, *Da-sein* is constantly its “that” as care’ (BT 262). I am not entirely sure what *you* meant by this – or by your reference to *Da-sein* as being (in your wonderfully moving phrase) ‘the naked “that” in the nothingness of the world’ (BT 255) – but it seems to me that, without too much distortion, I could unpack from this my own most fundamental (or ‘ownmost fundamental’) intuition about the nature of the self, of consciousness, of human being. It would not, I think, disturb you if you are in your study, trying to sink into the central spin of the vortex of your thoughts, and I am out here, if I were to recall a passage from the works of RT:

Most essentially, we are creatures who are able to experience, and hence to say, ‘That...’; and yet we cannot fully articulate what it is that this ‘That’ – in virtue of which the world is explicit and we live out our lives explicitly – is. That we are such creatures is the thought which, more than any other, I want one day to *express* rather than merely refer to. The suspicion that making explicitness central to the unique nature of humankind is the key to a new way of thinking about some of the most fundamental problems of philosophy may be a delusion, but it is this above all that keeps alive my impulse to philosophise.⁵³

I cite myself not solely out of vanity (though doubtless that vice, which you, like me, have never escaped, plays its part) but because it indicates the point of intersection between our preoccupations: what I brought to your books – which I may have derived from earlier readings of you; what I most wanted to think through with you; and what I want to develop beyond you. More specifically, it touches on something that I am arrogant enough to believe lies at the root of both our thinking: the endeavour to come to terms with the nullity and emptiness of the self.

Let me dwell on this for a while, as your own null self struggles in its ownmost space to take over authentically in its existence ‘the fact that it is the null ground of its nullity’. You and I have a different take on this emptiness. For you, it is the final truth about the self, about

Da-sein. You iterate it in a dozen different ways. ‘The facticity of Da-sein is essentially distinguished from the factuality of something objectively present’ (BT 255). ‘Ontologically, Da-sein is in principle different from everything objectively present and real. Its “content” is not founded in the substantiality of a substance, but in the “self-constancy” of the existing self whose being was conceived as care’ (BT 281). I could go on but I think the point has been made well (and often!) enough throughout our conversation. For me, the apparent insubstantiality of the self is the *beginning* of the enquiry, not its end-point.

Yes, the essence of the self (if one is permitted to speak of the essence of something that ‘understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of its possibility to be itself or not to be itself’, BT 10) is not to be a thing but to be care, heedful concern about the being-in-the-world which constitutes it: it seems to be nothing in itself and close to the ‘That’ in ‘That X [is the case]’ of *The Explicit Animal*. It is a mere illumination of the world (from which it is *not* itself separated as if it were a viewpoint, a subject, an ‘I-thing encumbered with a body’) with no real estate of its own.

So it seems to be; but it cannot be. For many reasons. Here are two cardinal ones.

First, if it is nothing, then it cannot be an individual. Nothing does not have localities, particulars, singulars, instances, or even plural instances – nothings. (Leaving aside the zeroes of notational systems.) Nothing’s nothing and there’s an end on it. There cannot therefore be a nothing corresponding to RT and another nothing corresponding to MH and a third nothing corresponding to your beloved Aletheia. (I shall resist reverting yet again to the fundamental ambiguity in your notion of Da-sein.)

Perhaps I am misunderstanding you here. You might argue that Da-sein is not nothing *tout court*; rather it is the basis of the nothingness implicit in the fact that Da-sein is existentially aware of its ability-to-be, and this includes the possibility of being able not-to-be. In other words, it is as the basis of *possibilities* that Da-sein appears in the guise of nothingness. But I don’t think this helps. For the ultimate (and indeed the permanent) possibility it posits is the possibility of itself: this is the ‘null ground of its nullity’. And (this is my second point) it is difficult to imagine the ‘null ground of its nullity’ (or anything like it) needing, acting, planning, scheming, etc. in the way that you and I need, act, plan, scheme, etc. Nor can I think of it as housing a structured life – and just how internally complex and exquisitely structured our lives are is something we tend to forget, as I have had occasion so

often to remind the neurophilosophers who try to reduce us to nerve impulses.⁵⁴ If nothing doesn't seem to be able to assume multiple identities – the RT-nothing and the MH-nothing, etc. – it seems even less likely to be able to be differentiated and organised, like the lives, the selves, the identities, of RT. And less likely again to be a point at which events, in the form of actions, etc., are initiated. And less likely yet to be coherent, internally stitched over time, to be what we would recognise as a *person*, such as the author of MH's 'massive' *Gesamtausgabe*. More specifically, the delighted realisation of the point tautology that we seem, according to your existential analysis of Da-sein, to be cannot relate to something like a conscience which (for all your fancy footwork) does seem to have, and to require, a content beyond mere self-iteration, especially if that self-iteration merely iterates its own nullity.⁵⁵

Third (and then I must stop, for I think I heard your chair scraping the floor as you leant back from your desk, and I want, I am surprised to discover, to be gone before you emerge), both Da-sein and being-towards-death seem to be circular. Indeed, authentic being-towards-death is a *revelation* of the essential circularity of Da-sein. In 'dispersing every fugitive covering-over' (BT 286) that hides Da-sein's true nature from itself, 'the awakened conscience of being-towards-death calls the self of Da-sein forth from its lostness in the they. The self thus summoned remains indifferent and empty in what it is' (BT 253). It is empty because the thing it is reaching for is precisely the thing that is doing the reaching. 'Being-toward-death is the anticipation of a potentiality-of-being of *that* being whose kind of being is anticipation itself' (BT 242). 'The call of conscience has the character of *summoning* Da-sein to its ownmost potentiality-of-being-a-self, by summoning it to its ownmost quality of being a lack' (BT 249). Resolute being-towards-death uncovers the essential nature of Da-sein in which it is disburdened of all the quasi-substance that is conferred upon it by its identification with the 'they' and with the projects the 'they' prescribes. 'With death, Da-sein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-of-being' (BT 232): 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein' (BT 232). For death, as we have already noted, does not fulfil but cancels Da-sein, collapses the openness-to-possibility, the being-ahead-of-itself, that is Da-sein.

Circular, empty, nothing: this is the essential nature of Da-sein as revealed in authentic being-towards-death. No wonder such authenticity stood you in such poor stead when the time came for you to exhibit the kind of authenticity that would be have been recognised as such in

the pre-theoretical world, the pre-ontological world, of ontic Da-sein. How did it go with you?

First, an empty, portentous gesture – a little man on the podium of a provincial university assuming the mantle of the Philosopher-King, or the Platonic Guardian, Aristotle to Hitler's Alexander, proclaiming nonsensically that

the university's quest for knowledge be grounded in and unified by the confrontation with Being that is part of the German destiny – 'the historical spiritual mission of the German Volk as a Volk that knows itself in its state',⁵⁶

while overlooking the thousand acts of unkindness, injustice, cruelty, violence, bestiality, torture, rape, homicide and genocide of which the accomplishment of that 'historical spiritual mission' (Whose history and mission to whom?) was composed, taking place all around you. First not noticing, then ignoring, then denying and then trying to forget, the rifle butt in the child's face as the Volk volked itself off. In your elevated role as Rector-Führer, you summoned your students to obey the call of conscience – issued by the Über-Führer and echoed by you, the Unter-Führer. A call that ended with your own reluctant answer when, as an overweight, middle-aged man, you set out on a bicycle in 1945, conscripted to join a Dad's Army⁵⁷ of ageing reservists. Thus ended your endeavour to help your nation 'to open itself up to the meaning of being that is destined for it'.⁵⁸ What a come down: from *Beruf* to call-up! Meanwhile your beloved Elfride put her more viciously anti-Semitic, more sincerely Fascist, shoulder to the wheel. A dedicated party worker to the end, she 'continued teaching about women's rights until her workers were reduced to digging trenches.... [She] "brutalized in the worst possible way" the women workers under her command, refusing to exempt from labor "the sick and the pregnant" during the bitter winter of 1944.'⁵⁹

Second, there followed forty or fifty years of trimming, shiftiness, lying, manipulation, deception and self-deception, as the nation you imagined you would lead at its moment of destiny (when, for some extraordinary reason, it seemed to you to be just what Being needed to get it out of being misunderstood by beings) plunged into the abyss and climbed out again, dripping with moral slime and covered with the blood of the innocents. *Das Nichts selbst nichtet*: 'Nothingness itself nothings' or 'Nothing nothings itself' and the world went to Hell.

No, Herr Professor, there is surely more to Da-sein than what you suppose it to reveal of itself to itself in the self-bootstrapping of inauthentic average everydayness as it assumes authentic Being-towards-death. Nothing nothings itself and six million are annihilated? It seems unlikely. A self-noth-ing nothingness doesn't somehow seem the kind of thing that could father, individually or collectively, things like concentration camps. Even its guilt – the guilt that flows from the fact that Da-sein is 'being-the-ground for a being which is determined by not – that is, *being-the-ground-of-a-nullity*' (BT 261) – seems an innocent, empty, general type of guilt, utterly disconnected from the terrible collective and individual guilts of you and your *Volk-betrunken* countrymen.

In short, neither your Da-sein nor my 'That [X is the case]' quite delivers what is needed: an explanation of the nature of actual selves – your sitting at your desk, I out here in the sunshine – and their place in the world. I recognise neither you, Herr Professor, nor myself nor anyone else in either Da-sein's 'ownmost possibilities' or That's '[X is the case]'. There must be more to it than that; more to it than 'That'. There must be more *substance* to what we are; indeed, we must grant substance to what we are if we are to be instances, to have definite identities, to have any kind of identity. And yet, the elusiveness of the self – *systematic* as one of your earliest and not entirely unsympathetic English commentators, Professor Ryle, pointed out – makes substance-based accounts of the self seem entirely wrong. One thing is certainly true – and on this you, Professor Ryle and myself are all agreed – it doesn't help to think of the self as some kind of object: 'I am not a thing'. Moreover, there is something in your goal of authentic being-towards-death that answers to something deep in me. I dream that one day I shall fully awaken to what is there – what other aim does my philosophising have? – and while the path to that goal may lead through specific thoughts, it will not itself be identical with those thoughts, with certain *results*. There will be no local changes in my mind or in the world as I see it: these would be mere distractions. Instead, the world *as a whole* would be placed in italics. Light, to borrow Wittgenstein's metaphor, used in a different context, would then dawn over the whole. I would *see* 'That it is the case', That 'That' is the case. The last stage before arriving at this would be the 'mystical' as characterised by Wittgenstein: seeing the world as a limited whole. Note that he does not say 'As a whole' but 'As a *limited* whole'.⁶⁰ As something that may have been quite different, indeed may not have existed at all. This is, as it were, to see life from the far side of the

boundary between life and death. For this, one would need to experience death in one's thoughts before one experienced it (or did not experience it) in one's body, in the extinction of one's existence. And, to this end, to make the idea of death work for one. Hence my sympathy for the call, the *Beruf*, to anticipatory resoluteness.

Authentic being-towards-death, in which one envisages the end of possibility, of being-ahead-of-oneself, is a way perhaps of enabling one to see what it – life, Da-sein, 'that' – was. No findings, no new course of action, only, as you say, 'the possibility of *getting power over the existence* of Da-sein and of basically dispersing every fugitive self-covering-over' (BT 286)

Nor does ... being-toward-death mean a detachment in which one flees from the world, but brings one without illusion to the resoluteness of 'acting'. Nor does anticipatory resoluteness stem from 'idealistic' expectations soaring above existence and its possibilities; but arises from sober understanding of the basic factual possibilities of Da-sein. Together with the sober Angst that brings us before our individualized potentiality-of-being, goes the unshakable joy in this possibility. (BT 286)

I, too, have known, and sought, this 'unshakable joy'.

But in a manner different from you, Herr Professor. I am tempted to say that I come from a different tradition, from a different culture: from a tradition that undermines, is unaware of, or ignores, 'tradition'; from a culture that is suspicious of Kultur. You might, I suspect, put it less charitably: that I come from an aphilosophical tradition, a *Land ohne Denker*. (Even that 'an English philosopher' is a contradiction in terms.) At any rate, my philosophy is less rooted in, in dialogue with, the past than – to use yet again your lovely verb – *entangled* in it. All of which is a rather roundabout way of saying that we have come to the parting of the ways. I shall leave you alone in your study, in the inner penetralium of your fastness in the forest, your 'ownmost' place, as you seek to realise your ownmost possibility, 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein' (which is 'at all times my own'), in resolute being-towards-death, contracting to a clenched fist of concentration upon the essential nullity of the self (which is 'at all times my own'), seeking joy in a bleakness beyond bleakness.

I do not, in my leaving you, however, deny your undeniable greatness. What you have set forth in *Being and Time* is (if there is such a thing as permanence) a permanent contribution to the debate about

the most fundamental issues that tax those of us who are concerned about fundamental issues. How often has it dawned on me how much of all my efforts, my projects, my passions, are so many flights from a sense of emptiness, the foundations for which were laid so long ago. The sense that one is nothing, or not much anyway, is hardly palliated by the fifty-page CV, the entry in *Who's Who*, repeated accolade on the podium, etc. The CV is just a carapace, an alluvium, a castle fashioned out of the bricks of the deposit account while one lives still in the nakedness of the swine hut that is the current account. For it is a desolating truth that a thousand layers of CV and personal estate will not change the fundamental fact that everything could simply go pop – indeed *will* simply go pop. A bang on the head could irreversibly cancel me. And something in my body will sooner or later, by main force or stealth, certainly cancel me. But even short of that, there is the sense that the meanings of things are simply ‘worked up’ and if the grace, the intuitions that underwrite them, go, so too will the meanings.

So, your ‘null ground of its nullity’ is something that my Da-sein has tried to assume, to realise, from time to time. I do not, therefore, reject this intuition of yours. Rather, I leave you because, after the long journey we have taken together (you have accompanied me in my thoughts for thirty or more years), after the long journey our century – the last century, in which you died and I was born – has taken with you (you its greatest and most influential and most discussed philosopher), it is time to set aside not your questions but your answers and, indeed, to revive precisely those questions that you set aside – as ‘the true scandal of philosophy’. To do something that you, above all, would approve of: to begin again at the beginning.

I will leave you alone in your study in Todtnauberg and, in another and quite different place – my ownmost place – seek my joy in ‘the wonder that a world is worlding round us’ otherwise and elsewhere. In the combs of the moment, a moment in the sunshine, far from this cold place where you contemplate your own nothingness, I will endeavour to engage with the mystery of the moment. For, in the end, there are only such moments – though worlds are created out of them – and it is in one such moment that, perhaps, the insight will be achieved that will enable me not to ‘soar above existence and its possibilities’ (a false hope, as you point out) but to seize hold of the world that has me in its grip. A moment when I would no longer be ‘too late for the Gods and too early for being’; indeed, I would *be* and live like the Gods. As your beloved Hölderlin said, ‘To live once like the Gods is enough’ – but I have quoted this line far too often.

Part II

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Leaving You and not Quite Leaving You

The search for content

It is a long journey from where you are to where I wish to be, from your place to mine. The warm, sunlit spot where I shall be taking anchor for a while is remote in many senses from the remoteness of your mountain retreat. Your fastness in the Black Forest was, according to your disciple Petzet, subject to 'misunderstandings'. There was, for example, 'the marvelling enthusiasm that came in many forms and that culminated in the exclamation of a lady from the city, who said, "How delightful it must be to live here close to nature and to enjoy the passing of the seasons"'. 'A lady' – and from 'the city': a Weberian ideal-type, doubly damned as an XX chromosome airhead, whose feeble grasp on reality would be further attenuated by her urban life – what better qualifications could one have for a Chair in Advanced Misunderstanding?

Upon hearing this, Heidegger became reserved. Was this reserve a way of expressing anger about so much stupidity? 'Yes, but only if you think it is fun to live up here and sit alone behind this desk in winter, when the timber creaks in the storm and the stove fails to warm up the room and loneliness creeps through every hole!'⁶¹

The lady, we are told, fell silent.

The journey from your place to mine will be a long one if only because I have so much unfinished business with you, which I wish to complete before I arrive at my destination in the sunshine where I will try to take up my own business, outside of the spell of your great mind, and assume an agenda of thought that is independent of yours. So that

I shall be alone with my meditations just as you, in your mountain hut, were alone with yours. (All of this is a vain hope, I know: I shall never escape your problems and your answers to those problems. They are, inescapably, my problems and, dispute the answers though I may, I have lived with them long enough for them to be present always in the conversations I have with myself.) Let me, anyway, as I journey towards the self that eludes me even as I approach it and is yet 'always already' there as even I try to escape it, think over again your vision of Da-sein as care, of being-towards-death and the 'ownmost possibility' of the self.

'There is' a 'world', a primordial referential totality of significance, which has a unity antedating encounters with particular things within it. This world exists courtesy of Da-sein which makes being be 'there' as 'being-in-the-world' for Da-sein. This disclosed world is disclosed to and for Da-sein, which is essentially care. And care is grounded in the ecstatic unity of temporality. So: Da-sein is care; care is temporalised temporality; and 'temporality is the primordial condition of the possibility of *care*', 'of heedful being-in-the-world' (BT 341). Hence, 'The meaning of the being of Da-sein ... [is] temporality' (BT 338). I can see how it all hangs together, Herr Professor, in a most satisfying way. And it seems not only coherent but compelling, until we start asking some very simple questions: questions about form or structure and, even more pressingly, about *content*.

I'd like to talk about content – about the content of:

- a) the Da-sein that is 'ecstatically understanding itself';
- b) the world that Da-sein makes be 'there';
- c) the 'facticity', the 'thrownness', 'the having-been' that Da-sein returns to; and, finally,
- d) the future, the 'ownmost potentiality-for-being' in which Da-sein comes towards itself.

In each case, we shall find that the content is, variously: nothing or nothing in particular.

a) The lack of content of Da-sein

Let's start with Da-sein. The fact that it does not seem to have any content at all – as we noted up in Todtnauberg – is consistent with your fundamental vision in which substance and 'objective presence' are alien to Da-sein. To attribute contents to Da-sein would be to make the fundamental mistake of seeing it as thing-like, as substantial; its

essence, on the contrary, lies in its existence; it is a way of existing, not an objective presence. Da-sein, properly viewed, as when *Angst* summons it to authentic being, is 'the naked "that" in the nothingness of the world' (BT 255). And although you suggest that Da-sein is roughly synonymous with the self, there is nothing in Da-sein to correspond to the distinctive individuality of selves – precisely because there is nothing in Da-sein. There is no real basis in Da-sein for the continuity, the multiplicity, and the-continuity-across-multiplicity of the self, its unity-in-variety that is like a melody. The unity of a melody, of course, is not inherent in the notes alone: it requires a conscious listener to synthesise the successive elements into one thing. (I am aware we are going over well-trodden ground between us here, but I think it bears repeating. I cannot be the only person who so totally fell under your spell. One day I will confess how, as a medical student, walking alone in the moonlight, I skipped and danced along the road, believing that, in your ideas, I had found the answer to the problems that most troubled me.) For all that you assert that 'Self-constancy is a mode of being of Da-sein and is thus grounded in a *specific* temporalising of temporality' (BT 344; italics mine), this is a constancy without content, a recurrence to itself that has no basis for recurrence because it cannot stray from itself, from the tautological dot that it is. Nor – and this is, of course, a connected point – does your vision of Da-sein offer a basis for the privacy of the self – for self-space (one's personal world), self-time (one's own past quite separate from someone else's past and separate from the general past that is history, etc.). To say that 'care already contains the phenomenon of self' (BT 293) raises the question of how it comes about that actual selves typically care for, and about, specific things. A 'delineation of care' that 'emerged from our analysis of the disclosedness that constitutes the being of the "there"' (BT 307) does not seem to provide the answer we are looking for. What we need to know is what it is that makes care care about something in particular. What determines – defines, differentiates, selects – the particular issues through which Da-sein, that being whose being is an issue for itself, expresses and encounters itself?

b) The content of the world

What of the contents of the *world* that Da-sein makes be there? We cannot derive those contents from assuming that Da-sein (which, as we have seen, lacks features of its own) acts like a 'worldless subject' imposing a network of forms on 'some material', as if it were a kind of pure light illuminating pre-existing entities. You expressly reject that

idea, which is close to traditional notions of God or the Flaubertian notion of the artist – everywhere active and nowhere apparent. That is not what either ‘There’ or being-there is about. But, if all Da-sein ‘brings to the table’ as it were is a naked ‘That’, then it is difficult to see how it could make present, or disclose, a *particular, differentiated* world.

This difficulty is exacerbated by what you have to say about spatiality and Da-sein. Da-sein, you insist, is not inserted into a particular point in the physical world: it doesn’t have a location in space; and it doesn’t occupy a certain amount of space. This would seem to make it impossible to explain why it should have particular surroundings, why it should be faced with particular threats and promises, why at a given moment it should have to take account of a cat in a drawing room rather than a tiger in the jungle.

Nevertheless, the assumption that Da-sein precisely does make present, or disclose, a particular, differentiated world pervades the entirety of your ontology. Da-sein lights up certain beings in the world and not others. These beings are not objective presences but beings ready-to-hand, such as tools, that have some purpose, serve some function, and are part of an ever-extending network of significances. But why should there be such things – serving purposes, addressing functions, having specific significances – if Da-sein is nothing? What purposes can be addressed on behalf of nothing? The functions served by hammers and nails, and so on, make sense only in relation to needs. Da-sein, however, does not bring anything to what it is supposed to have as its own situation, least of all something plausibly requiring tools – for example *a needing body* – to pick out some beings as ready-to-hand and not to pick out others; or to disclose being generally as primordially ‘handy’, useful, etc. Da-sein would seem already to have everything it needs because, being nothing in itself, it cannot house needs. The question, ‘What do you give to a man who has everything?’ seems child’s play compared with the question: What do you give to an entity that is nothing?

c) The content of the future

The impression one gets of Da-sein’s self-sufficiency is supported when we shift our attention from the present – and presencing – to the future. What does the future hold for Da-sein? What future does it project for itself? The future is ‘the coming in which Da-sein comes toward itself in its ownmost-potentiality-of-being’ (BT 299). But what is that ownmost potentiality-of-being? We already know the answer,

from our discussion of authentic being-towards-death – and it is disappointing, not to say unsatisfactory. The ownmost potentiality-of-being of its existence is *itself* – or its self. And that self is care, whose nature is fully disclosed in resoluteness when it sees that the essence of care is to be a lack, a lack that can never be filled without Da-sein coming to an end. According to you, when we see ourselves aright, we see our eminent possibility, the filling of the lack, the end of outstanding business, as the end of ourselves – death; or, as you put it, the possibility of our impossibility. This may be either a tautology, or a conceptual self-immolation, or an intimation of nothingness or all three, but, again, it doesn't bring much to the table. If the quintessential possibility that Da-sein projects into the future is its demise, or its tautological choice of its own nothingness, then there is no particular content to be found in that future and 'Futurally coming back to itself, resoluteness' bringing 'itself to the situation in making it present' (BT 300) will not help to give distinctiveness – specificity, actuality – to what counts as a particular Da-sein's situation.

The truth is that Da-sein itself could not project possibilities with actual content. For the possibilities we project for ourselves arise out of needs, appetites, wants, fantasies, etc. and none of these makes any sense outside – *embodiment*.

d) The past as content: 'facticity', the 'thrownness', 'the having-been' that Da-sein returns to

You are, of course, aware of all these difficulties. And the lack of real estate attached to Da-sein has caused you concern (though I suspect that you enjoyed the vertiginous bewilderment induced in your students by the thought that the 'most eminent' possibility of Da-sein and the target of the much advocated 'anticipatory resoluteness' was nothing, or 'the null ground of nullity'.) You therefore searched for content and seemed to find some sort of content for Da-sein in the *past*, or *its* past (not that you would admit to privileging one tense over another, as they are all part of an 'ecstatic unity of temporality'): in the fact that the self of Da-sein in its average everydayness is a they-self, that the world in which it has its being is 'always already' and so has some kind of realm of its own. Certainly, this past, this having-being, this facticity, this thrownness of being already in a world seems to amount to real content: one could even start putting together a biography out of it. The problem is that this quasi-substantive having-been in the always-already-world of the they-self doesn't seem quite to attach

itself to the present and future of Da-sein or to fit in with what has been regarded as Da-sein's own nature. For how could this past, this history of fallenness, of thrown being, or whatever, fasten itself to Da-sein – or *a* Da-sein? What would house it? In what would it inhere or subsist? You can't give anything to nothing – not even its own history. Nothing has nothing with which to give shelter to something.

Da-sein, in short, even with the putative luggage of the past, cannot of itself form the basis for a differentiated world – even less a particular world. Temporality, notwithstanding that it is 'the meaning of being of care' (BT 335), does not bring anything to Da-sein. And, for all that care is 'factically entangled existing' (BT 336), it is difficult to see with what it could get entangled, even less enduringly entangled, and how those entanglements could stack up to a respectable buttering of facticity over nullity. All Da-seins are the same Da-sein, that is to say, nothing.

Perhaps that is why you widen your search for some kind of content for Da-sein, for something a bit more substantial than the 'null ground of its own nullity' that Da-sein takes back from resolute being-towards-death and the acknowledgement of 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein'. Why, in short, you look beyond the temporality of Da-sein to its historicity, and beyond the private having-been of individual Da-sein to a collective past. Instead of exclusively looking forward to its Da-sein and its ending, you look backward to its birth and its origins. Of course, understood ontologically, historicity is still rooted in the temporality of Da-sein: it is 'to be "deduced" ... from the primordial temporality of Da-sein' (BT 345). However, you see this as justification for reaching out beyond individual Da-sein's private having-been to the collective having-been of 'heritage' and for the latter's being incorporated into the thrownness, the factically disclosed possibilities, that are revealed by their impossibility in death. We are justified in calling objects 'historical', you argue, because 'the world in which they were encountered as things at hand ... and used by heedful Da-sein existing-in-the-world' (BT 348) is no longer. Such objects connect the present with a past that reaches before the individual Da-sein and justifies our seeing Da-sein as an 'historical subject'. 'The occurrence of history is the occurrence of being-in-the-world' (BT 355). 'The historical world is factically only as the world of innerworldly beings' (BT 355).

In consequence, when Da-sein 'confronts death in order to take over completely the being that it is itself in its thrownness' (BT 350) and

resolutely takes over its own 'factual "There"', it can reach not only forwards but also back into its heritage, which seems to have a bit more about it than does 'the [mere] possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein':

The resoluteness in which Da-sein comes back to itself discloses the actual factual possibilities of authentic existing *in terms of the heritage* which that resoluteness *takes over* as thrown.

'Resolute coming back to thrownness involves *handing oneself over* to traditional possibilities although not necessarily *as* traditional ones' (BT 351).

This reaching back licenses a new, perhaps half-timbered, version of authentic existence, rather more cosy than simply discovering one's thrownness backlit by the light of the 'null ground of one's nullity' showing up the ownmost possibility of Da-sein as its impossibility. This rather less stark authenticity involves a conscious assumption of that by which one has been assumed, a seizing of that which has held one in its grasp: one's heritage, culture, even destiny or fate. This heritage-based authenticity may not be entirely comfortable, or mock-Tudor, however:

Only being free *for* death gives Da-sein its absolute goal and knocks existence into its finitude. The finitude of existence thus seized upon tears one back out of endless multiplicity of possibilities offering themselves nearest by – those of comfort, shirking and taking things easy – and brings Da-sein to the simplicity of its *fate*. (BT 351)

The simplicity of fate looks like a reversion to the bleak, pinpoint-tautological, self-affirmation of nothingness that is the earlier outcome of 'anticipatory resoluteness'. But you argue against this:

This is how we designate the primordial occurrence of Da-sein that lies in authentic resoluteness in which it *hands itself down* to itself, free for death, in a possibility that it inherited and yet has chosen. (BT 351)

By this means, you seem to enlarge the 'factual "There"', that is recovered in and for Da-sein as a result of resolute being-towards-death: what Da-sein hands over to itself is more than itself.

How this crucial step is justified I am not sure. Nevertheless, you build on it. Since Da-sein 'essentially exists as being-in-the-world in being with others', you argue that

its occurrence is an occurrence-with and is determined by *destiny*. With this term, we designate the occurrence of the community, of a people ... The fateful destiny of Da-sein in and with its 'generation' constitutes the complete, authentic occurrence of Da-sein. (BT 352)

Alas, we can see where this (frankly rather frail) train of thought is going, Herr Professor; and we all know where it ended up. But let us not dwell on politics and the communitarian and organicist and racist supremacist roots of Fascism. Instead, let us ask one or two preliminary questions – before we return to our original puzzle about *the content* of Da-sein.

Let us return to the past as content. First: what is the difference between 'the authentic occurrence of Da-sein' and the they-self of inauthentic Da-sein? How do we separate heritage (which is, after all, *collective*) from they-self? How can we be sure that the authentic self, which assumes its heritage, is *truly* accepting 'the thrownness of its own There free from illusion' (BT 357)? In moving from the Little Self of Da-sein's own nullity to the Big Self of the Collective, of the Past, Heritage, do we not risk falling deeper and further into fallenness? The second question is this: just as the boundaries dividing the they-self of inauthentic existence from the consciously assumed heritage of authentic existence are unclear, so too are the boundaries of the heritage (of the 'generation'). Much blood was spilt and much poison released in asserting one version of those boundaries. Besides, and this is my third question, how could Da-sein take on board, actively assume, all of its heritage, even if the demarcation of its own heritage from others heritages and from the they-self were clear? This last question becomes even more pointed if one accepts your assertion that Da-sein's task in arriving at a state of authenticity is 'to come to itself' and that, in order to do that, it must first *pull itself together* from the *dispersion* and the *disconnectedness* of what has just happened' (BT 356). That is a tall order, when one considers how much there is to pull together, how ill-defined is that which is to be pulled together, and the nature of the entity – Da-sein – that is purportedly doing or master-minding the pulling together. And this raises a fourth question: How does that which is dispersed pull itself together? Where, and whence, does it find and assert the centre towards which there is pulling, how does it get

power and ownership and authority over itself, given that there is no central command?

Perhaps my putting it thus betrays a certain literal-mindedness but my final query in particular does open up wider questions about the conscious assumption of one's facticity – confronting death 'in order to take over *completely* the being that it is itself in its thrownness' (BT 350; emphasis added) – that seems to be the essence of resolute-being-towards-death (and/or resolute-being-towards-birth and/or resolute-being-towards-history). The question is this: how does Da-sein bootstrap itself from the inauthentic to the authentic condition; how does it get a grip on, acquire power over itself? How, in other words, is Da-sein to assume that by which it is assumed? Not only does it need to possess a huge amount of knowledge (about the boundaries and contents of true heritage as well as about itself), but also has to be able to recover itself from dispersedness and other aspects of inauthenticity.

The problem of tacking an individual past on to Da-sein is as great with respect to the heritage that it is supposed to acquire from its (shared) 'historicity' as it is with respect to Da-sein's 'personal' past, supposedly built up from the past of its (own) temporality; with respect to the shared kitty of the past of the collective(s) to which it may believe it belongs as with respect to the private 'booty' of its own past. There is simply no basis within Da-sein, as you present it, for this belonging, for the attachments and the loot that comes with them. In short, the 'historicity' of Da-sein solves none of the unsolved problems that beset trying to possess the facticity supposedly derived from Da-sein's 'private' having-been.

e) The future, the 'ownmost potentiality-for-being' in which Da-sein comes towards itself

About this, there is nothing additional to be said. The difficulty of attaching a specific, contentful past to Da-sein is mirrored in the difficulty of assigning a specific contentful future to it.

Problems, problems, Herr Professor. But you keep going. And more problems emerge. For example, you tell us that 'Initially and for the most part',

Da-sein understands itself in terms of what it encounters in the surrounding world and what it circumspectly takes care of. (BT 354)

But in order to make any kind of sense of that, we need to understand why Da-sein comes to have one set of surroundings rather than

another and why it takes care of certain things in a certain way rather than other things or in different ways.

Let me spell out this central difficulty in more detail. This is what is needed for Da-sein to have content:

(i) *Something to pre-exist Da-sein* in order to give its world (and perhaps itself) content. Sometimes I think you were aware of this. For example, when you say that 'Disclosedness constitutes a being in such a way that, existing, it can be itself its "There"' (BT 308–9), I could almost swear you believed that there were things that had being, and properties of their own, that Da-sein did not create but encountered and, thus encountering, revealed as they are in themselves.

(ii) *Something to differentiate Da-sein* so that it has needs, wants, responsibilities, etc. that will give its possibilities content and thematise 'care' as *its own* specific cares. Being 'the null ground of its nullity' seems a poor basis for particular issues to engage a being whose being is an issue for itself. The being of a being whose being is any kind of *specific issue* – and hence any kind of issue, because utterly non-specific issues are not issues at all – for itself must include something to give Da-sein a location. For while one might agree with you that 'Da-sein can *be* spatial only as care, in the sense of factically entangled existing' (BT 336) – in other words, that it is not inserted into pre-existing physical space in precisely the way an object is – *something*, independent of Da-sein, must determine its 'where'. (Not that physical space has a 'where': I fully understand that the world according to physics has no wheres, nears and fars and so on.)⁶² But what 'where' it has, indeed that it has one where rather than another, must require that it has a location, so that its situation is, say, a jungle in Burma rather than a drawing room in Surbiton. Even if we accept your belief that regions are not primordially loci in physical space but referential totalities of significances, nexuses of signifying ready-to-hands – so that only on the basis of care and hence of an ecstatic and horizontal temporality is it possible for Da-sein to break into space – such regions must still be located on an objective map, the map of physics. ('Surbiton' is not a concept in physics, and it may be best understood as a nexus of ready-to-hands, but it is still locatable on the map of the physical universe.) And to that extent, the space Da-sein breaks into, antecedes it; belongs to something other than itself.

(iii) *Something to house a cumulative past for Da-sein*, to enable a series of events, vicissitudes and joys, its *facticity*, to be attached to and stick with it and for it to acquire habits, expectations, responsibilities and life-plans – on the basis of memory, retained experiences, promises

made, etc. Without such a something, there can be no historicity, heritage, collective consciousness – let alone all the things that you so disastrously derived from these: *Volkisch* pride, destiny, etc.⁶³

The ontology set out in your masterpiece provides none of these things. And without them, it is difficult to see how Da-sein has any content. Perhaps (to revert to an earlier argument) you deny it content *on principle*: Da-sein does not have content because it is not an objective presence; its being is existing. But if Da-sein has no content, one could be justified in concluding that

- a) every Da-sein is the same Da-sein (or that Da-sein is a mere category – like ‘mind’ from which it is impossible to derive individual, denumerable minds); and
- b) (which is the other side of a)) Da-sein is purely formal, like Kant’s ‘logical subject’.

Either interpretation would make the task of authentic Da-sein ‘that confronts death in order to take over completely the being that it is in itself in its thrownness’ (BT 350) at once empty and impossible.

The truth is that this issue of content can be overlooked (or to use against you your own favourite words of criticism) ‘concealed’, ‘covered over’ so long as we talk about Da-sein, and being-in-the-world and one or two other characters, as if they were categories rather than a set of denumerable individuals. But when we talk about individuals – ‘human beings’ as opposed to ‘human being’ – then the lack of specific contents assigned to individual Da-seins becomes a pressing concern. (We come back again and again, do we not, to this question of the status of Da-sein and to the ambiguity about its nature that runs all the way through *Being and Time* – and through our conversation – like ‘Brighton Rock’ through Brighton rock.) If ‘Da-sein’ refers to an indefinite number of *individuals*, then the problem of assigning content arises not only with respect to Da-sein but also with respect to its world: how being-in-the-world becomes being-in-a-particular-world; how the experience of being-in-a-world feeds into the facticity of Da-sein that becomes the content of its biography. Individual Da-sein’s having-been ceases to be an indivisible simple, arrived at through authentic being-towards-death that returns Da-sein to its thrownness, which is then available to be assumed freely: on the contrary, it becomes multiple and complex and cannot be unified through mere self-constancy of being the same for-itself in a ‘world that is always

mine', or a 'stretched out stretching' that is the 'between' (birth and death) that is 'care' (BT 343). Once individuality and content are granted to Da-sein, more is needed to ensure its connectedness than mere self-iteration: what is at present on offer would be sufficient only for the integrity and unity of a contentless, pinpoint tautology.

You won't like this, Herr Professor, but the something more that is needed sounds very like a human body; something, at any rate, that is (to use Quassim Cassam's⁶⁴ characterisation), 'solid, shaped and located', 'an object in the weighty sense' (i.e. enduring independently of consciousness – and, presumably of its Da-sein). Something like the body of Aletheia through whom all sorts of truths, not written in your philosophy, were revealed to you. Without such a something, Da-sein would not merely lack content, but would also lack identity.

I feel pretty sure that you do, in the final analysis, believe that Da-sein is an indefinite collection of individual Da-seins. Do you not, after all, state that 'We individually calculate the progress, arrest, adjustment, and "output" of individual Da-sein in terms of the course, status, change and availability of what is taken care of' (BT 354)? And the very fact that Da-sein exists finitely – with a death to anticipate resolutely as its ownmost possibility and a (dated) birth – proves that you are here thinking of it as an individual.

Once we allow that the body is essential to give care and being-there specific content, then the question of self-constancy gets both simpler and more complex than you have suggested it is. For you, 'the *constancy of the self* means nothing other than anticipatory resoluteness' (BT 297). This is the '*authentic* counter-possibility to the lack of constancy' (BT 297). However, even though it has to be earned rather than being given, your 'anticipatory resoluteness' interpretation reduces self-constancy to a something-nothing that is not all that different (I shall ignore your protests, Herr Professor, as I reiterate this) from Professor Kant's 'logical subject': a 'bare consciousness that accompanies all concepts', 'not a representation but the form of representation in general': a mere derivative of the fact that experience has to happen to *someone*. The 'I' is that necessary someone – a blank, unsigned cheque generated by logical necessity or even grammatical necessity – hence its designation as *logical* subject.

Of course, Kant's account of the underpinning of the self, like yours, lacks content. As glue to stick together all the things that can be legitimately regarded as making up, or belonging to, the self, his empty logical subject is a dismal failure. It doesn't do the business unless the business is already done: unless those things that make up the self are

tagged to that self – and bound together *in fact* – already. (And I am not too sure that either of us has a clear idea of the notion of an element – an experience, for example – being objectively or factually assigned to a self.) Your Da-sein-self is in consequence merely the iteration of itself, and although it differs from Kant's self inasmuch as it is saying 'I-am-in-the-world' rather than asserting itself rather snootily as an isolated, transcendental subject, it is still as empty, even though its emptiness may have a slightly different aetiology: it is empty not because it is an empty form but because, as already noted, it merely iterates it 'ownmost possibility' – 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein'.

What is really needed is *glue that will bind actual contents together*: this experience with that experience, this feeling with that memory, this promise with that action, page 1 of the CV with page 50. The body seems to be that glue, giving rise to the things that have to be bound together, the problem of things having to be bound, and the solution to the problem, the basis for binding. The embodied self exists *in fact*. 'One is, after all, what one takes care of' (BT 296), you yourself assert; but only the body can convert Da-sein into an individual with particular concerns and particular coherences and incoherences. The challenge, then, is to know how to separate the body from the self – so that the self is neither disembodied (and so locationless, identityless, etc.), or even housed, in Cartesian fashion, in the body, nor 'a persistently objectively present self-thing' (BT 297), nor an entirely dispersed creature, disposed of into '*what one takes care of*' (BT 296).

You spoke truly, Herr Professor, when you said that 'by refusing to go along with the everyday way in which the I talks, our ontological interpretation of the "I" has by no means *solved* the problem' (BT 296). But I wonder whether it has even, as you claim, '*prescribed the direction* for further questioning' (BT 296). For there seems to be no way back from your 'self-constancy' – which is absolute and empty (perhaps: absolute because empty) – to the coherence of the (empirical, everyday) self which has content and is relative.⁶⁵

So I set aside your views. But, while setting aside your views on the primordially of Da-sein does away with your magic thinking, the scientific view, which you opposed and which gives priority to objective presences,⁶⁶ precisely by resolutely avoiding magic thinking or 'mind among things', makes it difficult to understand where mind, minding, indeed mattering come from and where they fit in. If we begin with Da-sein, whose being is care, we can't get out of Da-sein; if we begin with objective presences, which are assumed to boil down

ultimately to matter and energy, we can't find Da-sein (or something like it); we can't find care. If we begin with Da-sein, we cannot accommodate or find the world of physics; if we begin with the world of physics, we cannot accommodate or find the world of care that is Da-sein. I am balanced (torn, wobble) between the view that being and time are rooted in being-there (Da-sein) and its temporality as care and the opposite view that beings that are able to make things be there, the bearers of 'That', are themselves inserted into, and part of, an already existing universe of material things that have objective presence and their own time; between the view that Da-sein's spatiality and temporality have primacy over physical space and time, and vice versa.

One thing is certain: if we start with Da-sein, it is difficult to see how Da-sein – that being whose being is an issue for itself – can have any issues without a body to care for, to be concerned over, to be its destiny, to be forced to be, to live out. Da-sein, if it is going to have any issues beyond the tautological and empty one of 'itself', has somehow to be individualised; and that implies a specific setting in which it is located and to which it is somehow related. Location and setting (a vulnerable Da-sein with needs and an environment which threatens Da-sein or promises to fulfil its needs) inescapably point to embodiment, an embodiment that is inseparable from Da-sein.

Which (I think) means that we must reject much that is foundational in your ontology. You had hoped that, by beginning with Da-sein, which is neither body nor mind, you would avoid both the problems that arise if you begin with matter (how is there such a thing as mind and how does mind access material things?) and the problems that arise if you begin with mind (how is there access to matter and what is the nature of material things?). Perhaps you did avoid those problems. But other problems have come to take their place.

My resurrection of the body, of the fleshy organism that is born, breathes and dies, and which in a rather confused way I feel to underpin my identity, is connected with something that has just now struck me, Herr Professor. It's this: the fundamental deficiency of your ontology (and, who knows, perhaps of all ontology) is not only that it cannot explain the particular structures and contents of our actual world (its features, our limitations) but also that it does not point to the direction in which such explanation is to be sought or how this ('ontical') enquiry should be linked with ontological one. The ontology is complete in itself and sealed off. For example, 'the most primordial, existential, and ontological constitution of Da-sein' (BT 211) is 'disclosed with the phenomenon of care'. But what is it that care cares

about? ‘Care’ in your writing seems to be a mere placeholder for ‘the existential meaning of Da-sein’ (BT 41), its ‘being toward the world’ (BT 53), its ‘being together with the world’ (BT 123), ‘guided by circumspection which discovers things at hand and preserves them in their discoveredness’ (BT 161), etc. It doesn’t seem to have any content in itself; or none that Da-sein *per se* provides. Something else – the body – is needed.

The body – or something like it (and it would be interesting to specify in the most general sense what the characteristics of that something should be) – is required to change Da-sein from a category to individuals, to give ontic content to the ontological form, to make Da-sein care for something, i.e. for something in particular. For (embodied) creatures such as me, care is differentiated into specific concerns – the pursuit of bodily needs and desires, the avoidance of terrors (illness, injury, physical threats from other living creatures including my conspecifics) as well as (but perhaps derivatively) pre-occupation about reputation, ambition, avoidance of humiliation, wanting to do a good job, not wanting to cause harm, etc. Only by bringing into the picture the body, or something like it, are we able to start the process of filling in the notion of Da-sein so that it moves on from being a virtually bare category to individual instances with actual contents, with biographies, and to link the ontological schema with ontical actuality.

In attempting to identify a something to confer content on Da-sein, *something for its ‘care’ actually to care about*, I have placed between you and me, Herr Professor, a being, the human body, that amounts almost to a dividing wall.⁶⁷ And so this, at last, really is a parting of the ways. For the living body not only distances me from what I see as a fatal emptiness within your system but also from the magic thinking that constantly threatens to discredit it. The body reconnects the world of the self with the physical world, and perhaps with the world as described by physical science, from both of which you had uncoupled self as Da-sein. The body solidifies what we are and explains its pains, the effortfulness of life; in it the lightness of the ‘That’, of the ‘there’ and the ‘here’ assumes its experienced heaviness. But with this heaviness also comes the possibility of delight which is also part of a contentful existence. And, building on the body, I might develop my own version of anticipatory resoluteness: a being-towards-life that I shall seek on my sunlit wall by the sea when I arrive at my Greek island.

But I am being-ahead-of-myself. There is still much travelling – from you and from your thoughts – yet to be accomplished.

What is the question?

It is said that on her death bed, Gertrude Stein asked 'What is the answer?' On getting no reply, she said, 'All right, then, what is the question?' She recognised, as you did, that asking the right question was at least as important as seeking the right answer. At any rate, it was a crucial preliminary step. For you, the fundamental question was one that had been forgotten since ancient times: The Question of Being.

At the very outset of *Being and Time*, you argue compellingly for a particular understanding of the question of Being. The inquiry into being, you say, has to be approached through the meaning of being and hence through an understanding of that being – Da-sein – 'to whose existence belongs an understanding of the nature of being as such'.

Regarding, understanding and grasping, choosing and gaining access to, are constitutive attitudes of inquiry and are thus themselves modes of a particular being, of *the* being we inquirers ourselves in each case are. Thus to work out the question of being means to make a being – he who questions – transparent in its being. Asking this question, as a mode of *being* of a being is itself essentially determined by what is asked about in it – being. This being which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being we formulate terminologically as Da-sein. (BT 6)

Da-sein is not an instance of being for the representational abstraction of being; rather it is the site of understanding of being. (BT 7 footnote)

Understanding of being is itself a determination of Da-sein. (BT 10)

Thus *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the *existential analysis of Da-sein*. (BT 11)

What is primarily interrogated in the question of the meaning of being is that being which has the character of Da-sein. (BT 37)

This last passage underlines how for you, it seems, the question of being is identical with the question of the meaning of being. And addressing that latter question requires us to place Da-sein – in whom alone being has meaning – at the centre of our enquiry. The fundamental work of ontology and the existential analytic (of Da-sein) are therefore one.

I am more than ever inclined to question this starting point. It seems, first of all, to conflate the nature and the meaning of being. The passages quoted above make very plain that this is scarcely an accidental oversight. Indeed, one of your best commentators, Herbert Dreyfus, asserts at the outset of his *Being-in-the-World* that your

primary concern is to raise the question of being – to make sense of our ability to make sense of things.⁶⁸

And that what you have in mind when you talk about ‘being’ is ‘the intelligibility correlative with our everyday background practices’ (ibid., p. 10). For me, however, the question of being and the question of the meaning of being are distinct – though doubtless any answer to either must lead to, or link with, the answer to the other. Of course, if being ‘is that on the basis of which beings are already understood’, then the question of being and the question of the meaning of being are inseparable. I have a lot of difficulty with this assumption because I want to say that there is something that goes beyond the ‘there’ so that being *cannot* be assimilated into its meaning for Da-sein. (And why, if the question of being *is* identical with the question of the meaning of being, do we talk about being and meaning as if they were distinct, even if interwoven?)

The motivation for assimilating being to the meaning of being is easily understood. If one begins with the (intrinsic) nature of being – as it is independently of the meaning that being has in or to Da-sein (or in or to us human beings) – then one is left with the mystery of the fact that being has or acquires meanings as well as being; that it has meaning for certain beings, namely ourselves, who live – understand, strive, plan, need, act, think, etc. – in a world that makes at least partial sense. This is a mystery that you do not really address, though the sense of it pervades the entirety of your writing, because you start off with being-as-meaning.

‘Aha’, you say, Herr Professor, ‘you cannot start anywhere other than with Da-sein’. Starting elsewhere was the elementary error, the fundamental mistake, that led ontology into the wastelands, the most desolate among them metaphysics, which sought ultimate reality in some self-subsistent ground-stuff, in self-iterating substances. To imagine that one can start with ‘pure’ being will lead you to think of being as primordially ‘objective presence’.

Yes, I understand all of that. But there is a fatal ambiguity, not to say confusion, in your argument to support what I believe in the end to be

a tactical rather than a fully justified decision, to merge the nature of being (as it is in itself) and the meaning of being (for those beings for whom there are meanings – those beings whose being is an issue for itself and is lived understandingly – namely Da-sein). Does it not seem obvious that there may well be more to being than its meaning to, or for, those beings to whom things have meanings? So, how did such a great philosopher make such a great (but seemingly elementary) error of judgement?

Let us look again at the very first page of *Being and Time*, where you try to justify your stance:

Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word 'being'? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew *the question of the meaning of being*. (BT 1)

The slide between the question of the meaning of being in the third sentence and the meaning of *the word* 'being' in the first is of the utmost importance. It prepares the ground for the elision from the 'question of being' – which you made it your life's work to 'retrieve', so that we might be cured of that 'forgetfulness of being' from which come so many of our ills (fancy forgetting being of all things!) – to 'the question of the meaning of being'. No one would argue against the view that investigating the meaning of the word 'being' must *start* from within the one kind of being that uses language – namely Da-sein. The trouble is, this argument is used to disarm doubt over whether the meaning of being *tout court* must be approached through that being which appears to be the sole bearer of meanings – namely, Da-sein. The slide continues and we are soon accepting, on the nod as it were, the notion that *being itself* is to be approached, understood, through Da-sein. Before long, we find we have accepted an ontology in which we deny that there are such things as 'objective presences' and 'inner subjects', except in so far as they exist derivatively, originating within that (assumed now to be primordial) being – Da-sein – for whom being-in-the-world, not material objects and minds, is primordial.

Herr Professor, it seems to me that your entire system – for all its marvellous insights, its wonderful exposition of so many things that appear to be true of our collective situation – has as its cornerstone a fundamental confusion: between a) the meaning of a word, b) the meaning of whatever it is that is indicated by the word, and c) the nature of whatever it is that is indicated by that word. The strategic value of this mistake for you comes from the fact that the meaning of

being is clearly internal to Da-sein, while being itself is not, since it is obvious – at least it is obvious outside your system – that there are many beings that have nothing to do with Da-sein. Or rather it does not follow from the fact that the meaning of the word ‘being’ is internal to Da-sein that the nature of being is internal to Da-sein or that it can be exclusively or most fruitfully approached through it.

The merging of the question of the meaning of being (or even of the meaning of the word ‘being’) and the question of the nature of being (or of what there is) is the cornerstone of *Being and Time*. By subsuming the question of being under the question of the meaning of being, you have made it seem possible to identify being with *being as revealed to Da-sein*. For without Da-sein, being is without meaning and if the meaning of being is identical (from the point of view of ‘the question of being’) with the nature of being, then being without meaning is in some central sense *not* and certainly not something with which an ontology should concern itself. And that is why, also, for you, the (meaningful) ready-to-hand has ontological priority over the (‘bare’, ‘meaningless’) present-to-hand and those ‘objective presences’ that are investigated in the sciences. And why, for you, being-in-the-world is primordial. Why, finally, you feel that you can merely state these things without arguing them.

If, however, we hold the view that being has a being which goes beyond its meaning and, in particular its meaning to, in, for, within Da-sein – that there *is* a valid question of *the being of being* in addition to the question of *the meaning of being* – then the primordially of being as disclosed to and in Da-sein can no longer be taken for granted.

This will certainly be true if we hold that the question of the being of being is *more fundamental* than that of the meaning of being. This, at the very least, is an arguable position: what being means, what it can mean – to, for example, Da-sein – must surely be constrained by its intrinsic character, by what it is. It is, of course, easier to see this ontically, in the case of individual beings, than it is ontologically, in the case of being itself. For example, the respective meanings of a scorpion as opposed to that of a pebble or a friend to a human being will be constrained by their (intrinsic) natures: their pre-human nature will determine their meaning or possible meanings.⁶⁹ It is admittedly less easy to see this distinction between the meaning and the nature of being when being is taken as a whole, or we are talking about being in general – the legitimate concern of the ontologist.

But this is a point, Herr Professor, that tells against you as much as against myself. It suggests that you may, after all, be asking an inadmissible question; that asking for the ‘meaning of being’ – of being as a

whole or being in general – is asking for meanings at a level where meanings have not been differentiated and where it does not make sense to expect them to be differentiated. For ‘being’ is somewhere between the sum of beings (or all possible and all actual beings) and a category under which all beings (actual and possible) may be subsumed. And undifferentiated meaning – utterly non-specific meaning – is surely no different from the absence of meaning. Worse, it is probably a contradiction in terms, which at least the absence of meaning is not.

I am conscious that I am saying something pretty fundamentally damning here. Telling a philosopher that his answers are wrong is bad enough; but suggesting that there is something awry with his questions – well it’s the worst thing you can do to him. And it is true that I am dislodging the cornerstone of the entire project and the vast system of which *Being and Time* is the first storey. (And the thing I am questioning did seem to be a constant in your thought: the famous and much-quoted claims that ‘man is the shepherd of Being’ and that ‘language is the house of Being’ are different ways of asserting the primacy of the meaning of being to Da-sein or humanity over any intrinsic nature being may have)⁷⁰. Grounds for breaking off discussion, perhaps. But I would remind you that you have done more than a little demolition work in your time. You saw Descartes and Kant, for example, as simply barking up the wrong sequoia. And, as they say, if you’re going to dish it out, you’ve got to be prepared to take it as well.

To be serious, this question of the difference between the being of being and the meaning of being is fundamental, as is the relative priorities or primordially of the questions, ‘What is being?’ and ‘What is the meaning of being?’ It is perhaps a difference of our fundamental (certainly unargued, perhaps culturally inherited) intuitions. I feel that there is something there that is more than its ‘being-there’ or its being ‘there’ for Da-sein. That there is consequently a question of being that goes beyond the intelligibility of being that is implicit in our ‘average everydayness’. Whether that question can be intelligibly asked, never mind intelligibly answered, is another matter.

At any rate, I feel as if I have put my finger on the place where you seem to have eluded the questions that have bothered me for so long. It is also the place where we are *both* stuck. It is the place where I ask (and you refuse to ask) the questions that baffle me most and eat away from below at my own treatment (far from a solution) of the mind-body problem: my assertion of the fundamental and fundamentally irreducible nature of ‘explicitness’, which seems inexplicable – in

terms, for example, of physical or any (by definition) third person science. I should like, therefore, to stay with it a while longer.

Let me go back to a little passage I quoted in our earlier discussion of the mind-body problem in which something slips by ever so quickly but is the heart of the matter – the essential question mark against your ‘system’, the fundamental irresolution in my non-system:

However, only as long as Da-sein *is*, that is, as long as there is the ontic possibility of an understanding of being, ‘is there’ [*gibt es*] being. If Da-sein does not exist, then there ‘is’ no ‘independence’ either, nor ‘is’ there an ‘in itself’...*Then* it can neither be said that beings are, nor that they are not. *Now*, as long as there is an understanding of being and thus an understanding of objective presence, we can say that *then* beings will still continue to be. (BT 196)

A remarkable passage, Herr Professor: remarkably brave, remarkably bold. No wonder it is somewhat hurried. On one reading you could seem to be saying that being *is* only so long as there is Da-sein. In other words, Da-sein not only discloses beings, is the disclosedness of being, but it is that in virtue of which there are beings, so that there are no beings, there is no being, outside of Da-sein. Or, to use Pierre Bourdieu’s formulation of the matter, you are ‘identifying Being with what Being is in so far as it presents itself to *Dasein*’.⁷¹ That is how the nature of being(s) became enclosed in the meaning of being. Only so long as there is ‘an understanding of being and thus an understanding of objective presence’ can we say that ‘beings will still continue to be’. This, of course, sounds very like idealism, though the world is constructed here not out of minds and their experiences and ideas, but out of Da-sein. The world is disclosedness and without disclosedness, there is not only no world, but also no beings. Under such an interpretation, the question of the *nature* of being becomes identical with the question of the *meaning* of being: being has no nature independent of Da-sein which not only discloses it but *lets it be*.⁷²

The problem with this radical view, Herr Professor, is of course that it not only puts science in its place but seems to require you to set aside much – indeed most – of what science has revealed to us. If being, understood as the sum total of what is (and has been and will be), *is* only relative to Da-sein, then where there is no Da-sein, there will be no being – or, at the very least, no specific beings. From which we seem to be obliged to conclude that the universe has no history prior to the emergence of Da-sein. Now this may be an acceptable conclusion if we

think of Da-sein as the unique bearer of time, as being that through which time was imported into the frame of things; if, that is, we believe, as we noted you seem to do, that history is derived from temporality and the latter is grounded in care. But when we think of Da-sein as in some sense identical with human being (and, as we have already discussed, you have given many indications that you think it is), then we have the problem of dealing with the scientific evidence that the universe existed for a very long time before human beings and, indeed, before any kind of life showed up: the universe, and hence being, therefore far antedates Da-sein, who is a newcomer in the scheme of things.

There is a less radical interpretation of this extraordinarily revealing passage: it is that being is made explicit, that it is able 'to be there', in the sense of being *there*, or being explicitly there, only within Da-sein. This may seem to be a rather modest claim: that being can be there only where there is being-there! It does, however, Herr Professor, connect with my own view that being (or beings) become 'that which is the case' only in virtue of the explicitness that comes with consciousness, in particular human consciousness. This less radical interpretation – and my use of the word 'consciousness' means that it is a view you would not feel easy with – brings its own problems.

First, there is the question, which I have already noted, posed by but unanswered in my own *Explicit Animal*, as to the extent to which being is differentiated into beings that may give rise to different meanings, prior to, or independently of, Da-sein: what 'raw material' Da-sein has to work on. If we take the view that the configuration of the world is determined to a great extent prior to the emergence of Da-sein, or conscious existences, or human beings, or whatever, so that its potential meanings (or their range) are, as it were, 'passively' consumed by human beings or Da-sein, then we are obliged to overlook the active role played by human awareness, need, appetite – or to use your term, 'mode of attunement' – in determining the configuration of meaning Da-sein, or whatever, flickers over, is enjoyed in, is suffered in, the world. Da-sein merely 'lights up' what is there. Second, we have to face the return of all the difficulties that your dissolution of the mind-body problem had seemed to sideline. If, for example, we have Da-sein as a latecomer on an already existing scene of differentiated beings and possible differentiated meanings (or, at the very least, differential constraints on the meanings Da-sein might find in things), then the question arises as to how Da-sein gains access to this world that is prior, and so external, to it: how it accesses these different kinds of beings

and their meanings, how it gets to know of them, etc. The epistemological problem returns.

These, then, are the problems that are thrown up by the less radical, the seemingly less idealist, understanding of your equation of being with being as it presents itself to Da-sein and of your denying that there a question of the nature of being separate from the nature of the individual beings revealed as meaningful to Da-sein.⁷³ At any rate, this less radical interpretation – that there is a ‘given’ prior to Da-sein but that it is given only to Da-sein – still implies that there should be a question of the nature of being (in-itself – which is, despite all your protests to the contrary, in-itself) – that is more fundamental than the question of the meaning of being. If such a question about the *nature* of being is allowed back on the agenda, it will lead our inquiry *beyond* the existential analytic, the existence philosophy founded in an analysis of Da-sein. More to the point, it will license my re-opening the questions you may have thought to have closed; my bringing back to the discussion the very puzzles that I have lived with since my teenage years; recapturing the agenda for myself, for the middle-aged descendant of the terrified, quasi-Cartesian child that I was.

‘From now on’, I want to say, ‘I am alone’. I know, however, that your unignorable presence, your puzzles, your solutions, will still enclose me, and your voice will again and again break into my monologue. Our conversation, Herr Professor, is by no means over: it will follow me at precisely the same pace as I walk away from it.

Sunlight on My Arm

My ownmost place

It seems a long time, Herr Professor, since I began trying to take my leave of you, withdrawing into my own solitude from your solitary hut, leaving you to your own, or ownmost, solitude and its profound joys and equally profound darkneses, its spring days and November dusks. I have no 'ownmost' place in the sense you would understand or approve. I am city-born, have little knowledge of, or interest in, my ancestors, and my spiritual homes are acquired from without: they are not a deepening of my endogenous being. Your assertion that 'what is creative grows only out of native soil'⁷⁴ marks a fundamental difference between us: it may condemn me as shallow in your eyes but it also distances me from precisely the kind of *Volkisch* mythologies of self and nation that sent your self and your nation into the very abyss of Hell.⁷⁵ My spiritual homes are all borrowed. Worse, they are places not of continuous dwelling but of intermittent vacation: the English Lake District, Cornwall, the Greek isles. Does this not confirm your view that 'an English philosopher' is a contradiction in terms?

Perhaps you may temper your disapproval if I tell you that it was in the Greek islands where your thoughts first became important to me and where, subsequently, I came closest to realising those thoughts in sustained intuition. (Whether I apprehended them as you would have liked me to have done is another matter.) For all your dissent from the metaphysics the Greeks invented, you regarded them as Germany's only philosophical peers. I think you really did believe that when being talks to itself, when it discloses itself most truly, it does so preferentially in Greek or German.⁷⁶ (As Coleridge's father believed that

Hebrew, rather than French or Scouser, was 'the immediate language of the Holy Spirit'.) Your disapproval, or the idea of it, is important. For however far I imagine I have travelled away from you, I shall still find that you have travelled with me.

Even so, I have an idea of a 'heremost here' which will be a place where we come nearest to parting company and where I, who have for so long endeavoured to think along with you, will feel able to reverse our positions and invite you to think along with me, as I follow the way my thoughts, on the far side of my distances from you, take me.

And you should be glad of this. Did you not say that you wanted your collected *oeuvre* to be a matter of 'Ways, not works'? As you wrote, in a Preface to the *Gesamtausgabe*, composed a few days before you died, the point is not 'to communicate the opinion of the author, and not to characterise the standpoint of the writer' but to 'awaken the confrontation about the question concerning the topic of thinking'.⁷⁷ Nietzsche put the essential point more succinctly: 'One ill repays one's teacher if one remains forever a pupil.' After thirty years as your sometimes sceptical pupil, it is time that I moved on from, and out of, your spell, magician of Messkirch.

My place and my agenda, then. I am less sure about the agenda than about the place: where better than an old wall not far from the sea? I could just as well have settled for a wall in my favourite place in Cornwall as for one in the Greek islands. But sunshine – warm, secure, endless – is not negotiable, and that must mean Greece, though I shall not be surprised if I do not find myself drifting sometime in the direction of Cornwall; for I have been *trying to arrive* there once, twice, three times, even four times, yearly for over twenty years.⁷⁸

Here, then, is my place. And here are its elements: warmth, the sound of the sea, an old wall, sunlight. As I think – talking to a place somewhere between us – I shall endeavour to be simplified to those essential elements, to be given over to them as completely as it is possible for one whose life carries the full burden of the complexity built up over many decades of urban busyness. As we talk, or half-talk, or quarter-talk, I shall sit on the wall, enjoying the sunlight warm on my arm, listening to the sea, with my eyes half-closed.

The sea, I have decided, will be a little remote, a few hundred yards away. Between my thoughts and the sea's edge will be one of those perfect little beaches made of rounded middle-sized pebbles, polished for thousands of years by tides, the wind and time. As each clear wave breaks, the sea water will sluice through them, hissing and splashing and gurgling before completing its retreat unclouded. Close up, the

after-sound of each wave seems like applause as the polished pebbles knock against one another: the polite applause at a thinly attended cricket match. But here, further away, the thump and wash and simmering retreat of the separate waves are fused and they confuse themselves with the sound of the breeze in the pines and the murmur of the blood in my head. I could confuse them even with the sound of Aletheia's soft breathing, bearing that 'endless message that arises out of silence'. For I am on the edge of sleep, on the edge of slipping out of the being-with that constitutes the shared cosmos.

I want to hold this moment forever: *Verveile doch, du bist so schön!* And so I dress it with more detail. Since this is Greece, the sound of the breeze will be the swish of the pine trees and the rustling *sécheresse* of the reeds by the little dried up pool at the back of the beach. I am on the edge of the pines. Not far behind me is a little thick-walled church. It is encircled by bumpy, tussocky ground – with reddish, dust-dry earth giving life-support to yellow grass, spiky xerophytes and a few olive and fig trees – itself enclosed by a broken dry wall. When the declining sun grows orange, the whiteness of the little church will acquire a hint of blue, though for the present it is pure, harsh, absolute in its whiteness. I imagine the faint murmuring of voices from within the cup of cool-and-shadow enclosed within the stasis of brilliance and heat. And, in this birdless, aromatic, dry place, I hear the missing bird-song in the little freshwater spring by the church wall, uttering unclouded lucency. The songs unexpectedly echo the springwater flowing outside your hut and the rainwater dripping off the leaves in your northern forest.

Echoes, but from a far distance; for this is a place where we seek not authentic being-towards-death but authentic being-towards-life. Yes, Herr Professor, I too will one day die; and I know that this, my finitude, is constitutive of me, not merely an accidental, contingent fact. Like you, I want to overcome this overwhelmingly huge and terrible fact. Like you I want this fact to serve my life; to make me live more wisely, and more virtuously and more abundantly. And I believe that this is possible: did not E.M. Forster say that, while death destroys us, the idea of it may save us? Armed with the idea of death, I shall be a little better insulated against the telephone ringing and insufficient attention to the blackbird's song and too many or too great preoccupation with the recollection of a humiliation or an unnecessary task left incompleated and all the other things that make up the thick paste of average everydayness.

Next to your headstone

Martin Heidegger 1889–1976.

Therefore, I shall situate this one:

Raymond Tallis 1946–*.

The * is a placeholder; and what a place it holds! And from the certainty of this *, I shall try to unpack a joyful sense of the miracle of life; what you so beautifully characterised as ‘the wonder that a world is worlding round us’, so that the sound of a spoon clinking on a plate reveals the whole world of interlocking significances to which it belongs. But there our concordance ends. For I do not want the bleak nullity of ‘being-towards-death’ – though I cherish the secular revelation promised in your work: the revelation that breaks through to a sharper, deeper, *brighter* understanding that encompasses, rather than rejects, ordinary understanding. A revelation, of immanence rather than of transcendence, that will not dismiss this life as a dream, a delusion, a shimmering surface of appearances. I want to lose myself in the teeming shallows that are life’s true depths, and so to sheathe myself from the stark terror of death or, at least, to learn how to face death with wonder and even joy: to find comfort and delight, even safety, between the meshes of experience, where the ‘million-petalled’ mystery of our conscious being trembles in the breezes of presence and self-presence.

‘Thinking,’ you said, ‘is dwelling.’⁷⁹ Dwelling *upon*, of course. But also, beyond this, dwelling *in*: in this place, in my life, in my self, in my body. Thinking in the sunlight, feeling the sunlight on my arm, thinking the sunlight on my arm. Here, where I am furthest from your black revelation of our nullity, I must find, and dwell in, my own place. Here is my beginning; here in the warmth on my skin, in the intersection between the physical world and the living self, between objective presence and the hungry subject, between matter and mattering.

Here I am, then, on the threshold of thought, in that attentive awaiting, that watchful stillness, in which you encounter not only your own voice-in-the-head but also your own body: breathing, of course (and pausing in order to attend to itself, to obey the command implicit in the astonishment at itself: ‘I am this breathing thing!’ ‘I am this breathing!’); sensing the pressure on the buttocks and back of the thighs answering the downward pressure of one’s own weightiness, of the weight of the body one is and is not; aware of the not quite colic of the not quite evacuated bowels; and conscious, above all, of the sunlight on my arm ...

I begin with myself. Not considered as essentially or exclusively a kind of thinking substance, a *res cogitans*, or as a Cartesian hybrid – a

res cogitans attached to a *res extensa*, a body. No, I begin with myself experiencing the sunlight on my arm.

In pursuit of an authentic-being-towards-life beyond your being-towards-death, I begin with myself.

I am embodied.

I am embodied

I begin with myself. I begin with my warm body in the sun. I begin with the sunlight on my arm. And with the inner voice that articulates *that* I am a warm body in the sun, that I am warm, that I am a body, that I am in the sun. An inner light or anti-light of meaning, of abstract understanding, that articulates what it knows, that reaches beyond what it knows and understands towards further knowledge and more complete understanding.

Feeling the sunlight on my arm – warm, pleasant, evocative of so many past days – I want to ask: Is it the sunlight that I know or is it my arm? You will not like that question and your bodiless ghost grows restless at the resurrection of the ‘theoretician’ who ‘lacks an understanding of handiness’ (BT 65) and who does not appreciate that the ‘already-being-with’ in which knowledge is grounded ‘is not solely a rigid staring at something merely objectively present’ (BT 57). It is through this ‘rigid staring’ (your ghost wearily insists) that artificial problems are created: the problem of knowledge; of what it is we know, what knowing is, and who the knower is. But I find these problems, Herr Professor, returning again and again.

There is an interaction between a body I inhabit or am (or something half-way between the two: for I do not merely inhabit my body nor am I quite identical with it) in partial understanding and a world into which I am thrown in partial understanding, an understanding that fails utterly before the inscrutability of material objects. I cannot escape this belief: that the world that surrounds me is mediated to me by the body that I, to some extent, am; that (while it would be absurd to describe the body merely as ‘a device for knowing the world’) it seems as if I know the world through experiencing my body. To put this more precisely: out of this experiencing body comes my knowledge of the world (and of my body located within it), and – something deeper and wider and more primordial than knowledge – my actual being-there in the way that I am there.

So my question is valid: As I sit here enjoying the sunlight on my arm, is it the sunlight that I am knowing, or is it my arm?

There are, in truth, several questions:

- a) Do I know the sunlight on my arm? Do I really know the intrinsic nature of this wonderful benefaction that makes my body hum with pleasure?
- b) Or is it something else that I know? If so, what is it that I know when I experience or know the sunlight on my arm?

To spell it out more precisely: Is this experience a way of knowing:

- i) my arm?
- ii) sunlight?
- iii) myself (my soul, my essential self)?
- iv) something else totally different?
- v) nothing other than the experience itself?

What is it that my experience knows?

My arm?

This, it seems, can be set aside at once. My arm is composed of a large number of structures, exquisitely constructed and harmonised, none of which is revealed in my experience of the sunshine. The experience does not display my muscles, nerves, blood vessels; nor even – to preempt any such suggestion – my skin. Sunbathing is not dermatology. Nor – to anticipate the last-ditch position – does the experience reveal the sensory endings that I believe permit me to have this experience of the sunshine, or the current behaviour of those endings.⁸⁰

One can take this confession of ignorance further. The feeling of warmth on my arm is not only not a revelation of my arm in itself – what it is in its resting state, as it were, unawoken by sunlight; it is not even a revelation of something inherent but dormant in my arm which is made manifest by the neutral energy impinging on it from the sun. At first one might be inclined to suggest that it reveals something about my arm. After all, there would appear to be something in the difference between the arm and the wall I am sitting on, or between the arm and the tee-shirt with which I shall shortly cover it, that accounts for the fact that warmth is felt in arms but not in walls and tee-shirts. Is not this difference revealed in the sensation felt by my arm? Actually, no. For if I were to sever the spino-thalamic tract passing up the spinal cord from my arm – leaving my arm intact and, indeed, unchanged – I would no longer feel warmth on my arm. The feeling of warmth

cannot, therefore, be inherent in the arm itself. It is clearly not a revelation even of dormant but intrinsic properties of my arm. (I am not even sure that my arm *has* intrinsic properties. For more on this see note 69.)

Sunlight?

Well, yes and no. When I experience sunlight on my arm, I do acquire some knowledge; that, for example, there is sunlight in the place where I am. But what I do not acquire is knowledge of the sunlight; for example, that it has travelled 93,000,000 miles; that it originates from the sun, a star 93,000,000 miles away; that it has certain intrinsic characteristics – such as that it is electromagnetic radiation of a certain wavelength, etc. I do not, that is to say, experience *knowledge of the sunlight*. (Or: My experience does not amount to knowledge; or to objective experience of the experienced.)

Most importantly, there is no relationship between what I experience – gratifying warmth – and the electromagnetic radiation from the sun. There is nothing inherent in the sunshine that makes it gratifying – or, indeed, warm. There was obviously no *gratification* bundled in with it when it set off on its 93,000,000-mile journey from the four billion-year-old sun to my 54-year-old holidaying arm. Is there anything inherent in the sun that makes it *warm*? It isn't warm when it is travelling. Nor is it warm when it is landing on most surfaces – for example, the pebbles on the beach, the sea, the grass. It becomes, or gives rise to, warmth only under a particular, rather narrowly specified set of circumstances relevant to the needs of certain kinds of highly sophisticated, conscious living bodies – like mine. Whether or not sunshine is warm will be determined by the relationship between its propensity to increase the temperature of the surfaces it lands upon and the normal, or desirable, temperature of conscious, living bodies. Manifestly, this *relationship* is not inherent in the properties of the sunlight as it travels from the sun. Nor is it a property that is brought out when it lands on any old surface: its bathing the wall on which I am sitting is not associated with an experience of warmth in the wall itself. The lovely, warm old wall no more feels warmth than it feels lovely. So there is nothing in the energy that comes from the sun that corresponds to the feeling of warmth on my arm. This experience of warmth, therefore, does not amount to knowledge of the sun – not even inchoate knowledge.

Myself?

What is revealed to me as I experience this warm sunlight on my arm is that I am a kind of being that can experience and enjoy warm sunlight on my arm. Nothing else is on offer. From this warm sunlight, I learn nothing more about myself.

Something else totally different?

Yes, it would seem so. The feeling of warmth on my arm gives me knowledge neither of my arm (or my arm in itself) nor of the sunlight (or the sunlight in itself), nor of my self *qua* self. What I am knowing, feeling, enjoying, immersing myself in is simply this: the sunlight on my arm; or, if it needs spelling out, the-sunlight-on-my-arm. (The invocation of a hyphenated being will not have, I am sure, escaped Someone's attention. I wonder how you would you have managed, Herr Professor, if hyphens hadn't been invented!) Neither the sunlight nor the arm but the two in interaction: the sensation, the experience, simply is – or is *of* (no small distinction) – the interaction between the two. It is not a question of revealing (the inner – or intrinsic or objective – nature of) my arm or (the inner – or intrinsic or objective – nature of) the sunlight. Neither is known in itself; each is known through and in the interaction between them.

Well, really! If that is the case, how do I know that there is such a thing as sunlight separate from my arm and such a thing as my arm separate from sunlight? Why do I confidently speak of 'sunlight on my arm' and not just of unanalysable 'sunlightarm' or 'snarm'? Is it because I am aware of the sunlight on my arm through more than one channel – not only through somatosensory sensation but also through vision; and in vision the sunlight and the arm are clearly separated. But is this separation, based upon vision, invalid? Of course not: the arm and the sunlight are independent of one another.

Nothing other than the experience?

The question, therefore, remains: When I experience the delicious warmth of the sunlight on my arm, am I experiencing the sunlight or my arm? One answer would be that what I know is the experience of the interaction between them. Note: the experience of the interaction, not the interaction. That is to say, I do not know *anything* – or that I do not *know* anything: I merely have experiences and those experiences do not bring me anything (such as object knowledge) beyond that experience. And yet this can't be true: since all of our objective knowledge

and, indeed of our science (such as the astronomy that I dipped into just now), must ultimately be based on experiences such as sunlight on the arm, we must gain some knowledge through them. The facts that I invoked earlier to support the argument that neither I nor my arm know the intrinsic nature of the sunlight are just such facts. I go round in circles. You must be smiling, Herr Professor. (The smile is warped by more than a little malicious satisfaction at the marsh into which I have stumbled as a result of setting aside your ontology.) As I sit here enjoying the warmth of the sun on my arm, feeling that I am utterly at one with the body it is given me to live and the world it is given me to live in – at one with them, that is, apart from my thoughts about the things I am at one with and my further thought that I am at one with them – I am enjoying neither a revelation of my arm nor of the sunshine. I am not, therefore, enjoying the interaction between arm and sunshine ...

What, then, am I to make of this feeling of warmth on my arm, this revelation of the world and of myself-in-the-world, of my embodied existence on this lovely Hellenic day, as I stare dazedly at the lizards darting in and out of the wall (freezing to brooches when they sense my gaze on them), and listen to the crickets stitching the heat to the air and the reeds and the pines brushing the silence with those not-quite-sighs the slight breeze evokes from them?

Shall I retreat into that vessel of coolness, the little chapel, and – as I accustom my eyes to the comparative darkness, and entranced by a beam of light as firm and defined as a pillar, slanting down to the stone floor – appeal to the notion of some transcendental being who placed this awareness in me and made of it a source not only of experience but of knowledge? Or shall I simply step back and think again, before I am skewered on your triumphant I-told-you-so: ‘You should not have started with objective presences – your arm, the sunshine – and then you would not have got stuck in this impasse’?

Mmm. But we know, Herr Heidegger, that your way out doesn’t work because it does not account for the most important fact about being-there: that it is shaped by the object that is my body. In short, you bypass the central mystery which we all live out and upon which, ultimately, we are impaled, and that, Herr Professor, is no way for philosophy to proceed, let alone one that wants to recover the truth from the abyss of forgetfulness. Even if we were to accept, on the nod, the primordiality of *Da-sein*, we would still be left with the task of explaining the relationship between the third-person world of (true) scientific facts and the first-person world of experiences rich in secondary qualities such as warmth, not to speak of higher-order qualities (such as the

pleasure and comfort that are bundled with sunlight on my arm). Moreover, whatever you say, however maliciously you may smile, I shall still persist in trying to understand the relationship between:

- a) being, as in being a stone over there; and
- b) being, as in being a human body – my body, this body, here, sensing, suffering, being enworlded, and knowing a world.

All these things are clotted together in your notion of ‘Da-sein’ and that, Herr Sly-Peasant Professor, is simply not good enough.

In your system, everything is given, nothing is derived, never mind explained. How is it that we know what happens in our bodies, and through this, know what happens in a world that is manifestly beyond our bodies? How is it that we suffer or enjoy what we know? Where between the world we know as information and the world we suffer is constructed the creature that we are? How is it that we are able, through our actions and the choices that direct them, to some extent to shape what we suffer, enjoy and know and so plan our moments and guide our lives? You cannot, with your knowing smirk, deny me these questions. Not at least without evading your responsibilities as a philosopher.

And I for one will not let go of the mystery underlying them. The mystery, that is, of our relationship to the material world that surrounds us, a material world that you deny as having reality except as the slightly illegitimate child of a certain theoretical stance: ‘the rigid staring’ of the scientist or of the philosopher bewitched by physical science. I am speaking of the world of ‘objective presences’ – the world that seems variously to be composed of matter or energy or mass-energy. You admit that this world is revealed to us implicitly or inchoately or pre-theoretically, in the frustration of our plans when the ready-to-hand fails us and precipitates out of the web of signification as the merely present-at-hand. In admitting this, you have already allowed into your ontology more than you know, or at least admit to. For the emergence of the present-at-hand when our plans are frustrated shows that there really is an *outside* – beyond our plans, beyond Da-sein and its projects – that is real. It is this reality that science explores and technology exploits. For science is human investigation freed from a particular moment of interest. (Not, of course, freed from all – all human – interest.) And so long as you reject the fundamental truth of what is revealed to the contemplative or theoretical stance and the traditional philosophy that ‘privileges this detached attitude’⁸¹ – you cannot begin get a grip on the miracle of objective knowledge and science.

Science advances – and our collective knowledge and our ability to act on and shape the world in which we live and have our being advances in its wake – *because* we humans have the capacity to see the general properties of things independently of their being revealed to a particular interested action. We see truths beyond, and deeper than, the world that is the inner accusative of our interested actions. For example, in science we do not merely seize the hammer and use it. We respect it as something that is not entirely assimilated to our goals, as something having properties, a nature, of its own. Beyond its involvement in our actions, our projects, there is always a residual presence of the thing as something in itself. These properties are both particular and general and the latter connects it with other things. I examine the hammer for its properties – weight, tensile strength, centrifugal force when I swing it, etc. I also look at the most general features of plans that may or may not be served by a hammer – or something like it. In this way, I arrive at a general specification of tools that might serve better the purposes, themselves generally specified, that hammers serve at present.

I am talking about technology ('the most monstrous transformation our planet has ever undergone'⁸²). Technology, as has often been said, is explicitness. There are two aspects to this explicitness: making explicit the general nature of the goals we wish to achieve through tools; and making explicit the general properties that would have to be instantiated in tools that serve those purposes. Both aspects require a recognition of something that lies outside the momentary plans that engage us, beyond the flux of *Da-sein* and its endless being-ahead-of-itself. This is not at all monstrous; indeed it is a form of 'piety' (to expropriate your famous word): for successful technology requires not only that we reflect on the general nature of our needs (and so respects our collective identity through commonality of need); it also requires that we in part wake up out of those needs and recognise that there is something outside of them, a world of non-human beings that have their own properties. Contrary to what is popularly held by critics of our 'instrumental relationship to nature',⁸³ science does not put us to sleep: it is rooted in a profound wakefulness to the otherness of the world, a wakefulness that is aware of the things that lie beyond our immediate interests and needs. Technological man is not someone who cares less for things; but his care is less fastened to its momentary objects. And, indeed, such technology-driven scientific enquiry opens on to enquiry for its own sake – that dispassionate questioning that you described as 'the piety of thought': the alchemist hoping to dis-

cover a means of transforming base metals into gold, the warlord wanting to double his firepower, open the way to wonder-driven research into the properties of metals (the Periodic Table, quantum mechanics, astrophysics) – simply because such interested enquiry requires much disinterested intermediate action (or places so many stages between wants and their satisfaction). I am thinking here, Herr Professor, of Auden's 'first collector of shells to forget his dinner'.

So there is a 'piety of thought' (this repeated use of your famous phrase is intended to scandalise you)⁸⁴ that recognises an objective world, a world that has nothing to do with human concerns, a world of objective presences, of objects composed of something that may be characterised as matter or mass-energy – of objects like the sun, and sunlight and, even, my arm. A piety that, far from forgetting being, is only too aware of it: as utterly other than ourselves, inassimilable to our immediate, or intermediate, or even ultimate needs. This is the essential piety of science that says that the universe – Being, if you like – is greater than human beings, greater than Da-sein, greater than what I want here and now. It recognises that there was a universe of material beings before there was a human world, that this universe has not only antedated but may well out-endure Da-sein and disclosedness. That the question of being, or even the question of the nature of being(s), reaches beyond the intelligibility of being to Da-sein as it is presupposed or implicit in our 'everyday background practices'.

You probably think that I accept the deliverances of science too readily. That I am a naive child of my age, so blissfully forgetful of being as to be utterly unaware even of my own amnesia. Before I take this discussion with myself any further, I would like to bring you back into the conversation a little more. Specifically, I would like to address – and challenge – what you seemed to have about science in *Being and Time*. Unsurprisingly, you try to enclose not only science (its practices, its pronouncements and its institutions) but also the states of affairs that it describes, within Da-sein and being-in-the-world by taking on one of its greatest achievements: the laws of motion discovered by the 'incomparable Mr. Newton' – the man who heard the sundial's tick.

Mr. Newton enters the discussion in the wonderful pages you devote to 'Da-sein, Disclosedness, and Truth' – the famous section 44 of your masterwork. '*There is*', you say, '*truth only insofar as Da-sein is and as long as it is*' (BT 208):

Beings are discovered only *when* Da-sein *is*, and only *as long as* Da-sein *is* are they disclosed. Newton's laws, the law of contra-

diction, and any truth whatsoever, are true only as long as Da-sein is. Before there was any Da-sein, there was no truth. For in such a case truth as disclosedness, discovering, and discoveredness *cannot* be. (BT 208)

So far, so good. (Indeed, I have argued as much myself.⁸⁵) But then you run into trouble. You argue, quite correctly, that before Newton's laws were discovered, they were not true. This is perfectly obvious: an unpromulgated law can be neither true nor false. Before they were discovered, Newton's laws were not false, either. And you point this out yourself:

Before Newton's laws were discovered, they were not 'true'. From this it does not follow that they were false or even that they would become false if ontically no discoveredness were possible any longer. (BT 208)

However, it does not follow from this that, prior to Newton, the (as yet undisclosed) physical universe did not unfold in accordance with patterns that were later summarised in Newton's laws. For example, the movement of the planets did not suddenly change in 1687 to conform to Newton's laws of motion. And, again, you recognise this: 'With the discoveredness of beings, they show themselves precisely as the beings that previously were' (BT 208). So it is entirely wrong, or at least seriously misleading or confusing, for you to say that 'The laws became true through Newton' (BT 208). What is correct is that Newton's laws did not exist before Newton, though the patterns of behaviour of material objects which make the laws true did. In other words, the laws came into existence with Newton, though the patterns that make them true antedate Newton – and indeed they came into being shortly after the origin of the universe, billions of years ago. Newton made the laws explicit, though the states of affairs of which they are true were there all the time.

Your mistake, Herr Professor, is to confuse (or to encourage others to confuse) what it is that makes scientific laws able to be either true or false – namely their being brought into distinct existence by being promulgated, by being written down – with what it is that makes them either true or false. I have expressed this elsewhere as a confusion between the *existence conditions* of a true or false statement and the states of affairs that make statements either true or false – their truth or falsity conditions.⁸⁶ Before Newton, his laws were neither true nor false; they were simply not; though the general patterns of behaviour

of material objects which they describe, and which make those laws a true account of how things are, were in place.

It is arguable that you don't need to have been reminded of this but your distaste for technology has, it seems to me, made you happy to promote certain ambiguities regarding the truth of science and to attempt to cut science down to size by enclosing it within the 'discoveredness' of Da-sein. This is misconceived because it is based on a confusion between, on the one hand, the practice and pronouncements of science, its investigations and its written down knowledge, and, on the other hand, the properties of the universe which it endeavours to describe, the things it has discovered and now knows. Science – as an institution and a human activity and as a body of knowledge that we have access to – is enclosed within Da-sein, but the universe it describes is not.

Let me nail this point once and for all with a couple of rather homely examples:

- a) It is true that on this beach there is a piece of bleached driftwood six feet from a pebble that I particularly admire and that this distance is approximately equivalent to the height of my elder son. This truth did not exist until I made it explicit. Once I have made it explicit, and a matter of which I am conscious, the truth exists in a sense in which it did not exist before – it is *a fact* that has a distinct existence. Its truth, however, is not internal to my consciousness – it is not something I have made up: its truth depends entirely on the existence or otherwise of the state of affairs – the spatial relationship between the pebble and the bit of driftwood, and the relationship between that and the height of my son – which I have described.
- b) At some time in the history of the human race, it became apparent to human beings that the universe they lived in had existed before there had been any human beings. Let us call the year when that was first realised, Year X. The fact that nobody realised before Year X that there was a pre-human universe does not imply that before Year X there was no pre-human universe.

These examples show that we are not entitled to identify the discoveredness in a fact with the fact that is discovered. Nor may we identify the world discovered to Da-sein (or RT's 'explicitness') with the 'discoveredness', 'disclosedness' that is Da-sein. While it is quite right to say that Newton's laws are true only as long as Da-sein *is*, this is to give a

(misleading) half of the story. The full story is that Newton's laws exist (in order to be true) only so long as Da-sein is (or they are made given distinctive existence in explicitness), while the things that make them true, of course, are quite independent of Da-sein (or explicitness). One could put this another way: the existence of a truth requires a truth-bearer (a person) plus truth-conditions that are met. You have rather overemphasised the truth-bearer (Da-sein) at the expense of the truth-conditions. Others, as I have myself argued, have rather overlooked the truth-bearer.

Many things seem to me to follow from this, as I sit among the pine trees, glad of their shade, listening to their ceaseless intimation of the self-delighting beauty of the world mingling with the endless not-quite-message of the sea. The first is that Da-sein at some stage came into being in a material world that was not internal to Da-sein – either to its 'ownmost' self or the collective consciousness that is the 'they-self'. This world beyond Da-sein is appropriately described as being composed of material objects. Or, come to that, as being made up of objective presences – of things that are:

- i) continually there,
- ii) unconnected with oneself (seen in this context as a subject) or with a collective they-self,
- iii) not transparent to consciousness, and
- iv) having to be taken account of in the realisation of projects and possibilities.

Since these objects largely antedate Da-sein, they can be quite validly regarded as the reality that Da-sein has to negotiate in order to achieve its aims – related directly or indirectly to its needs and its first-, second- and third-order appetites. The world negotiated by Da-sein may not unreasonably be thought of as a collection of (more or less) meaningful things more or less connected with one another against a background of things that are simply there as setting.

You can see where this is leading back to, Herr Professor: my stubbornly reiterated position that 'objective presence' is not an artefact of the 'theoretical' way of looking at things which supposedly overlooks their primordial 'handiness'. While it may be the case that 'Being-in-the-world, as taking care of things, is *taken in by* the world which it takes care of' (BT 57), it is also the case that those things lie in some important sense outside Da-sein: they are outside the entity that Da-sein, *as an individual rather than a category*, is primarily 'entangled' with: its body.

Thus have I broken with your spell, at last. Once we break with your spell and are able to assert without hesitation that the question of being cannot be subsumed into the question of the meaning of being or the question of the meaning of the word 'being', then all sorts of problems and mysteries, hitherto ruled out of bounds, return – to delight, but also to haunt and to bother, us. For example:

- a) Is there meaning before explicitness/Da-sein?
- b) Is there even differentiated being before explicitness/Da-sein?
- c) Or, if it is accepted that there is such differentiated meaning, how much meaning, how much differentiation?
- d) Is the meaning or nature of things determined before or outside of explicitness/Da-sein?

A long way back (when we were talking about the body and physical death and the body as viewpoint) I felt that I had established, against your view and to my own satisfaction, that, while in one sense there is no 'outside of Da-sein' because it is through Da-sein that there are out-sides (and insides), in another sense there *is* an outside of Da-sein; for there is pre-history, the great endless, boundless history of the universe in the absence of Da-sein. So I ask again: What is given? (Or what is *primordially* given?) And I ask also: To whom (or to what) is it given? And: by what means is it *the* given? And by what means is the given given?

These questions are utterly fundamental. As is the observation – what you made visible – that the givenness of the given cannot be accounted for by the properties that we allow to what is given: physical things do not account for their own being-present. What, in short, is the origin and nature of givenness?

No answers forthcoming – to this, our (yes, *our*) fundamental question.

Rigid staring in the sunlight

Let me begin by marking out my distances from you:

a) The primordial reality of objective presence

Objective presence may be an artefact of the 'theoretician' who 'lacks an understanding of handiness' (BT 65) and who does not appreciate that the 'already-being-with' in which knowledge is grounded 'is not solely a rigid staring at something merely objectively present' (BT 57) but that is not, and cannot be, the end of the matter. My being here is inseparable from my being embodied and my being embodied cannot

be extricated from the fundamental fact of my being (amongst other things) a body among other (living and non-living, human and non-human) bodies. My tripping over something on the floor, or having to exert effort to carry something from A to B, or to get myself up the stairs, is no less fundamental to my being-in-the-world than the web of significance that is 'constitutive of Da-sein' and 'the significant whole' that is its world. Of course, tripping over and exerting force are themselves subordinated to purposes and so part of that web of significances. They can, indeed are, incorporated into it; but this does not mean that they are dissolved into it without remainder. The present-at-hand does not completely dissolve into the ready-to-hand, is not totally taken up into it; being-in-the-world, as constitutive of Da-sein, does not entirely ingest the world of physical bodies. If the latter were purely internal to Da-sein, or were an artefact of one of its ways of articulating the world, then there would be no outside for Da-sein and no external constraints upon it. The condition of our lives would be no different from the one posited by magic thinking or one of its more respectable cousins, such as Kantian idealism.

Let me try to put it another way. Physical space, time, energy, matter may be abstractions derived from a particular way of looking at the world – one that gives primacy to 'objective presences' over the ready-to-hand that we live amidst in our ordinary dealings with the world. This way of looking may have originated from the Greek world where light and vision have (as Martin Buber, I think, pointed out) primacy among the senses but it still has to be accounted for. Or (since to put the problem this way is already to concede too much to your standpoint) the authority and efficacy of these viewpoints have to be explained. Here are some illustrations:

- i) The act of reaching for some food is infused with meaning, but this meaningful act can be accomplished only by taking account of things that do not, it appears, carry the charge of significance they bear for the person reaching for food.
- ii) The impact that I feel when I trip over an object is partially social (humiliation) and partly sensory (pain, etc.), but it is rooted in, occasioned by, accounted for, something that is neither social nor sensory: the physical interaction of physical bodies.
- iii) Our every action can be understood in physical terms as well as in terms of the consciousness of the agent and both aspects are necessary and have parity. They are (to use a favourite term of yours) *equiprimordial*.

- iv) Death may be my 'ownmost' possibility – or the ownmost possibility of Da-sein whose world is a world that is always and always-already its own. Its universal inevitability, however, and its particular occasion are accounted for by the (universal) physical properties of the body and its mode of interaction with other bodies – the bodies in a world that lies outside Da-sein and is by no stretch of the imagination to be described as its 'ownmost' world.

I am embodied. And, though my body and the bodies that I interact with in pursuing my life are assimilated for the most part into the complex lacework of meanings that constitute my world, my endless being-ahead-of-myself, they are not dissolved without remainder into those meanings; indeed if they were, there would be no basis for the differentiation of meanings. If there were no 'other' in the material world to be taken account of, no unchosen given, there would be no shape, direction or differentiation to Da-sein's purposes and the actions that are shaped, directed and differentiated would be arbitrary and pointless. Without these external constraints, there would be nothing to give specific content to the possibilities that exercise Da-sein. We would be beyond even the frictionless realm of magic thinking; for the magic – disconnected from particular needs, specific projects, distinct goals – would have no content. Da-sein would be an openness to nothing, an iteration of the empty tautology of itself that we have run into so often before. The 'null ground of nullity' would not get off its null ground, have no reason for getting off its null backside.

b) Minds and bodies

Once it is conceded that there is bodied reality ('thingliness') that is genuinely outside Da-sein and has at least equal priority with Da-sein and its constitutive being-in-the-world, then we may take the notion of the world as an interaction between bodies ('objective presences') seriously again. We are licensed to abandon equivocation (at last!) and to think of Da-sein as being deeply connected with individual bodies. Even to suggest that there is, for each living human body, a faculty of making things 'be there', such that that body is enworlded – not in the sense merely of being physically surrounded, but in the sense of being engaged with other bodies in a world, which amounts largely to a web of meanings, or even a sheet, or continuum, of meanings which involve a body-world and a world both distinct from and coupled to a

body. All this is heresy to you and shows how little I have learned from you. Or how little I have agreed to accept your ontology.

For you can see where all this is leading to. If there are Da-seins corresponding to each living body – an inevitable conclusion, once the notion of Da-sein is driven out of the shelter of ambiguity and forced to declare finally whether it is a mass noun or a count noun – then we are back to the old questions about the relationship between mind and body, of consciousness and matter.

Of course, I know that, under some formulations, the mind–body problem is an artefact, generated by mistaking the ‘shadows cast by the opacity of words’ (to use Friedrich Waismann’s phrase) for things. There is no excuse for thinking of the mind as a special kind of thing or substance somehow non-spatially inhabiting the space-occupying and spatially located body. And there is equally little excuse for addressing the problem as if it were about explaining how transparent, weightless minds are acted upon and themselves act upon inscrutable, weighty matter. Such misformulations arise from thinking of consciousness as an ‘interior’, a special hidden place that is one’s very own, as a packet of stuff, or (as you put it so beautifully) as a ‘cabinet’ where one repairs with ‘the booty’ seized by perception (BT 58). (You and I *are* at one on this, believe me. The neural theories of consciousness that I have spilt so much printer’s ink opposing are ‘packet’ theories, with consciousness being tucked away in the head. Or the brain. Or a bit or bits of the brain.) But even without those daft ideas, there are still real questions about the relationship between mind and body, mind and world, consciousness and material reality, between what we (materially) are and what we experience.

To mention just the one that lies nearest to hand: if ‘being there’ is connected with an individual, has individual instances that are entangled with the fate, the location, the vicissitudes of a particular body (an assumption you cannot escape, Herr Professor, once Da-sein’s cover of ambiguity is blown) what then is the origin and definition of the ‘here’ upon which its being-in-the-world is centred? (We may, not too frivolously, rephrase the mind–body problem as the ‘here-heaviness’ problem. Or recast the mind–body–world problem as the ‘me–it–that/those’ problem. And then we shall note that not only is the handiness of a hammer different from the presence to hand of the material objects studied by science – or, come to that, the material objects encountered in unhandiness – but it is also different from the handiness of my hand!)

These are my problems as well as yours. And there are others that I have already adumbrated, but which we need now to face head on.

Existential and scientific truths

Once we allow the world of material objects back into our ontology, and accord the kinds of things discussed by the objective science (whose most characteristic expression is physics) at least equal status with *Da-sein*, then we run into the problem of connecting the truths of science with the truths of daily experience. (A good reason, I imagine you retorting, for barring these things from your ontology!)

There are two sorts of problems:

i) The often-remarked difficulty of finding in the world as described by science – a universe of impersonal matter – the values that suffuse our every waking moment. Science treats the world as if it had nothing to do with us. There is no ‘mattering’ in its matter – whether we consider the matter of which our bodies and their brains are composed or the matter that makes up the rest of the universe. There is (to use your inexhaustible phrase) no Care in it, no basis for our endless heeding, our eternally preoccupied, possibility-projecting, *Angst*-ridden, selves. In the matter (or mass-energy) that is the fundamental stuff of the world – its beginning, middle and end – there is being without meaning. Matter is that mode of being whose being is *not* an issue for itself. (Greetings from Greece to Herr Stuhl!)

ii) The equally important difficulty of trying to understand how the general truths of science connect with – in particular arise from – the truths of everyday life. The journey from my personal experiences to the laws of physics, from my experience of sitting on the wall in this sun, to our knowledge that the universe had such and such a form in the first second of its existence billions of years ago, is not easily traced. What are the steps that link primary (even primordial) experiences such as this delicious sensation of sunlight on my arm to the reliable knowledge that this warmth has originated from an object 93,000,000 miles away? (How many arm-lengths, how many RT-lengths!) By what means do we collectively move so securely from our personal experiences to objective, robust general knowledge? The experiential-existential-intellectual audit trail is woe-fully incomplete.

This brings us straight back to the question asked by your sadly abused mentor, a question which you rejected as you rejected him:

How can experience as consciousness give or contact an object? How can experiences be mutually legitimated or corrected by each other, and not merely replace each other, or confirm each other subjectively? How can the play of consciousness whose logic is empirical make objectively valid statements, valid for all things that exist in and of themselves? ... How is natural science to be comprehensible ... to the extent that it pretends at every step to posit and know a nature that is in itself – in itself, in contrast to the subjective flow of consciousness?⁸⁷

You may have rejected Husserl's starting point – or his idea of where we all start from (for example, his 'Idea of a subject which has intentional experiences merely inside its own sphere' and his treatment of meanings 'being the products or ingredients of mental acts').⁸⁸ And you may be perfectly correct in seeing it as a fundamental error – the mistake at the heart of his dream of philosophy as 'serious, rigorous, indeed apodictically rigorous science' – to imagine that he could unpack the common cosmos from the deliverances of and to an isolated consciousness. But his errors do not justify your evading the profound puzzle that he addressed with unwearied honesty, the relationship between individual experience and collective, cumulative knowledge; more precisely, between, as we have said, the succession of our individual perceptions and the collective progress of science. This is a real puzzle – if only because the remarkable effectiveness of science-based technology implies that scientists must have got some (very big) things right. (Whether or not one likes technology or – because it is supposedly the supreme expression of 'forgetfulness of being' – hates it is irrelevant to the truth of the science that underpins it.)

My difficulty is to understand how we derive the big truths of science from the small truths of everyday life – astronomy from the sense of sunlight on my arm. You have the opposite difficulty, as we have noted already: your *Da-sein* has too little to learn because – except when it is blown off course by 'gassing' – everything is open to its disclosedness; as for values, they are built into its world 'which is always mine' and is woven out of possibilities-for-me. Magic thinking, magician.

The reason your account of things does not permit progressive understanding of the world and accumulation of ever more reliable knowledge is that *Da-sein* is too self-sufficient from the beginning: it is in the world, it is with others, it is disclosedness. There is nothing for it to learn, because it simply is, and is complete, in this disclosedness.

The very overthrow of the notion of the primordially of things 'objectively present' not only displaces science and the scientific world-picture as the basis for ontology, it also precludes any account of why Da-sein should need science, how it should conceive of the kind of pursuit of knowledge science supremely embodies and how it could ever wake up out of itself sufficiently to enact this pursuit.

Of course, there are faults on both sides. The scientific world-picture you reject provides no place for the existential world-picture – for beings whose being is an issue for themselves, for mood, for value, for many of those all-pervasive features of ordinary life whose centrality we are both agreed upon. The existential view, on the other hand, which begins with Da-sein whose being is being-in-the-world, allows no room for science, or indeed objective (or even factual) knowledge. If "Intuition" and "thought" are both already remote derivatives of understanding' (BT 138), how could 'intuition' and 'thought' *reform* understanding? It would seem that the die is already cast and the bounds of knowledge already drawn up to proscribe genuine scientific discovery.

I should like to press this point a little further. If 'the disclosedness of the there in understanding is itself a mode of the potentiality-of-being of Da-sein' (BT 138), we seem to have a closed circle, from which no escape is possible. (Attunement and understanding are the primordial disclosedness of being-in-the-world.) To say that there is something called 'interpretation' in which 'understanding interprets what it has understood in an understanding way' (BT 139) explains nothing. Indeed, your own assertion that 'any simple predicative seeing of what is at hand is in itself already understanding and interpretive' (BT 140) suggests that there is no way out of the closed circle, especially as understanding and interpretation seem to be on the same level as each other and especially, also, as these are embedded in the relation of the in-order-to which belongs to the totality of relevance 'in terms of which what is simply encountered is understood' (BT 140), as 'interpretation is never a presuppositionless grasping of something previously given' (BT 141), that there is necessarily posited with interpretation 'fore-having, fore-sight, fore-conception' (BT 141) and that, like meaning, it is 'structured by fore-having, fore-sight, and foreconception' (BT 142). Despite this, you seem to accept the existence of beings whose mode of being is unlike that of Da-sein which 'must be understood as *unmeaningful*, as essentially bare of meaning as such' (BT 142).

You yourself are aware of this apparent circularity of understanding and argue that the 'circle is not a circle in which any random kind of

knowledge operates but it is rather the existential fore-structure of Da-sein itself' (BT 143). But this – as we have earlier remarked – doesn't get you off the hook because it does not explain how Da-sein can break out of its 'always already' into knowledge it never had before of things it had never conceived of; knowledge, such as that which led to the discovery and production for example of safe antibiotics, therapies that may stop certain Da-seins from dying?

Even if we interpret your assertion that the 'circle' (your quote marks) belongs to the *structure* of meaning as if it referred only to the fact that meaning is internal to Da-sein (so that "the charge of circularity" itself comes from the kind of being of Da-sein', BT 291), this offers no way of breaking out of the successive moments of Da-sein into a world in which reliable knowledge of the world we encounter is built up over millennia by the collective effort of millions. You yourself recognise that the 'circle' encompasses not only the fact that we have as it were to approach Da-sein from inside of it – that we have self-evidently to understand the understanding of being from within understanding itself – but also extends to the being of Da-sein itself, which is 'circular' (BT 291). The understanding of Da-sein will be made up (as it were) of more Da-sein or carried out by Da-sein: one cannot get outside Da-sein to understand Da-sein because Da-sein, and Da-sein alone, is that in virtue of which there is understanding. Da-sein has no outside from which it may be understood.

I am happy to accept this as an acknowledged limit on your existential analytic. The trouble is, it is more than that: it is also a limit imposed not just upon Herr Professor Heidegger's understanding of Da-sein but upon Da-sein itself, preventing it from breaking out of the charmed circle of itself. And that is why I hold that starting with Da-sein is both a methodological error and an ontological mistake. Why, in short, you should have kept the question of the being of being distinct from the question of the meaning of being.

In fairness, you do have a go at trying to connect the world of moment-to-moment experience as it is engaged in by Da-sein in 'circumspect taking care' (for which innerworldly beings are entities ready-to-hand, such as tools) and the realm of scientific knowledge – more generally, 'the theoretical discovery of things objectively present in the world'. You attempt an 'existential genesis of science' (BT 328), with the aim of incorporating it within your existential analytic of Da-sein. You argue that the seeds of the theoretical stance are to be found in the practical taking care of things. This is to be observed, you say, in *deliberation*, which is 'specific bringing near of what is taken care of by

interpreting it circumspectly' (BT 328). This deliberation 'must in the scheme of making present adapt itself to the kind of being of what is to be brought near' (BT 329), 'it must interpret itself in the schema of the as-structure' (BT 329). By this I take you to mean that, in order deliberately to make use of an entity, one needs to recognise and respect its (intrinsic) nature, and this implies locating it under, or allocating it to, a general category. Such activity, you claim, is already charged with an inchoate form of 'theoretical investigation'. Then, by a dizzying sequence of jumps, you manage to reach theoretical science. Here is how I read the sequence.

If, in our circumspect use of tools, say, we find that a hammer is too heavy or too light, we thereby discover a property of 'heaviness' in the tool. At this moment we break out of the web of significance that is the ready-to-hand: 'the discourse understood in this way is no longer in the horizon of the awaiting retention of the totality of useful things and its relations of relevance' (BT 330) but 'a corporeal thing that is subject to the law of gravity' (BT 330). Circumspect, 'practical' talk about the hammer being 'too heavy' or 'too light' at this point ceases to have any 'meaning'. We are in the world of 'objective presences', presences that are also indifferent as to place: 'we *overlook* not only the tool-character of the being encountered, but also that which belongs to every useful thing at hand: its place' (BT 331). From this it is but a step to 'the mathematical project of nature itself' (BT 331). This project 'discovers in advance something constantly objectively present (matter) and opens the horizon for the guiding perspective on its quantitatively definable constitutive moments (motion, force, location, and time)' (BT 331).

All of which, Herr Professor, is more than a little surprising, coming from your good self. If science originates in the fact that practical circumspect handling has to take account of the actual nature of the things it handles, does this not suggest that these things do, after all, have objective natures which must be respected in order that we can achieve the projects that *Da-sein* projects for itself? Now, if we accept this (and anyone with common sense, unbewitched by the magician from Messkirch, does accept this) and also grant the 'constant objective presence' to which it opens the way, then have we not accepted the view, forbidden by your existential analytic, that the objects we deal with in everyday life do, despite all your protests to the contrary, have those real, intrinsic properties that science discovers? The notion of objects as 'other than *Da-sein*' and as objective presences is not, therefore, merely the product of an artificial 'rigid staring' or the inappropriate re-introduction of the theoretical stance into practical daily life.

There is, of course, the bit where you say it and the bit where you take it back – in this case, the bit where you betray your existential analytic and the bit where you come to its rescue. You can re-assimilate the world uncovered by science and the objective view and bring science back into the fold of Da-sein by denying that there are ‘bare facts’. The ‘thematic beings’ of mathematical physics, you then argue ‘are discovered in *the* only way that beings can be discovered: in the prior project of their constitution of being’ (BT 332). *Thematization* – ‘the articulation of the understanding of being, the definition of the subject-matter defined by that understanding, and the pre-figuration of the concepts suitable to these beings’ (BT 332) – ‘aims at freeing beings encountered within the world in such a way that they can “project” themselves back upon pure discovery, that is they can become objects. Thematization objectifies’ (BT 332). The ‘thematization of innerworldly beings presupposes being-in-the-world as the fundamental constitution of Da-sein’ (BT 332). By this means, not only science, but also the world uncovered by science, is reincorporated back into Da-sein.

There are two ways of responding to this rescue operation:

- 1) Accept your argument, in which case, I am sorry to say, Herr Professor, we are back in the realm of magic thinking.
- 2) Point out that the argument confuses two quite different things:
 - i) the context that makes science and its practices possible – Da-sein and being-in-the-world; and
 - ii) the world revealed to, and in, science.

Separating those two things brings ‘objective presences’ back on the menu and Da-sein and being-in-the-world and the ready-to-hand are seen no longer to be the sum total of things in the world, or even the sum total of things primordially in the world. Your confusion between the practices of science (and the conditions necessary for there to be science) and the findings of science is precisely analogous to your confusion about the truth of Newton’s laws.

And so I have steered the argument back to my old preoccupations – the things with which I have filled too many pages of too many books: the relationship between the material world, of which science sees us as a part, and the conscious experiences that constitute our lives, our selves, indeed, everything that matters – the relationship between matter and mattering. For if science is true, or captures important truths, then there are deep questions about the place our first-person, value-saturated consciousness occupies in its third-person, value-free

world. More precisely, there is a mystery about how the first person comes to be in such a world. It is all very well to say that what science tells us about our experiences and what we experience are two levels or aspects of the truth, but there is still a need to trace the connections between them – an urgent need to find out how they are connected.

You began, Herr Professor, with *Da-sein* and *being-in-the-world*. You think this lets you off having to explain how we know a world outside of ourselves. You are no longer required, you believe, to solve the traditional ‘problem of knowledge’ because it is an artificial problem arising from the erroneous notion of an ‘isolated’ or ‘inner’ subject facing an external reality consisting of ‘objective presences’. Instead you have *Being-in-the-world*, which is constitutive of *Da-sein*: we don’t have to find some epistemological glue to stick outside and inside together because they are not separated in the first place. The trouble is that you cannot then account for the actual outside we encounter: the near outside of that inscrutable object – that lovely pebble – over there; the intermediate outside of things beyond our sensory field, the things that bring the unexpected futures we live through, the events round those many corners we cannot see past; or the many-layered far outside of the universe as revealed to and in science.

If, on the other hand, we begin with the objective world of science, we cannot explain how there is, amid coordinateless matter, such a thing as ‘here’, ‘now’, ‘me’, ‘mine’ and all those other things that make up the world which is to some degree mine and in so far as it is mine adds up to ‘my world’, the world in which I am a responsible agent, not a set of mechanisms, a world in which there are actions as well as happenings, actions based upon happenings and mechanisms, in which there are sorrows and schemes and delights, as well as energy transfers.

Back to my own preoccupations, indeed. Even so, I had hoped that in this final part of the conversation, I would be left a little more to myself. But your thoughts and my thoughts about them, Herr Professor, have dominated my soliloquy in the sunlight. As, indeed, I knew they would. However, it seems that I am trying to return (with thanks – of which more presently) all that I once took from you, giving it back with the feeling that it is no longer of use.

And yet, and yet, there is much that I still admire about your great masterpiece: your spell is not entirely broken. For behind your insights are many things that I share. Foremost among them is the certainty that we shall never be able to arrive at an understanding of, never mind explain or derive, the sense of the world – explicitness, values,

everything that we heed and care for – if we begin with, or give priority to, what you call ‘objective presences’, and I call by many names but most often ‘material objects’. There is more to the sunlight on my arm, to my feeling of being so deliciously bathed in sunlight, than can be accounted for by interactions between material objects behaving according to the laws described for the material world.

I’d like to put this another way: if I think of the universe as consisting primarily and priorly (and even primordially) of material objects, then I cannot explain secondary qualities – or indeed any qualities – never mind the qualia that for me are the constitutive of consciousness – or (not to be mealy-mouthed) its very stuff. If – as must follow from the hypothesis that the world is a collection of material objects (irrespective of whether those material objects are composed of atoms, waves of energy or whatever) – I, too, am primarily a body, then everything that there is – including secondary qualities and qualia – must consist of material bodies or be the products of their interactions. This is clearly nonsense (as you and I agree) and yet it is what the neurophilosophers and other advocates of materialist theories of consciousness have assumed. They believe that, for example, my consciousness of other bodies, and of the world in which I see those bodies to be situated, can be derived from the interactions between my body (in particular the brain that my body supports) and other bodies – either directly, as in touch, or mediately, as in sight. It is as if, for them, consciousness, being-there, worlding, being enworlded, were made up out of sparks created by material objects, directly or indirectly, striking other material objects – namely my body or, through my body, the brain inside my skull.

This account, Herr Professor, does not and will not give us anything approximating an explanation of secondary qualities and consciousness. For it depends upon the notion that there are certain privileged events – nerve impulses – that are aware of, reach out to, refer to, other events – namely the events (or indeed the objects) that are supposed to trigger them off. The fundamental problem with this ‘explanation’ of consciousness is that it fails to show what it is about nerve impulses that makes them so special that they are able to carry the miraculous conversion of the material events into awareness of material events. As events in themselves, they are not particularly special: the electro-chemical activity of which they are composed is found widely throughout nature. Most significantly it is found in parts of the brain – for example, the spinal cord or the cerebellum – that are *not* associated with consciousness. Those who try to evade this little difficulty argue that it is not what nerve impulses are composed of but *where they occur*

– certain places in the cerebral cortex, for example – that makes them able to carry the burden of making certain bits of matter like ourselves conscious of themselves. This, however, explains nothing: there is nothing about the cerebral cortex that can explain its privileged status as the locus of this magical metaphysical conversion of matter into consciousness (of matter). To put this as succinctly as possible: transferring the explanation of the magical property of being able to convert matter into consciousness of matter from a particular type of entity (electrochemical waves) to a particular type of location (in a cerebral cortex) does not advance our understanding one bit. And if it does not help us to understand putative elements of, or ‘atoms’ of, consciousness, such as sensations, it will certainly not give us the sense of me, here, now – of my being a kind of being that is an issue for itself – of my being *this* (thing). Even less will it give us any kind of inkling of how it is that we live extraordinarily complex lives (encompassing everything from the component motor programmes supposedly implicit in a single task, through the staggering multiplicity of discrete projects that make up an ordinary job such as preparing for and giving a lecture, through to the overarching sense that governs a life shaped by timetables, ambitions and long-term plans) in our many-layered worlds. And that’s just for starters. Most fundamentally and most overwhelmingly (if I may use this word again and use it thus!), it does not give us any account of how the ‘X is the case’ of the material universe becomes ‘*That* X is the case’ of the human world.

We are left, therefore, Herr Professor, with a choice: either to insert our subject into the scheme of things in a Cartesian fashion, as something that enjoys, suffers, acts upon, etc. the material world but is not part of it, being somehow and mysteriously coupled with it; or to deny the primacy of material objects and give that accolade to consciousness or mind, making the material world a construct of mind. (The third possibility – denying that there is such a thing as consciousness – is, I am afraid, a rather dull example of pragmatic self-refutation; for such a denial, though wrong, is a very high-order example of human consciousness at work.) In any case, we are back in the very nightmare that you thought you had taught us to leave behind by rejecting both the primacy of the Cartesian subject and the primacy of the ‘objective presences’ of the material world. We are back in it because, as we have discussed at such length over our hours of conversation, I reject your rejection; for I believe it bypasses the problems that are of interest and does not demonstrate them to be invalid. (At least Wittgenstein tried to do the latter.)

Stretching my arm

And so, here in the sunlight, on this lovely old wall, puzzling over the sensation of sunshine on my arm, I am back to the pre-Heideggerian puzzles. Not entirely pre-Heideggerian; for there is a deep validity about what you have said; something that speaks to me at the level of my most enduring philosophical intuitions. So while there are important disagreements between us, there are equally important concordances of philosophical sympathies. The fact that we are, after all my hours of journeying away from you, back in conversation is therefore no surprise at all.

But I am unashamed of those parts of my thinking that exhibit an unreformed pre-Heideggerian naivety. And if I do have the courage of my naivety it is because your confusion between the question of (the nature of) being and the question of the meaning of being and/or the question of the meaning of the word 'being' suggests that your ontology is founded on sand. Spotting this confusion of yours gives me permission to ask again the questions that you have seen as empty – and indeed scandalous.

For example (brace yourself) the question of how we can demonstrate the reality of the outside world.

The 'scandal of philosophy' does not consist in the fact that this proof [of an existence outside of our own] is still lacking up to now, but *in the fact that such proofs are expected and attempted again and again.* (BT 190)

Well, while I have no intention of scandalising you in precisely that way, I shall indulge in comparably scandalous behaviour, by asking the question about the derivation of something that should be accepted as simply given.

I want to begin with Descartes, whose views you so thoroughly trash early on in your masterpiece. For Descartes, as you point out, the essential characteristic of the world is that it is *extended*: world for him is *res extensa*, which is one of the two fundamental substances in creation, the other being *res cogitans*, which is somehow coupled to the extended world. You, of course, reject this ontology of the 'world' because it completely misconstrues its phenomenology. For you, extendedness is a product of spatiality and

Spatiality can be discovered in general only on the basis of world in such a way that space, after all, *also* constitutes the world in

accordance with the essential spatiality of Da-sein itself with regard to its fundamental constitution of being-in-the-world. (BT 105)

Extendedness, in short, is a derivative form of spatiality which belongs to Da-sein's being-in-the-world. Descartes' failure to see extendedness in this way betrays, according to you Herr Professor, his 'basic ontological orientation towards being as constant objective presence' (BT 89). As such, this being which is '*what always is what it is*' (BT 89), can be accessed only through '*intellectio* in the sense of the kind of knowledge we get in mathematics and physics' (BT 89).

This last point is of particular interest; for you have brought out something in Descartes that touches closely on my own unreconstructed preoccupations. Descartes' arguments for granting priority to extension over all other properties – such as division, motion, shape, hardness or colour – are of especial relevance to me, as I sit here, feeling the warmth on my arm and wondering how it is that I can feel it, how it is that I value it and where the sunshine, my arm, my self that is enjoying it and one or two other things fit into the greater scheme of things. (I reach out my arm in the warm-aired extendedness of these Greek spaces and enjoy my arm and space and my arm enjoying its spatiality and its exploration of space: Freedom! Life!)

The reason Descartes denies priority to motion and shape is that they *presuppose* extension: without extension, you cannot have either motion or shape. What is more, a corporeal being can maintain its total extension and yet be divided in different ways or assume different shapes. Extension out-endures every other aspect of corporeality; it is therefore most real and most constant and, as such, is most appropriate for reliable knowledge. This knowledge, however, is abstract knowledge: the knowledge we get in mathematics and physics. The reality which is captured in these fundamental sciences is empty even of such qualities as shape and motion. It is certainly void of qualities such as hardness and colour. Hardness, Descartes argues, is not a fundamental property of corporeality, for we can imagine a situation in which objects retreat as we advance our fingers to press upon them. They would not be experienced as hard, though their extendedness would remain. Hardness depends upon an accident – a collision with a sentient being and resistance to the latter's attempt to advance.

And this brings me, Herr Professor, to a key passage that you quote from Descartes, against himself:

It will be sufficient for us to observe that the perceptions of the senses are related simply to the intimate union which exists

between body and mind, and that while by their means we are made aware of what in external bodies can profit or hurt this union, they do not present them to us as they are in themselves unless occasionally and accidentally.

That the perceptions of the senses do not teach us what is really in things, but merely that whereby they are useful or hurtful to man's composite nature.

Or, as you put it so beautifully (in best magician mode):

The senses do not enable us to know any being in its being; they merely make known the usefulness and harmfulness of 'external' innerworldly things for human beings encumbered with bodies. (BT 90)

What is given in the senses – colour, flavour, warmth, resonance – is not for Descartes ontologically important, not real, not truly fundamental.

You conclude from this that we could not derive the actual contents of experience from Descartes' objective presences objectively present to one another – *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, side by side, coupled to one another. And with this I wholeheartedly agree, and the reason for the wholeheartedness of my agreement will become apparent in due course. Your conclusion is that qualities such as 'Hardness and resistance do not show themselves at all unless there is a being which has the kind of being of Da-sein' or (and you add, with revealing uncertainty) 'at least a kind of living being' (BT 90). I would prefer to draw quite another conclusion from this; or rather to use the self-destruct of Descartes' scheme to open up another seam of enquiry, to animate a new series of questions and wave in the direction where answers may be sought.

There is, as very many before me have pointed out, a profound connection between Descartes' ontology and the materialism of the science that evolved in the subsequent centuries – the science (well hidden from most) that underpins the technology which is the central fact of our culture. For this science, matter, energy, or mass energy are fundamental and most real and the contents of our consciousness are less fundamental and less real. This science denies final reality to what is revealed in sensory experience, even though the latter is the place from which science takes its rise and to which it ultimately returns. For science, the ultimate truth about light is not that it is bright, even less that it is beautiful, but that it is electromagnetic energy of a mixture of

wavelengths. And the truth about sound is not that it may or may not be meaningful (as when people speak or music moves us or trees rustle) but that it is a time series of continuously varying pressures, changing at different frequencies, in the air. And the truth about heat is not that it is warm, even less that it is comforting, but that it is a set of velocities of molecules best describable in statistical terms. And the truth about these quite different things – light, sound, warmth – converges as science becomes more fundamental. In parallel with this de-differentiation of the kinds of phenomena there are in the world, there is a move towards descriptions that are increasingly mathematical. As the final truth about the world is *res extensa* – pure extension – so the truest descriptions of it become purely mathematical. For extension without content (a shape without content, movement without content) becomes bare *number*; and number is the representation of the most general form of the world without content: of pure extension.

Of course, it is only at the highest level that science gets close to shedding content and its objects approximate to mathematical constructs. But well below the peak, there is a loss of content and we have rather abstract entities with only a whiff of content. The world of science, even as it only approximates to a universe of pure extension and pure number, is stripped of those things that actually fill our days; of the qualities, the qualia, the *meanings and significances* of ordinary life, of ordinary, preoccupied, suffering and delighted humanity. This is not to condemn science as either untrue or, even less, as irrelevant. For the wonderful and undeniable truth is that it brings back, from its journeys into abstraction and generality, tools that are of the utmost significance for ordinary life, and of benefit to ordinary, preoccupied, suffering and delighted humanity. And the fact that it can do this shows that abstract science must have a purchase on some fundamental truths about the everyday world in which live and have our being. After all, elsewhere in life, things work only if we get something right and we get something right only if we have a true idea of it. So science is certainly not untrue; but its truths must be only partial.

Qualia and things

I have addressed the incompleteness of the truth of science head on in those many places where I have criticised the misbegotten attempts of scientists (in particular neuroscientists) and those whom I have called their ‘philosophical fellow travellers’ to give a neuroscientific account

of consciousness. The failure to produce even a half-way plausible account in terms of the science seemingly best placed to produce it is part of a much wider failure. (If there *can* be a wider failure than the failure to explain the kind of creatures we are and how it is that these creatures are aware of themselves, and aware of the world, and out of this ever more explicit awareness create something called science that, among many other things, attempts to explain the kind of creatures we are!) This wider failure, is the failure to find the basis for secondary qualities – beyond the fundamental ones – in the world as described by science. To find the warm sunlight on my arm.

I want to look at this from another angle, while still retaining the position that the 'objective presences' of science, understood as lumps of unconscious and certainly unthinking matter, are not artefacts. The assumption that at the basis of the world is material nature (studied by physics, which is seen to lie at the basis of all true sciences) captures something about the reality of the unimpugnably real world we live in. It reflects something fundamental about our situation; namely that human meaning has a context which is intrinsically unmeaning, that human experience is predicated upon objects that are not themselves experiencing anything – amongst these objects being (for the most part, most of) the human body; that the web of significance that is the world is pitched upon or against or located within, a world without intrinsic significance. Only such assumptions can deal with the accidents of our lives, the partial inscrutability of the things we have to deal with and the greater inscrutability of those that enclose the objects we deal with, with the fact of physical death and physical birth. To let go of these assumptions, or deliberately to set them aside as you do, Herr Professor, is (as I have repeated far too often in this conversation) to fall into magic thinking.

The meanings that light up, or at least fill, our lives are predicated upon the existence of material objects, located in objective presences which bring their own properties to the table. If this were not true, there would be no basis for differentiated significances – for a hammer having a different significance from a boulder or a scorpion. Objective presences may be impregnated with meanings – meanings are not merely laid on top of them as a kind of outer coat painted by an independent consciousness – but those meanings are dependent upon, or constrained by, the material properties of the objective presences. We may be able to make a seat out of a log or out of a smooth rock as well as out of a purpose-built chair; but we cannot make one out of a cloud, a cockroach or a cup of tea: their physical properties – attributes of their objective presence – forbid it.

The challenge, I would argue, as I remember to enjoy the blissful sensation of the sunlight on my arm, and italicise this pleasure by stretching my arm out into the warm sunlit air, is to accept the reality of the world of objective presences, even the fundamental reality of material objects (notwithstanding that the concept of matter may have to be set aside as too slippery), and the truth of science (so far as it goes – which is a very long way but a long way short of the whole way), while trying to understand how the qualia that form the contents of our consciousness, the meanings that fill our world, the needs we have, the plans that derive directly and indirectly from them and the actions that serve those plans, connect with the world of material objects of which through our bodies, and through their needs and our actions, we are inextricably a part. This would be to confront head on the mystery of secondary qualities: how they are revealed in material objects that do not have them, and, what is more, revealed in, to and by a material object – my body, your body – which, presumably also, does not have these properties in itself.

I am sometimes tempted to express the mystery in this way (though it concedes far too much to materialism and even to the neurophilosophers): How is it that, out of the interaction between material bodies such as my retina, and its connections with the brain, and the sun, the sensation of brightness results? How can it be possible that, out of the interaction of the energy from the sun and my arm (and its inner-bodily connections), there arises the feeling of warmth and all the comfort and pleasure that that affords me? How does meaning issue from the interaction of intrinsically meaningless objects? How is that ‘disclosedness’ results from the direct or indirect bumping of one body into another? (The very language in which I pose the question, Herr Professor, betrays how I am suspended at a mid-point between you and your antipodes.) How does mattering arise out of matter? (I prefer ‘mattering’, incidentally, to your ‘care’: it is as primordial; indeed, ‘care’ seems to be one of its subdivisions, as are need, heed, worrying, concern, compassion, delight, want, longing, suffering.)

It is very tempting at this stage to reintroduce something like the point-subject, a viewpoint upon physical objects, underivable from such objects, in virtue of which otherwise meaningless objects have meaning. The subject would, of course, have to be not only that in which things have meaning but also the one who has to bear, endure, delight in, respond to these meanings. And these meanings would include ones which seem to originate from the subject’s own body as well as those accessed through his own body – that being which is the

subject's most continuous concern, to which he is answerable, in which he seems to dwell and for which he is answerable as that being through which he lives his 'being an issue for himself'. I am thinking of things like pain and an itch which demand a response, piled on to the things in the world around the body, which are those things the subject has to take most immediate account of.

And so it is through me, the subject, experiencing the states of my body, or experiencing events in my body as states of myself, that the sunlight falling on this object my body becomes warmth, pleasure, and so on. That its 93,000,000-mile journey through empty space reaches a kind of terminus in its miraculous transformation into my delighted awareness of it.

But to say this clarifies nothing. Indeed, to talk about a 'subject' is to revive the notion of some sort of pin-point of 'thereness' or 'there-induction' through which things are revealed as 'there' and it, retroactively, or the body with which it identifies becomes 'here' or even inhere-ent. And this is not at all helpful because this indivisible, dimensionless, non-spatial point does not seem to be able to get a foothold on a particular point in space, in order that the viewpoint it is should have an actual, particular view. Moreover, it seems quite unable to house my complexity or my depth; in particular, the accumulative depth that comes from lived time, the temporal depth of a creature such as myself who has acquired so much past informing so much structured, timetabled, future.

This last thought awakens in me a temptation – and because I am alone and free I shall give way to it – to move a little into the shade. To move backwards from this brilliantly lit present moment into my own past. To move from the stasis of Greek sunlight to the complexioned vagaries of another place by the sea: a village on the north Cornwall coast.

I find myself recalling, and so inspecting, an old wall encircling a churchyard, next to a car park by a pub, after a walk through the woods, on the edge of a cottage garden, somewhere, nowhere, everywhere, anywhere – an old wall, in the softer sunlight. At its core (half-hidden and in part an inference from the fact that all the rest stands upright) is ancientness: stone placed on stone, with care and skill, so that years, decades, centuries pass by and stone still remains placed on stone. The few stones that are visible are decorated with grey-by-grey-by-green lichen, so long dead it seems almost mineral, a flowering of the stone itself. And mixed with that, younger lichen – rusty and orange and yellow: only just living and spreading with glacier-like creep over years and decades. On top of that is the ivy, itself grown old

and tree-like, its ligneous trunks supporting each year's crop of leaves. Between the ivy, the grass growing so profusely makes the wall looks in places like a mohair sheep. There are older tufts, freeholders, and newer shoots, that may or may not stay and become permanent features of the wall's presentation to the world. Finally, there are this year's flowers – ivy-leaved toadflax, campions, vetchlings – and, at the very top of the wall, ladies' bedstraw, catching the sunlight like the spindrift off a breaking wave, a transfixed cry of delight.

The current account, the here and now; the easy access deposit account; the archive requiring notice for withdrawals; the underlying structure. The many layers corresponding to different eras: it symbolises the self, my self, your self, any self. A self not captured in the notion of a pinpoint, indivisible 'subject', that I have requisitioned to bring secondary qualities, meaning, awareness into the world of objective presences, the subject that is a mere moving light playing on things, making them present, making them have meaning, so they can be suffered and delighted in by the body that carries (but does not quite own) the meanings, the glistening web of significance, that the subject, through being identified with the body, invests in it.

The experiencing subject makes a world be present to itself, or encounters a world already made present. Its body is usually implicit as that being to which that which is made present is presented. At least in looking. But not in feeling the sunshine on my arm, where my arm is explicit, made self-aware; or, since the arm has no self, no intrinsic qualitative properties to be known, has experiences that are referred back to itself.

Half-way between experiences such as those of sunlight on my arm (in which the body is explicit and in the foreground) and those such as are yielded by looking (where the body is only implicit), there is touching. I run my finger along the rough, cool surface of the stones. I feel the stones but I feel my fingertips as well. Indeed, as someone said, touch 'provides us with a sense of our own solidity, and ... that ... requires proprioception'.⁸⁹ In other words, in the case of touch, we acquire awareness not only of the object that is touched but of our body that is touching. The touching reaches back and we who touch are ourselves touched and this gives the body self-awareness.

How we are able to unpack both a sense of ourselves as touchers-being-touched, as well as the object as the touched, out of a single sensation is not clear. But I am already drawn away from this nice little puzzle for I am thinking, here in my solitude, next to the memory-wall, of what it is like when hand touches hand.⁹⁰

When Aletheia first let you enclose the warmth of her long-fingered hand in the ice-cold chill of your anxious fist which, for some reason, I wish to imagine is a little pudgy, that warmth that spoke to you, to the warmth within you, and, saying: 'You are', opened up an abyss of joy within you, the abyss of yourself, as deep as thought. Yes, it said: 'You are!' It put your being in italics. That warm hand, stroking its thumb over your palm, said: Da-sein is more than the null ground of nullity. It asked that you should *be*. It said that you should gather yourself together. But not in that anticipatory resoluteness that would seek 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Da-sein' (which is 'at all times my own'), in resolute being-towards-death, 'the potentiality-of-being-a-whole disclosed in the anticipation of death' (BT 317), concentrating to a clenched fist of concentration upon the essential nullity of the self (which is 'at all times my own'), seeking joy in a bleakness beyond bleakness. On the contrary, that warmth said: There is another; one in whom 'the entangled being-with of Da-sein' reaches its most intense entanglement; one here besides your thoughts and transcending the nullity for which you strive.

Sentient warmth clasping sentient warmth: we touch each other for a while, in our warmth, and then we grow cold and we forget we were once warm, and finally we forget ourselves and the world forgets us. But the moment of warmth – the entangled being-together-with that is 'the third constitutive factor of care' – is a moment when 'Da-sein has brought itself back out of falling prey in order to be all the more authentically "there" for the disclosed situation in the "Moment"' (BT 302):

We call the *present* that is held in authentic temporality, and is thus *authentic*, the *Moment*. This term must be understood in an active sense as an ecstasy. It means the resolute raptness of Da-sein. (BT 311)

With this thought – the booty captured from my short retreat from the sun – I move back in the sunlight, to the warmth on my arm and the remote sound of the sea and the pine trees brushing the silence with a sound that is closest to it. Again I ask, what is it I get to know when I experience the sunlight on my arm? Is it the sun itself, is it the sunlight, is it my arm, is it something designated by the term 'myself'? How does what I experience connect with what I know? How does what I experience and know connect with what I am? With my true and most essential nature? With my true and essential situation?

A last look at our differences

The time really has come for the final parting of the ways, Herr Professor. And, although you will travel with me wherever my body or my thinking takes me, we will be forever separated by important things. Your hatred of technology, for example, seems to me deeply misconceived, notwithstanding the profound relationship it has to your entire ontology and your version of the history of human thought and, indeed, to your biography of being itself. For a start, it does not take account of the impersonal horror of a life unalleviated by the comforts brought by technology. Man is *homo faber* because, without tools, he is at the mercy of nature and nature is not notably merciful. Your anti-technological agrarian conservatism is sentimental about the often brutal, even brutish, narrow, life of the peasant. (I need not dwell again on the connection between such sentimentality, combined with certain abstract ideas, and your ghastly Destiny Politics: on this enough has been said.) Your loathing of technology is as sentimental about the living body that sustains us as it is silent on the body and its vicissitudes and the extent to which we are vulnerable to the most shocking and appalling visitations of Hell from the very object with which we are most identified. Anyway, let us leave to one side your hatred of technology and your politics.

What separates us most in the matters that have been the true subject of our conversation lies at the very origin of your thought: your assumption that the question of the meaning of being is identical with the question of the nature of being. This enables you to bypass all the hard questions that have haunted me since I was a teenager: if being is inseparable from being as disclosed through Da-sein, the epistemological question vanishes. Or it is replaced by another: the problem of knowledge is supplanted by the puzzle of ignorance. Another (and very closely connected) consequence of your reduction of the question of being to the question of the meaning being has for the entity which uniquely imports meaning into the world, namely Da-sein, is that the body is somehow bypassed. You dismiss objective presences as derivative and this means that the notion of the individual as a living, physical body is rejected as an error resulting from an artificial way of seeing things. Getting rid of the body, and along with it the epistemological problem, also voids the self, the individual, of content. Human beings as instances of Da-sein are empty tautologies, nothings that nothing themselves. The fact that the difference between Da-sein as a category and individual human beings can be elided is a striking symptom of this emptying of the individual. More striking yet, however, is your

characterisation of authentic Da-sein as one which resolutely anticipates its death, as its *ownmost* or 'eminent' possibility. Da-sein, seen aright, is you believe simply 'the naked "that" in the nothingness of the world' (BT 255). 'Resolutely', you say,

Da-sein takes over authentically in its existence the fact that it is the null ground of its nullity. (BT 283)

Is it surprising that Destination Nothing is the only terminus for a bodiless entity or category such as Da-sein?

Yes, the 'here' and the 'there' of Da-sein seem light, free, airy. But in order to establish the here and there, there needs to be a body; and here is where heaviness, vulnerability, limitation, woe, our daily vicissitudes (effort, work, pain, bodily fears) and the ultimate vicissitude of death, in short reality, come in; but also delight, pleasure, sensuality; for here and there are 'real'. They are real because they are suffered, enacted. And so, I am afraid, after we have parted, one of my first tasks will be to bring back the body (the bearer of the sunlight on my arm) and replace your being-towards-death with being-towards-life.

It is perhaps because I am a doctor that the body looms so large in my thoughts. And this may also be why, in the end, I cannot accept your notion of authentic existence. You regard 'thrownness', 'falling prey', seeing the world according to the they-self, as modes of inauthentic Da-sein. Behaving responsibly, however, depends upon addressing the needs of, and responding to, other people where they are at. And it also depends upon *availability*, unscheduled, unquestioning, responding to the cry for help, the letter, the phone, the bleep. A doctor who did not allow himself to be lost in the world of they – where they and their needs are and are understood – would be a poor physician.

At any rate, I want to try to get beyond your ontology, to see what my dissent adds up and, above all, to go back to the place, the puzzles, the intuitions of mystery which for so long made me amenable to your thoughts.

Can you see, Herr Professor, that I am ready to do what all philosophers must do again and again: to begin at the beginning? Though you may approve of this, you will not approve of the place where I may find my beginning: somewhere round about the place where you pushed the great and good Professor Husserl aside. Not that I intend to perform my own *epochē*. I fully understand how this 'bracketing off' of the world and of all the deliverances of the natural standpoint – freeing the thinker to start only with the apodeictic certainty of the

immediate contents of consciousness – may have led to a cul-de-sac. But I do want to start somewhere not far from where he started. Exactly where, I cannot yet specify.

And I want to conduct my search here, in the Greek sunlight – or in the idea of it. Yes, in the idea of the very sunlight where, you believe, philosophy, indeed Being itself, took a wrong turn. Here where, to the sound of the sea, in the pine-scented groves, those wonder-filled men of genius turned their attention away from Being to beings, and, their light-filled eyes, so dazzled by the wonder of beings, forgot Being itself, forgot what it was in virtue of which there were beings to investigate and wonder at. Here, where science truly had its beginning, and the era of metaphysics, of ‘forgetfulness of Being’, was inaugurated; and Being itself began its long march to the great eras of technology and ‘the desolation of the earth stemming from metaphysics’.⁹¹ Here, then, shall I begin.

I should like to be able say that I shall here be seeking another kind of ‘anticipatory resoluteness’, an authentic being-towards-life in repudiation of your exhortation to Da-sein to seek to adopt an attitude of authentic being-towards-death. But I would not believe myself; for it is as impossible to direct one’s inner gaze on the everything that is life as it is to direct it upon the nothing that is death. Instead, I shall begin with here and now: with my warm body in the sun. More particularly with the sunlight on my arm.

I enjoy this sunlight with certainty. Not the apodeictic certainty that Professor Husserl sought – after all, how can I be sure that this is my arm and this is sunlight? How can I *not* be sure, you (and Herr Professor Wittgenstein) would ask. So I can begin with something that I am sure of and that some philosophers – the Cartesian purists would doubt – and others would say simply could not be doubted. This will do me fine: ordinary certainty directed at something that philosophers of Type A say must be doubted and philosophers of Type B say cannot be doubted.

I shall feel the sunlight on my arm and rejoice that I am alive; that I am me; that I am this. And wonder that I am alive; wonder at the tautology that I am this entity that feels sunlight on its arm – a tautology contaminated with all the particulars that constitute the accidents of my life – the accidents which, being all the things I know, and all the things I am, seem inevitable. (How much I am at home, Herr Professor, with the facts of the case of being RT, and with all the quiddities that case entails! And how strange that I should be so at home.)

That is where I shall begin.

Thanks

Heidegger died in his sleep in the early morning, whispering the word 'Thanks'. Did he not say once that thinking and thanking are the same?⁹²

So much for what separates us. Let's forget all that, since there is something as deep (who knows, perhaps deeper) that unites us: our commitment to philosophy as celebration. I applaud your unwavering sense of the relationship between philosophy and wonder, between philosophy and delight in the world. Like you, I believe that our questioning is born of gratitude as well as of fear and bewilderment and puzzlement. There is an essential piety in philosophy: as you so famously said, 'Questioning is the piety of thought'. To ask questions is the opposite of impiety. It is the supreme way of taking the world seriously, a most perfect expression of Spinoza's 'the intellectual love of God'. And if questioning is the piety of thought, then my questioning your answers and even your questions is a way of treating your thought with the deepest respect. (That is true at least if I question what you say and not what I thought you might have said. I trust that my questioning is on the basis of true listening.)

I respect you most of all for this great gift you left to the thinkers that follow: you made the phenomenon of the world visible. You turned 'The Given', the most ordinary generality of the world, from the burdensome weight of constraint, of flat dullness – the opposite of delight and magic, the dead hand of the inexorable and the significance-free – into an unexplained miracle of 'Thereness' that, equally inexplicably, coheres into being-in-the-world. You have bequeathed us an ungain-sayable astonishment that there *is* a 'There' and a 'Here', that there *is* an 'I' and an 'Us' and 'The World'. In short, you have turned 'the Given' from the walls of a prison into an astonishing blossoming, an unaccountable revelation of being; from the implacability of the insuperably there to a miracle, a miracle of disclosure.

You have made The Given a gift. And since you have taken away God ('we are too late for the Gods') – that killer answer to all questions, the defoliant on the blossoming of wonder, turning astonishment into terror – this is a gift that requires of us not that we bow down before The Giver, only that we should light up with wonder. You made the given into a gift and at the same time relieved us of the notion of a Giver demanding an endless, wearisome tribute of thanks.

So, as you may see, not only am I unable to shake off your presence, but I am also unwilling to do so. You have been within me too long.

Even if I could escape your presence, I could never lose or forget what you have gained on our behalf: we must not allow ourselves to slip back into pre-Heideggerian ways of thinking – or not without good reason anyway. We must build on your vision as we address questions that you have left unanswered but made clearer and more urgent, as we endeavour to look more steadily at the mystery you have made more visible.

I thank you, most of all, for your widest realisation of the revelation of 'That'...; of the underivable mystery of disclosedness. (One supremely important thing that you and I are agreed upon: you cannot get disclosedness out of one thing rubbing against another. That's not the way *Aletheia* goes.) After you, Herr Professor, philosophers should be 'Professors of That!' and philosophy luminous vertigo. Though I do not accept your answers (or your exposition of the world), or even the starting point for your questions, I accept your transformation of the very field of the problems which seem to confront us when we endeavour to think about the world and ourselves in the most general and deepest way.

Here, as I try to start again, I shall begin with your '*Es gibt*'; meditating on what it is that is given, on

the wonder that a world is worlding around us at all, that there are beings rather than nothing, that things are and we ourselves are in their midst, that we ourselves are and barely know who we are, and barely know that we know all this.

And so, though you will most certainly feel disappointed, when you listen in on my conversation with myself as I doze in the sunlight, and think that I have learned nothing from your writing, and be shocked that I reject so many of your fundamental premises, you may still be assured that *Being and Time* has not addressed me in vain. You have reawoken fundamental questions that many of us had simply not noticed; you have roused philosophy and philosophers (and would-be philosophers such as myself) from a sleep-woven mind-set. You have not 'annihilated' the 'problem of knowledge' (BT 57) by giving primacy to being-in-the-world as constitutive of *Da-sein* and thereby sidestepping the question of how it is that 'knowing inner subjects' gain access to 'outer objective presences'. Nevertheless, you have required us to rethink the epistemological question and radically to recast it.

And now I really must leave you. In order to go beyond your thoughts. Or beneath them. Or (most likely) to fall short of them – but

in my own fashion and my own place. Though there is no arrival in thought, only journeying, there is point in making it one's own journey and helping others to do likewise. For there is delight, even glory, in the 'active uncertainty' of thought; a warmth as real as this warmth on my arm – this warmth that I cannot fully understand, though it tells me I am in the world, and places my being-in-the-world in italics. This delight opens on to moments when, Herr Professor, anything seems possible: I start to believe in a mode of being myself in which I could be drunk on sunlight and stoned on the sight of a sunlit wall. And in the possibility of even more luminous moments when all our deepest, truest, thoughts will come together and a supernova will flower in consciousness.

Here's to such a self, and such moments! In the meantime, I bid you farewell and go my own way. Let my last word to you, Herr Professor Martin Heidegger, magician of Messkirch, be your last word to the world: Thanks.

Appendix

Some Controversies in the Interpretation of *Being and Time* in the *Conversation*

Introduction

Much of the *Conversation* you have just read records my agreements and disagreements with what I believe Heidegger to have said in *Being and Time*. The point of the *Conversation*, aside from celebrating a great work of philosophy, has been to define some of the problems Heidegger's masterpiece left unsolved and mysteries it left untouched. The validity of my disagreements with Heidegger naturally depends upon the validity of my interpretation of his meaning. While I was aware that readings other than mine were possible, I was perhaps less aware than I should have been just how controversial my interpretations might seem to some scholars and that some might even be regarded as outright mis-readings. This became apparent to me only after I had received an extraordinarily generous, sympathetic, detailed and carefully argued report on my manuscript from an anonymous reader, who subsequently revealed his identity to be that of David Cooper, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Durham and Heidegger scholar. The burden of Professor Cooper's comments was that, while admittedly Heidegger himself was often ambivalent on certain key issues and there was much controversy among scholars, several of my readings were, indeed, open to challenge.

The consequence of this supplementary *Conversation* – about rather than with Heidegger – was a certain amount of rewriting of my text. I did not, however, change my mind about all the unresolved issues and crucial ambiguities in *Being and Time* – issues that Heidegger's subsequent writings did not, so far as I was aware, satisfactorily resolve. It became apparent, however, that it was necessary for me to defend some of my readings. This defence could not fit easily into the *Conversation* without making the dialogue even less racy than it was already and finally destroying the conversational format. Hence this Appendix.

The particular areas Professor Cooper picked out – which corresponded to key themes that occur and recur like *leitmotifs* in the *Conversation* – are fundamental to any interpretation of Heidegger's philosophy. They are:

- 1) The relative priority or primordially of 'objective presences' and the 'ready-to-hand' in Heidegger's ontology.
- 2) Whether the question of being is assimilated by Heidegger to the question of the meaning of being and, if so, whether this is legitimate.
- 3) Whether Heidegger's ontology fails to allow for the dappled knowledge and ignorance of everyday life and for the progressive improvement of our knowledge through scientific enquiry.

- 4) Whether Heidegger really is ambivalent, indeed confused, about the nature of Da-sein: Is it a collection of individuals or a category of being? How important is this ambivalence (or confusion) in giving his ontology, and the bypassing of epistemology, its plausibility?

1) The relative priority or primordially of 'objective presences' and the 'ready-to-hand' in Heidegger's ontology

At several points in the *Conversation*, I argue that Heidegger runs into difficulties by seeming to imply that the 'ready-to-hand' is primordial while objective physical presences are merely derivative, the products of a variety of theoretical stances that may range from 'rigid staring' to that underpinning the most abstruse scientific inquiry. The most conspicuous of these difficulties are:

- i) a failure to take account of the (material, organic, living 'biological') body – which is both something lived and something which is objectively out there and outlasts us, as when it continues as a corpse;
- ii) a failure to give a satisfactory account of the fact that the (material) world existed before, and may well outlast, Da-sein;
- iii) an inability to accept that the account of the world as given by the natural sciences, although not comprehensive, is in many places an advance, in terms of truth, on the account of the world as immediately available to Da-sein.

The question we need to address first is whether Heidegger really *did* confer primordially upon the ready-to-hand.

There are three possible ways of interpreting the relationship between the ready-to-hand and objective presences in *Being and Time*:

- i) The ready-to-hand comprises an order of beings that are ontologically prior to the 'objective presences' while the latter are derivative, being revealed only to the spectatorial standpoint, notably that of science. (An ontological-hierarchical view.)
- ii) The ready-to-hand and objective presences are the same things encountered or experienced in different ways. However, the viewpoint, or mode of comportment, that discloses the ready-to-hand is somehow more fundamental, perhaps closer to the truth, than the spectatorial viewpoint. (An epistemological-hierarchical view.)
- iii) The ready-to-hand and objective presences are the same things encountered or experienced in different ways. However, the viewpoint that discloses the ready-to-hand is no more fundamentally true to, or of, the way things are than is the spectatorial viewpoint that discloses objective presences. (An epistemological-egalitarian interpretation.)

Interpretation iii) entrains none of the particular problems I have referred to. On the other hand, it fails to capture Heidegger's general trend of thought within *Being and Time* and does not make sense in the light of much of his subsequent thought – in particular his (hostile) attitude to science-based technol-

ogy. (The scientific view that being is composed essentially of objective presences or bits of matter seems to lie at the root of all evil so far as the later Heidegger is concerned.) Interpretation iii) can, therefore, be set aside. The two remaining views bring with them all the problems I have alluded to; and i) carries with it the danger of magic thinking, as I pointed out on more than one occasion in the *Conversation*.

What evidence is there that Heidegger espoused interpretation i); namely that the ready-to-hand is ontologically more primordial than objective presences or the present-at-hand? There is a discussion early on in *Being and Time* which suggests this. The key passage seems to be the following:

To expose what is merely objectively present, cognition must first penetrate *beyond* things at hand being taken care of. *Handiness is the ontological categorical definition of beings as they are 'in themselves'*. (BT 67)

That would seem to settle the matter. However, Heidegger then poses this question:

But 'there are' handy things, after all, only on the basis of what is objectively present. Admitting this thesis, does it then follow that handiness is ontologically founded in objective presence? (BT 67)

Heidegger's answer to this question is never entirely clear but it seems to be implied at many other places that 'handiness' is prior to 'objective presence'. Take the discussion, for example, of the relationship between physical space and the space of being-in-the-world in sections 22 and 23:

the aroundness of the surrounding world, the specific spatiality of the beings encountered in the surrounding world is grounded in the worldliness of the world, and not the other way around, that is, we cannot say that the world in its turn is objectively present in space. (BT 94)

There is never a three-dimensional multiplicity of possible positions initially given which is then filled out with objectively present things ... Regions are not first formed by things objectively together but are always already at hand in individual places. The places themselves are assigned to what is at hand in the circumspection of taking care of things, or else we come across them. (BT 96)

The fact that what is at hand can be encountered in its space of the surrounding world is ontically possible only because Da-sein itself is 'spatial' with regard to its being-in-the-world. (BT 97)

This would seem to suggest that at least one fundamental aspect of 'objective presence' – physical location in physical space and physical extendedness in physical space – is secondary to, and merely derivative from, the nexus of the ready-to-hand that is the world of Da-sein.¹

On this basis, it might seem reasonable to infer that the ready-to-hand has some sort of priority over objective presence. It is difficult otherwise to know how one could interpret the following passages:

The fact that reality is ontologically grounded in the being of Da-sein cannot mean that something real can only be what it is in itself when and as long as Da-sein exists ... (BT 196)

However, only as long as Da-sein *is*, that is, as long as there is the ontic possibility of an understanding of being, 'is there' [*gibt es*] being. If Da-sein does not exist, then there 'is' no 'independence' either, nor 'is' there an 'in itself'...*Then* it can neither be said that beings are, nor that they are not. *Now*, as long as there is an understanding of being and thus an understanding of objective presence, we can say that *then* beings will still continue to be. (BT 196)

It might still be argued that Heidegger is addressing the question of how Da-sein encounters the (its) world and not how the world is in itself. That it is a matter of epistemology rather than ontology; in other words, interpretation ii) – the epistemological hierarchical – is valid. This would be allowable, however, only if Heidegger accepted that the existence of something like a 'world' was possible in the absence of Da-sein and/or that a 'world' could be constructed out of objective presences. But for Heidegger, the very notion of a 'world', of a nexus of things linked together, is inseparable from that of Da-sein and the ready-to-hand.

Moreover, several of his commentators seem to think, as I do, that for Heidegger the priority of the ready-to-hand over objective presences *is* ontological rather than merely epistemological. For example, Polt² argues that since, according to Heidegger, 'knowing is a mode of Da-sein founded upon Being-in-the-world' so that 'being-in-the-world as a basic state must be interpreted *before-hand*', then 'the question of being is deeper than the question of knowing. Ontology precedes epistemology'. Herbert Dreyfus (whose wonderfully luminous and user-friendly interpretation of *Being and Time* is regarded by many as definitive) speaks of Da-sein's pragmatic spatiality being 'ontologically primary':

Once we see that everyday spatiality with its places and regions must be 'overlooked' to reveal objective space, we see that we cannot hope to understand the everyday world of places and regions in terms of pure extension, and that, therefore, as far as intelligibility is concerned, Da-sein's pragmatic spatiality is ontologically primary. (p. 140)

On this central issue, however, Dreyfus's position is arguably ambiguous, reflecting perhaps crucial ambiguities in Heidegger's own thinking; at any rate, Dreyfus hedges his position about with an important qualification. Da-sein's 'pragmatic spatiality', he says, is 'ontologically primary' only '*as far as intelligibility is concerned*' (italics mine). This may suggest that the space of Da-sein and of the ready-to-hand set out in it is only epistemologically, rather than ontologically, primary.³

Ontological and epistemological primacy would be identical, of course, if the 'kinds of beings there (fundamentally) are' – the business of ontology⁴ – were determined by the mode of access to being – which is for some the proper concern of epistemology. Adopting this position might be thought to lead to something like phenomenism or even perceptual constructivism – positions that Heidegger rejects completely. Or at least thinks he does.

Consider the crucial opening moves in *Being and Time*, which do indeed suggest that he merges the ontological enquiry into the being of being and the enquiry into the intelligibility of being. (Indeed, that this is pivotal to his entire enterprise.)

Insofar as being constitutes what is asked about, and insofar as being means the being of beings, beings themselves turn out to be what is *interrogated* in the question of being. But if they are to exhibit the characteristics of their being without falsification they must for their part have become accessible in advance as they are in themselves. (BT 5)

the being that has the character of Da-sein has a relation to the question of being itself ... certainly something like a priority of Da-sein has announced itself. (BT 7)

It is important to appreciate that Heidegger is not talking here of the mere 'appearance' of being *to* Da-sein; for being, as it is revealed in Da-sein as beings, is exhibited 'without falsification'. Intelligibility is not only a means of disclosure of being; it is that in virtue of which being has being. Ontology, which is the process of reflection on the being of beings, becomes identical with an existential analytic since the being of beings is whatever is revealed in and to Da-sein.

There may be no room in Heidegger's system, therefore, for a distinction between the ontological-hierarchical view and the epistemological-hierarchical view. At any rate, there seems a reasonable case for assuming that Heidegger adopts some sort of hierarchical view – either epistemological or ontological – though there seems to be a stronger case for believing that he adopted an ontological-hierarchical view – in which the ready-to-hand does indeed have priority over the present-at-hand or objective presences.⁵

2) Does Heidegger assimilate the question of the meaning of being to the question of the nature of being and, if he does, is this legitimate?

The question of the relative priorities of the ready-to-hand and the present-to-hand is, it seems to me, fudged, or settled in advanced, by Heidegger's merging the question of the meaning of being with the question of (the nature of) being. The inquiry into whether he does in fact do this, has two components:

- i) Does Heidegger confuse the meaning of the word 'being' with the meaning of being? This seems to be evident from this passage:

Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word 'being'? Not at all. So it is fitting that we should raise anew *the question of the meaning of being*. (BT 1)

- ii) Does Heidegger confuse the meaning of being with the nature of being? This seems strongly suggested by the following passages:

Hence what is to be *ascertained*, the meaning of being, will require its own conceptualization, which again is essentially distinct from the concepts in which beings receive their determination of meaning.

Insofar as being constitutes what is asked about, and insofar as being means the being of beings, beings themselves turn out to be what is *interrogated* in the question of being. Beings are, so to speak, interrogated with regard to their being. (BT 5)

Is it beyond question a misreading of Heidegger to interpret 'the being of being' as meaning 'the nature of being'? If it isn't, then it seems as if Heidegger slides from 'the meaning of being' to 'the nature of being'.⁶ At any rate, we do slide from 'the meaning of being' to 'the being of being'. This slide would be legitimate only if it has already been accepted that the being of being is identical with the meaning being has (to Da-sein). But this is what, so to speak, has to be proved.

The conflation of the meaning of being with the being of being is not accidental or due to incompetence, of course. It is the central claim of his philosophy. Moreover, he does attempt a kind of proof that the meaning of being and the being of being are identical. These are the key passages:

Regarding, understanding and grasping, choosing and gaining access to, are constitutive attitudes of inquiry and are thus themselves modes of a particular being, of *the* being we inquirers ourselves in each case are. Thus to work out the question of being means to make a being – he who questions – transparent in its being. Asking this question, as a mode of *being* of a being is itself essentially determined by what is asked about in it – being. This being which we ourselves in each case are and which includes inquiry among the possibilities of its being we formulate terminologically as Da-sein. (BT 5–6)

Da-sein is not an instance of being for the representational abstraction of being; rather it is the site of understanding of being. (BT 7 footnote)

Understanding of being is itself a determination of being Da-sein. (BT 10)

Thus *fundamental ontology*, from which alone all other ontologies can originate, must be sought in the *existential analysis of Da-sein*. (BT 11)

What is primarily interrogated in the question of the meaning of being is that being which has the character of Da-sein. (BT 37)

This argument, or series of linked assertions, is persuasive, however, only to someone who has *already* accepted that the question of being (or of the being of being) is identical with the question of the meaning or intelligibility of being. It is not at all persuasive if we refuse to let go of the intuition that there is a question of being – of the being of being – separable from the question of the meaning of being (to or for Da-sein).

To put this another way: the merging of these two questions – of the being of being (or, as I would prefer it, of the nature of being) and of the meaning of being – will be allowed through 'on the nod' only if we already believe that

Da-sein has the last word on being. (Or that not only has being no meaning without Da-sein but also that there is no 'nature of being' beyond the meaning or meanings of being.) But our accepting that Da-sein has the last word on being depends upon our already assimilating the being of being (or the nature of being) to the meaning of being (to Da-sein). In other words, Heidegger reaches his goal of equating being with its readiness-to-hand (to Da-sein) and equating ontological inquiry with the existential analytic of Da-sein by means of a vicious circle. Ultimately, it is the circularity I object to – along with the sliding between the terms that permits the circularity to pass unnoticed.⁷

Many sympathetic commentators accept that Heidegger does merge the questions of the meaning of being and the nature or being of being. However, they defend this move robustly. Dreyfus (who prefers the terms 'intelligibility' or 'sense' to 'meaning') argues that for Heidegger all the 'ways of being' are 'related to human being and human temporality' (p. 1). 'To raise the question of being is to make sense of our ability to make sense of things' (p. 11). He quotes Heidegger's assertion that '*What is asked about* in the question to be elaborated is being, that which determines beings as beings, that in terms of which beings have always been understood' (BT 4–5). The being of being is 'the intelligibility of being' and this intelligibility is founded in 'everyday coping skills', dealing with the ready-to-hand.⁸

The nub of the argument is expressed by Dreyfus as follows:

If it were not for Da-sein as a clearing in which entities could be encountered, the question of whether there could be entities independent of Da-sein could not be asked, and more important, without Da-sein's giving meaning to the occurrent way of being, the question could not even make sense. (p. 256)

This is, of course, true; but the fact that Da-sein is the necessary condition for the question being asked does not tell us, nor should it legislate over, even less determine, the answer. The fact that what Dreyfus calls 'occurrent beings' – for which we have used the term 'objective presences' – requires the assumption of a decontextualising stance in order to be revealed does not prove that these entities are the artificial (or somehow ontologically secondary or even inferior) products of the decontextualising stance. The detached attitude that 'deworlds' them may simply be removing what has been put around them, liberating them from the interpretations that have been imposed upon them, by Da-sein's primordial enworlding stance. We could argue that they do not require decontextualising in order to *assume* their (or a) nature because, existing before us, they did not have a context anyway: their natural state is context-free and decontextualisation reveals them as they are in themselves.

So, contrary to what Dreyfus says, to ask the question 'What would have been occurrent if Da-sein had never existed?' is not the same as asking 'What would have been the case [occurrent] if this question did not make sense?' Likewise, the fact that the *concept* 'independent of Da-sein' does not exist prior to Da-sein does not imply that there is nothing, no-thing or no thing independent of Da-sein. Although the *notion* of 'objective presence' is internal to Da-sein, it does not follow that objective presences are. After all, as Heidegger himself admits, 'The cosmos can be without human beings inhabiting the earth, and the cosmos was long before beings ever existed' (quoted Dreyfus, p. 256).

In short, it is the elimination of the difference between the question of being and the question of the meaning of being (to Da-sein) that enables ontology to have as its fundamental target the ready-to-hand; and enables Heidegger to reinterpret the question of being as the question of the intelligibility – which makes the ready-to-hand ‘more primordial’ than the present-at-hand. Objective presences then acquire a somewhat inferior status as objects that are merely outside of, or on the fringes of, the ordinary intelligibility of ‘absorbed coping’. They have either dropped out of intelligibility – as when they become conspicuous by their unhandiness⁹ (such as tools that are broken or in some other sense not working) – or are about to become intelligible (as when they are to be assimilated into the ready-to-hand) – or when they pose questions for the science that will create the technology that will, by a rather circuitous route, bring them back into the fold of intelligibility. The intelligible remains the ready-to-hand.

In summary, it is the assumption that ontology is about the intelligibility of beings that secures the result that ‘the kinds of things there fundamentally are’ are ready-to-hand: if ontology is about intelligibility – and the being of being is the intelligibility or meaning of being – it will inevitably award priority or primordially to beings that are ready-to-hand. To put this another way, if we assert that when we substitute (as Heidegger does) epistemological questions by ‘*ontological*’ questions concerning what sort of beings we are and how our being is bound up with the intelligibility of the world’ (Dreyfus, p. 3) we have already either narrowed the scope of ontology or redefined its fundamental goal of determining what kinds of things there are to what kind of things we are and what kinds of things are available to us. No wonder the ready-to-hand – which is bound up with intelligibility – gets to look like the fundamental material of the world/universe. And if it is further argued that there is no making sense of the question of being outside of intelligibility – because there is no intelligibility outside of intelligibility – then the drastically reduced scope of ontology or the foregone conclusion to its inquiry into the question ‘What (fundamental) kinds of things are there?’ is assured.

3) Does Heidegger have problems with the incomplete truths of daily experience?

If, as seems to be the case, the ready-to-hand is, for Heidegger – ontologically or in some fundamental sense – more primordial than other objective presences, this creates problems in accounting for our ordinary experience of truth and knowledge. The truth about things, he tells us, is intelligibility or, to use his preferred term, ‘disclosedness’. I argue, in the *Conversation* that, thus defined, truth seems, far from being a hard-won goal of human inquiry, an inescapable condition of Da-sein. Heidegger’s ontology, therefore, does not seem to allow for the dappled knowledge and ignorance of everyday life and even less for the progressive improvement of our individual knowledge through experience and maturation and personal inquiry and less again for the growth of our collective knowledge through the development of science.

Let us deal first with ordinary everyday (partial) truth and then with scientific progress towards ever larger truths.

i) Ordinary everyday truth (and falsehood)

It seems to me that Heidegger cannot accommodate ordinary ignorance and the everyday phenomenon of finding things out because Da-sein is (in a sense) incorrigible. Da-sein is 'disclosedness' and disclosedness is truth; even fundamental truth, given that the ready-to-hand is ontologically more primordial than objective presences. Here are some key passages in *Being and Time* which seem to support this interpretation of his position:

only with the disclosedness of Da-sein is the *most primordial* phenomenon of truth attained. (BT 203)

The existential constitution of the there ... pertains to nothing other than the most primordial phenomenon of truth. (BT 203)

The structure of care as *being-ahead-of-itself* – already being-in-a-world – as being together with innerworldly beings contains the disclosedness of Da-sein. (BT 203)

Now it might be argued that Heidegger's position could be given a less vulnerable interpretation. He might be pointing out that, without the 'that' – as in 'That there is X, Y, Z, etc.' – of Da-sein, there is no truth. In other words, Da-sein is the existence condition of there being truths (or of being presented as truth) but it does not legislate over (particular) truths – over what is and what is not true or over what and what is not 'the case'.¹⁰ In short, Da-sein makes 'truth' possible but this does not mean that it makes truths true or, more precisely, enables true assertions to have their truth conditions to be met.

This benign interpretation, however, is undermined by passages which seem to justify my belief that Heidegger has particular difficulty accounting for ordinary falsehood and getting things wrong:

In that Da-sein essentially *is* its disclosedness, and, as disclosed, discloses and discovers, it is essentially 'true'. Da-sein is '*in the truth*'. (BT 203)

disclosedness [is] interpreted existentially as *primordial truth*. This is not primarily a quality of 'judgement' or of any particular mode of behaviour, but an essential constituent of being-in-the-world as such. (BT 273)

All of this suggests that Da-sein's *very fabric* is truth. This, of course, goes much further than the (to me) correct assertion that there is no truth without prior disclosedness. The problem is to move beyond this to understand how disclosedness can be the basis of falsehood as well as truth, so that Da-sein can get things wrong, or in order that there can be such a thing as (first) getting things wrong and (later) getting them right – or more nearly correct. This is relevant to the status of science, as we shall presently discuss, because science is above all the progressive correction of our everyday (subjective) truths by superior, objective truths: for example, the replacement of the belief that the sun is something that moves up and down something called the sky by the knowledge that the sun is in fact a star, at the centre of a system of planets revolving round it, one of which is the earth.

Admittedly, Heidegger does recognise the need to acknowledge that disclosedness gets things wrong as well as right. Indeed, he says:

The full existential and ontological meaning of the statement 'Da-sein is in the truth' also says equiprimordially that 'Da-sein is in untruth'. (BT 204)

And 'Da-sein is always already both in the truth and the untruth' (BT 205), that 'Disclosed in its "there", [Da-sein] stays equiprimordially in truth and untruth' (BT 275) and, even, that 'being-in-untruth constitutes an essential determination of being-in-the-world' (BT 204). The trouble is, he does not provide a satisfactory explanation of how this can come about.

He has a go at such an explanation by arguing that Da-sein can get things wrong because it is 'lost in its world', absorbed in 'public interpretedness' so that what is discovered is 'disguised and closed off by idle talk'.

Discoveredness is appropriated to a large extent not by one's own discovering, but by hearsay of what has been said. Absorption in what has been said belongs to the being of the they. (BT 206)

Two things, however, it seems to me, remain crucially unclear about this explanation: the first is how Da-sein gets collectivised in this way, so that disclosedness is mediated through the 'they', and illusion slips in and 'uncovering' can be alienated from itself; and the second is how, if it 'essentially falls prey to the world, Da-sein is in "untruth" in accordance with its constitution of being', Da-sein manages to progress towards some kind of truth about an objective world. The collective aspect of Da-sein that enables it to participate in untruth would seem to imprison it there as well: how that collective can then be the basis of a collective advance towards the objective truths of science is unexplained.¹¹

There seems, in short, to be a problem in getting from Heidegger's 'truth as disclosedness and disclosedness as constitutive of Da-sein' to the dappled world of truth and falsehood that we individually and collectively seem to engage with in real life. It is as if Heidegger's 'disclosedness' does not allow room for an outside to reform its deliverances; an outside with respect to which those deliverances may seem to be wrong. It also does not have the necessary layeredness to enable objective truths to be differentiated from subjective or immediate impressions. This layeredness is captured in the conventional epistemologies that Heidegger bypasses.

To put this another way: the notion of truth as disclosedness and disclosedness as the very essence of Da-sein seems to confine the exposure of the latter to the immediate truths that it uncovers: Da-sein is not clearly separated from what it exposes and seems as fastened to the truth as a burr on Velcro. This, ultimately, is why I dissent from his account of truth, although I do not dissent from his view that disclosedness is a necessary condition of there being truth (and falsehood).¹²

ii) Scientific truths

If the notion of Da-sein as disclosedness makes it difficult to understand the limitations of our ordinary grasp of truth and to make sense of our ability to

amend our ignorance to some extent through ordinary inquiry, through looking about and finding out, it makes it even more difficult to understand the origin and success of scientific inquiry – in particular science's reform of ordinary understanding and the superior effectiveness of the knowledge which it makes possible.

The trouble that science presents for Heidegger's philosophy is rooted even more directly than are his difficulties with ordinary growth of knowledge in the problems we have identified with his ontology and they are proportionately greater. For, as Heidegger emphasises, the notion of the world being made up of 'objective presences' revealed to a detached gaze lies at the heart of the world picture implicit in the natural sciences – the cosmos (including our own bodies) is essentially a universe of matter – and is exactly what his own ontology is aimed at destroying. Heidegger's seeming displacement of 'objective presences' removes the very stuff of the scientific world-picture from prime position in the order of things. It therefore undermines that world-picture and seems to put in question the claims of science to superior knowledge and to leave unexplained the fruitfulness of the 'active uncertainty' of scientific inquiry and the abstraction and mathematisation of the universe – understood as objectively present nature – that characterises scientific thought.

Heidegger must explain why, if science is subordinated to the less systematic and objective disclosedness of Da-sein, we give greater credence to (say) the heliocentric than to the geocentric theories; why we grant the truth of all the counter-intuitive (and, even more, counter-perceptual) things that scientists tell us; and why science-based technology is so much more powerful than any other way of engaging with the world that (apparently) surrounds us. Why, in short, the ready-to-hand is all the handier for having been re-designed by technologists.

Heidegger would have difficulty accommodating the superiority of some scientific over ordinary, everyday or existential truths even if he retreated to a position whereby the ready-to-hand available to Da-sein's being-in-the-world conceded its priority and were only equiprimordial with the presence-at-hand, the objective presences, of the scientific world-picture. But his actual ontology, which gives precedence to the ready-to-hand presents him with much greater difficulties. If, to be more specific, the objects studied by science have to fit into a 'projection' or 'ground-plan' of Da-sein, then it is difficult to see how we came to believe some of the things that science tells us; for example, that the reality of things is quite different from how they are disclosed in the mode of the ready-to-hand; that human beings are located in objective space-time; that the ready-to-hand has properties, upon which its handiness in the widest sense depends, that are not disclosed directly to Da-sein; or that there was a material (and even biological) world long before there was Da-sein. In short, that there are truths about objective presences that may be closer to the truth about the world than the Da-sein-based truths of everyday being-there. It is even more difficult to explain how we came to conceive of, never mind successfully to prosecute, the lines of inquiry that gave us those truths.¹³

What cannot be denied – and I am not denying it here – is that science is a latecomer compared with everyday understanding and science-based technology is a latecomer compared with ordinary practical know-how. Practice is prior to theory – of course. We have to live before we can engage in the scientific enquiries that will ultimately show us how more effectively to secure the means to life. As Dreyfus puts it, practical know-how has priority over theoretical

know-that. The fact that theoretical knowledge depends upon the pre-theoretic understanding implicit in practical skills is, however, insufficient proof that the objects revealed to theoretical knowledge (which has, after all, been more powerful than the ordinary engaged awareness available to all mankind since hominids first evolved from monkeys, and perhaps even earlier) are not prior to *Da-sein*; even less that the objects revealed to theory are somehow derivative compared with those revealed to practice. On the contrary, it is arguable that the greater power of theory-based understanding shows that it reveals the truth of being in the way that unreflective practice does not; that scientific knowing-that *reforms* practical knowing-how. Ordinary manipulation could be regarded as being further from the truth of being than is detached contemplation precisely on those traditional grounds that Heidegger rejects – namely, that the revelation of the object by manipulation is more directly contaminated with the individual aims and purposes of the manipulator.

If the theoretical stance and its objects were merely what was left after the cessation of practical activity, then it would be difficult to see how science came to be so effective. Heidegger's ontology, in other words, makes the unreasonable effectiveness of science even more unreasonable!

Dreyfus's 'absorbed coping' which engages with the ready-to-hand may be more basic and continuous but it is not necessarily in contact with the more fundamental truth about things unless we close the circle by arguing that the world as revealed to basic coping is the truth about the universe. Indeed, the fact that we are often vulnerable in proportion as we are caught up in absorbed coping (such that the transition from unthinking activity to deliberate action based upon theories and theories embodied in technology has made us less vulnerable) suggests that absorbed coping may not have a privileged grasp on how things are – even as it is relevant to *Da-sein* – and that precipitation out of absorbed coping into the stance of detached contemplation may be a kind of awakening. In short, that what is revealed to the theoretical knower – equipped with deliberate actions informed by explicit mental representations and informed by declared general principles – is truer to the underlying reality than what is revealed to absorbed coping.

Heidegger, I believe, has a sneaking suspicion that this may be so, as the following passage, which we have already cited, suggests:

But 'there are' handy things, after all, only on the basis of what is objectively present. Admitting this thesis, does it then follow that handiness is ontologically founded in objective presence? (BT 67)

Yes, it should be admitted. And, this admitted, the superior access of science to the truth of the universe in which the world of *Da-sein* is situated, should also be admitted. (To deny that that universe has priority over the world of *Da-sein* is, of course, magic thinking. Or, to put it a little more politely, idealism.)

What the theoretical standpoint, or indeed science, cannot explain, however, is that there is such a thing as encountering; how it is that being is 'opened up' through *Da-sein*. Even less can theory explain how it is that there are theories or science account for the intelligibility that is presupposed in scientific enquiry.¹⁴ It would be unreasonable, of course, to expect them to do so. As Einstein said, it is the (partial) intelligibility of the world that is the greatest mystery of all.

4) The ambivalent status of Da-sein

To characterize with a single term both the involvement of being in human nature and the essential relation of man to the openness ('there') of being as such, the name of 'being there' [*Da-sein*] was chosen.¹⁵

We come finally to the issue that surfaced repeatedly in the *Conversation*: the ambiguous status of Da-sein. Is Da-sein a category, or is it an indefinite number of (presumably human) individuals? This issue touches upon many others, including those we have already addressed in this Appendix. If Da-sein is somehow coupled with, or distributed over, a certain number of (material) human bodies, then the priority of the ready-to-hand over objective presences is in question – for bodies seem like objective presences. Likewise, if its fate is caught up with that of human bodies, then the truths of science, according to which human bodies and Da-sein appeared quite late in the history of the universe, rather put the disclosedness of Da-sein and the ready-to-hand in their place; for example, Da-sein's spatiality and its temporality are enclosed, under-pinned, trumped, by physical space and physical time.

If Da-sein is linked with bodies, we are, of course, better able to understand why its disclosedness is not coterminous with the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth: partial knowledge and error – indeed, specific disclosures as opposed to uncommitted 'disclosedness' – are possible. Bodily located Da-sein cannot see, or disclose, what is spatially or temporarily 'round the corner'.

In a sense, it seems as if something has to give:

- a) either Da-sein has the last say on truth – and it is somehow bodiless – in which case the status of science is in doubt;
- b) or it has to accept the deliverances of science and finds itself located in the Greater Scheme of Things.

The former position sits more easily with the notion of Da-sein as a category (or a massless mass) and the latter with the notion of Da-sein as instantiated in an indefinite number of embodied instances – for which there is much support in *Being and Time*:

Da-sein exists in each case only in its factual concretion (137) [and] as factual, Dasein is among other things things, in each case, dispersed in a body. (quoted in Dreyfus, p. 41)

[Dasein] has been delivered over to beings which it needs in order to be able to be as it is. (416) [364] (quoted in Dreyfus, p. 44)

Dreyfus subscribes quite explicitly to this 'count' interpretation of Da-sein:

Usually each human organism is one Da-sein, one human being, because it has taken on one set of the available social ways of organising its activities. (p. 349)

This body-bound interpretation of Da-sein not only brings back the old mind-body conundrums but raises puzzles of its own; for example: How can

Da-sein – understood as pure ‘being there’ – have needs, and how can those needs be satisfied by objects in the environment? How can this substanceless being have wants that are satisfied by the material objects and conditions in the world? What needs could mere disclosedness have? If there are conditions of disclosedness’s continuation – e.g. an adequate supply of food and water to keep its body going – how could this be? *Why should openness require dinner?* How could dinner be a requirement for general disclosedness to become the disclosing activity of a located body? In sum, if the needs of Da-sein are needs of a particular body, how is Da-sein coupled to that body? How does it share the body’s fate?

We have of course no idea how a living body could be the condition for an individual Da-sein’s disclosedness disclosing an individual world. We have equally little idea how Da-sein’s general property of being openness to the world, of letting the world be there, becomes the openness of a what to a whom; how the clearing gets to be *located*; how being-in-the-world differentiates, courtesy of embodiment, to being-in-this-world. We are back in epistemological trouble – and worse.¹⁶

In view of this, it is easy to understand why Heidegger leaves the status of Da-sein unclear. While this may not be deliberate, it serves his purpose: he needs the ambiguity. Da-sein is neither fully or clearly a massless mass, nor clearly or fully a countable number of instances – of things or unthings – nor both. Da-sein survives as a plausible foundation stone for the ontology at the heart of his philosophy by sliding between one persona and the other. If Da-sein were unequivocally a category, then it would be difficult to see how it could alight on particular bodies, individual people, etc. And yet it would need to alight on particular places, at particular times, in order for its disclosedness to differentiate into specific disclosures (such as the ones that I am enjoying now). It would need to be located in a particular body – or assume the location of that body – in order to have a reference point for particular ‘theres’ to be illuminated and particular worlds to be engaged. Without a body it would be like a light without a lamp: a light from nowhere, illuminating nothing in particular. In short, Da-sein could not be individuated. How it might acquire a body, having started off as a category, remains utterly incomprehensible. If there were one Da-sein per body, Da-sein and body would somehow have to be co-located. If, on the other hand, Da-sein were from the start a countable collection of instances, of embodied individuals, with one Da-sein per living person, then Heidegger would seem to inherit all the problems associated with the traditional idea of the point-subject or the ‘cabinet’ consciousness. And if – as a compromise – Da-sein were both a category and instances – the combined option – it would run into both lots of difficulties.¹⁷

If we try to overcome the difficulty of relating Da-sein and human bodies by invoking the notion of embodied Dasein as a primitive (rather as Strawson posited the notion of the ‘person’ as a primitive prior to notions such as body and mind¹⁸) – so that Dasein is countable (one Dasein per body) but not merely ‘coupled to’ the body – we still do not evade the problems of traditional epistemology. For we are entitled to ask: How does this body light up a world which is around it in the literal sense? What is it about the *human* body that makes it (quite unlike other material bodies) the embodiment of Da-sein and that in virtue of which there is a ‘here’ that is itself and a ‘there’ that is in relation to itself? And so on. Until the notion of embodied Da-sein offers more on these

problems – and the fundamental problem of how the living body comes to be a *lived* body – then it seems that we should suspend judgement on the advantage of a Heideggerianised ontological-epistemology!

Conclusion

Notwithstanding his claims, Heidegger leaves most of the traditional philosophical problems unsolved. We have discovered moreover that, contrary to his belief, they cannot be bypassed. We have to return to them. But how much more interesting they are after *Being and Time*!¹⁹

Notes and References

Preface

1. The most obvious – and therefore least interesting – point of convergence lies in the central place each gave to language in both the aetiology and the dissolution of philosophical problems in their later works. Much more interesting is the correspondence between Wittgenstein's very late meditations on what can and cannot be doubted (in *On Certainty*) and Heidegger's discussion (in *Being and Time*, section 43) of the unreality of the question of the reality of the external world and the 'scandal' of philosophers' repeated attempts to demonstrate that reality. To both philosophers, for much of their career, it seemed that most philosophical problems can be solved or dissolved by paying careful attention to the presuppositions implicit in ordinary social life. This second-order scepticism – a scepticism about traditional scepticism – reflects a deeper similarity between them: a simultaneous rejection of a metaphysics that tries to stand outside of the social world – and of any epistemology that tries to provide a firmer foundation for our ordinary understanding – along with a profound, wondering astonishment at that ordinary understanding.

Heidegger rejected epistemology (and Descartes' starting point and problems) and metaphysics in favour of ontology, while Wittgenstein, influenced by Frege, rejected epistemology and Descartes in favour of a philosophy of language that focused on defining the limits of what could be said or discussed and the sources of, and constraints upon, the meaning of words. Both were, in their different ways, right intermediately but wrong in the last instance.

2. Raymond Tallis, *On the Edge of Certainty* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).
3. In fact, he has had more than his share of irresponsible, ill-informed commentary; but much of this has come from professional scholars, though not necessarily philosophers. I am thinking, for example, of the professors of postmodernity, whose names I shall withhold for the sake of their families.
4. My acknowledgement of my lack of credentials as a scholar is not offered as a pre-emptive strike on the charge of bad scholarship or as an excuse for this inexcusable crime, which now seems to be endemic in the humanities. See, for example, 'Evidence-Based and Evidence-Free Generalisations', in *A Raymond Tallis Reader* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000) and 'Sokal and Bricmont: Is this the Beginning of the End of the Dark Ages in the Humanities?', *PN Review* (1999), 128: 35–42. I take full responsibility for any errors. But I do not take credit for new knowledge about Heidegger nor pretend to be fully *au courant* with what is already known or, indeed, with the whole range of Heideggerian interpretation.
5. The reader may wish to consult my essay 'Metaphysics and Gossip: Notes Towards a Manifesto for a Novel of the Future', in *Theorrhoea and After*

(London: Macmillan, 1999) for further explanation. That seemingly frivolous essay is deadly serious.

6. Herbert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), p. 337. Dreyfus emphasises the continuity of Heidegger's ontology even more explicitly in this passage:

He never gave up or historicized the two basic modes of being laid out in *Being and Time*. In his last published work, *On Time and Being* he singles out availableness and occurrentness as 'modes of presencing'. (p. 85)

'Availableness' and 'occurrentness' are Dreyfus's translations of respectively, 'being-ready-to-hand' and 'being as objective presence', the terms that are used in the *Conversation* that follows. (They are the words favoured by Joan Stambaugh, whose translation is used throughout.)

7. Frederick A. Olafson 'The Unity of Heidegger's Thought', in Charles B. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
8. Quoted in Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 9.
9. It has been pointed out to me that, while this is true in Anglo-American circles, on the Continent, later works (such as 'Letter on Humanism') have possibly been more influential, at least in recent years.
10. Quoted in Joseph Kockelmans, 'Heidegger on Theology', in *Thinking about Being: Aspects of Heidegger's Thought*, ed. Robert W. Shahan and J.N. Mohanty (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

By Way of Introduction: Parts I and II

1. George Steiner, 'A Secondary City', in *Real Presences* (London: Faber, 1989), pp. 1–50.
2. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Vol. II (Pfullingen: Neske, 1961), p. 486. Quoted in David Cooper, *Heidegger* (London: Claridge Press, 1996), p. 60. I have a feeling that you would not have been entirely pleased with this marvellous little book which distils so much of your thinking into a very few, authoritative and often witty pages.
3. *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. R. Wolin (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1993), p. 68. Quoted in Cooper, *Heidegger*, p. 58.
4. T.S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* ed. with an introduction by Frank Kermode (London: Faber, 1975), p. 40.
5. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 158. I have relied entirely on Professor Stambaugh's translation of the seventh edition of *Sein und Zeit* (originally published by Max Niemeyer Verlag, Tübingen, 1953) in the large number of passages I have quoted in this *Conversation*. (The page numbers are those of the English translation, not of the German original.) Not being a German scholar, I cannot comment on the accuracy of the translation; I can only, as an impassioned reader, report with gratitude on its luminous clarity and expressiveness – and on the immensely helpful

supporting material, notably the Lexicon of English Expressions, tracing the entire history of the terms used by the translator as they appear in the book.

6. Richard Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1999), p. 153.
7. See *ibid.*, 'Heidegger's Politics: Facts and Thought', pp. 152–63.
8. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, translated by Peter Collier (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991). The final sentence is worth quoting:

And it is perhaps for the same reason that he refused to the very end to discuss his Nazi involvement: to do it properly would have been to admit (to himself as well as to others) that his 'essentialist thought' had never consciously formulated its essence, that is, the social unconscious which spoke through its forms, and the crude 'anthropological' basis of its extreme blindness, which could only be sustained by the illusion of the omnipotence of thought. (p. 105)

That 'social unconscious' is well described in Hans Sluga's *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993) which shows very clearly how Heidegger's sense of mission and destiny was of a piece with an apocalyptic sense experienced by many German intellectuals at the time and their interesting delusions as to the role they should assume in averting disaster.

9. This story may not be true. Polt (*Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 156) says that it is 'not clear' what happened. It is also discussed by Seyla Behabib in 'The Personal is not the Political' (*Boston Review*, October/November 1999), who concludes that Heidegger did not refuse Husserl access to the library. You denied it robustly, Herr Professor. However, you did nothing to limit the damage caused to Husserl by the series of decrees, passed through your office, banning Jews from access to the University – and thereby sparing Freiberg University from the painful task of commemorating one of its most illustrious alumni.
10. Karl Löwith, quoted in Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 20.
11. Hans-Georg Gadamer, quoted in Polt, *ibid.*, pp. 19–20.
12. Cooper, *Heidegger*, p. 7.
13. They have got you wrong, by the way. (As they have got everyone else wrong.) Let me give a couple of examples. They confuse your central argument (which we shall visit in due course) that being is not to be identified with Substance and that being-in-the-world, and the ready-to-hand, rather than objective presence, is primordial, as an 'attack on the Western metaphysics of presence' – as if the ready-to-hand were not present! And they misinterpret your views on language, set out so clearly in *Being and Time*, taking one of your later assertions – that it is language that speaks – as your entire view of the relationship between language and speech. For you, in *Being and Time* at least:

Discourse is existentially equiprimordial with attunement and understanding. Intelligibility is also always already articulated before its appropriative interpretation. Thus it lies at the basis of interpretation and statement. We called what can be articulated in interpretation, and thus more primordially in speech, meaning.... If discourse, the articulation of the intel-

ligibility of the there, is the primordial existential of disclosedness and if disclosedness is primarily constituted by being-in-the-world, discourse must also essentially have a specifically *worldly* mode of being. (BT 151)

No support there, I believe, for those who believe that the system of language has priority over speech, that this system is what determines what is said, and that meanings are the effect of language.

14. Karl Löwith, quoted in Elzbieta Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt-Martin Heidegger* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) p. 11.
15. Quoted Ettinger, *ibid.*, p. 11.
16. If you do have access to a library where you are at present, you may wish to consult my *The Explicit Animal: A Defence of Human Consciousness* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edition, 1999) and 'The Poverty of Neurophilosophy', in my *On the Edge of Certainty and Other Philosophical Explorations* (London: Macmillan, 1999). I hope that Herr Professor Husserl is not the librarian.
17. Edmund Husserl, *Philosophy as a Rigorous Science*. Quoted and translated by David Bell, *Husserl* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) p. 84.
18. I owe these two definitions to Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 34.
19. This shift has been beautifully encapsulated by one of your most luminously clear interpreters, Herbert Dreyfus:

At the foundation of Heidegger's new approach is a phenomenology of 'mindless' everyday coping skills as the basis of all intelligibility.

Since Descartes, philosophers have been stuck with the *epistemological* problem of explaining how the ideas in our mind can be true of the external world. Heidegger shows that this subject/object epistemology presupposes a background of everyday practices into which we are socialized but that we do not represent in our minds. Since he calls this more fundamental way of making sense of things our understanding of being, he claims that he is doing *ontology*, that is, asking about the nature of this understanding of being that we do not *know* – that is not a representation in the mind corresponding to the world – but that we simply *are*. (*Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, Mass: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991, p. 3)

20. This is reported in Russell's *Autobiography* and cited by John Passmore, *A Hundred Years of Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 205.
21. I think I have expressed this least clumsily in 'The Poverty of Neurophilosophy', Chapter 3 of *On the Edge of Certainty*.
22. From your essay 'Hölderlin's Hymne "Andenken"'. Quoted in Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 1.
23. Some people might argue (not, perhaps, yourself) that we should set aside folk intuitions when we do philosophy; but it is such intuitions that guide our assent to one particular ontology rather than another, to one way of conceiving how things are rather than another, and to the consequences we feel might flow from them.
24. In *What is Metaphysics?*, quoted in Polt, *ibid.*, p. 126.
25. See *ibid.*

26. Heinrich Weigand Petzet, *Encounters and Dialogues with Martin Heidegger 1929–1976*, translated by Parvis Emad and Kenneth Maly (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press 1993), pp. 12–13.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
28. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, translated by Hazel Barnes (London: Methuen, 1957), p. 524.
29. Daniel Dennett, *The Intentional Stance* (Cambridge, Mass: Bradford Books, 1987), p. 5.
30. Petzet, *Encounters*, p. xvii.
31. The infamous passage, Herr Professor, is worth quoting in full:

Agriculture is now a motorized food industry, essentially the same as the manufacture of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as the blockade and starvation of countries, the same as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs. ('Das Ge-Stell', quoted in Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 172).

What exactly did you mean by 'essentially'? Would both agriculture and genocide have been acceptable if they had been conducted with less technological prowess, if each cow had been lovingly reared and taken on a string separately to the abattoir and each Jew been slaughtered with a bit more personal attention?

32. Quoted in Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger*, p. 11.
33. You do address the issue of circularity. In fact, you defend yourself against the charge of circularity by making a virtue of it. We shall have more to say about this later, as well about the conflation (with which it is connected) of the question of being and the question of the meaning of being.
34. See p. 22 above for the distinction between the ontic and the ontological.
35. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger*, p. 14.
36. Heidegger's resentment of Arendt's success and his difficulty in coping with her status as an independent thinker is well described by Ettinger, *ibid.* See in particular chapter 10.
37. You will recognise the misuse of your famous essay 'The Origins of the Work of Art':

The art work opens up in its own way the Being of beings. This opening up, i.e., this revealing, i.e., the truth of beings, happens in the work. In the art work, the truth of being has set itself to work. (*Basic Writings*, translated by David Farrell Krell, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978)

38. Interestingly, and rather surprisingly, Gottlieb Frege – who was the fountainhead of the philosophical trend most hostile to your way of doing philosophy – made the same point in his famous essay on 'The Thought'. He argued against the notion that truth consists in a correspondence analogous to that between a picture and what it depicts:

A correspondence ... can only be perfect if the corresponding things coincide and are, therefore, not distinct things at all ... it would only be possible to compare an idea with a thing if the thing were an idea too ... [But] it is absolutely essential [for the correspondence theory] that reality

be distinct from the idea. But then there can be no complete correspondence, no complete truth... So the attempt to explain truth as correspondence collapses. ('The Thought: A Logical Enquiry', translated by A.M. and Marcelle Quinton, in *Philosophical Logic*, ed. by P.F. Strawson (Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 18–19)

39. Preface to Tallis, *On the Edge of Certainty*, p. xii.
40. If (God forbid) we were talking about knowledge, we might speak (along with Russell) of (indirect) knowledge by description outweighing (direct) knowledge by acquaintance.
41. Fall from 'Primordial state of being-in-the-truth'? Yes this is what you appear to say. This would suggest that truth and falsehood are *not* equiprimordial. You can't have it both ways: either truth and falsehood are born twins, in which case the origin of falsehood out of disclosedness remains obscure, or falsehood results from a falling away from truth, in which case falsehood and truth are not equiprimordial. Another muddle, Herr Professor.
42. The full story is, as I have already mentioned, to be found in 'Explicitness and Truth (and Falsehood)', in *On the Edge of Certainty*.
43. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, translated by Helen Zimmern (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1967), p. 1.
44. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger*, p. 11.
45. Petzet, *Encounters*, p. 10.
46. For this quotation and the details in the following paragraph, I am grateful to Ettinger's impassioned and perhaps partisan memoir of the relationship between Heidegger and Arendt. Ettinger has been quite savagely criticised in an article on the recently published correspondence between Arendt and Heidegger, in *The New York Review of Books*: 'Ménage à Trois', by Mark Lilla (18 November 1999, Vol. XLVI, No. 18). While I am persuaded by this article that Ettinger is sometimes unfair to you, I feel that she got some important things right.
47. *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol. ii, ed. Ernest Sirluck (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 642.
48. See Hugh Mellor, *Real Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) for a decisive treatment.
49. Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 111.
50. This and subsequent details are taken from Petzet, *Encounters*, pp. 190–4. David Cooper, *Heidegger*, reports that the 'mountain hut' was 'actually a small hillside house on the outskirts of a village' (p. 8). You yourself emphasised the centrality of your hut to your whole life's project. 'When in the darkness of a winter night, a snow storm surrounds the shelter (*die Hutte*) and covers everything, then the great moment of philosophy has arrived' (from a radio broadcast, quoted in Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, p. 51).
51. 'Half of the year you surrender yourself here entirely to yourself, and in your work you have the inner passion of consuming yourself' (Petzet, *Encounters*, p. 194).
52. Rainer Maria Rilke, *First Duino Elegy*. I have used the translation by J.B. Leishman (London: The Hogarth Press, 1967).
53. *On the Edge of Certainty*, p. xvi.

54. See my 'The Poverty of Neurophilosophy'. I shall refrain from repeating the library joke.
55. It has been suggested to me that I am taking your talk of Da-sein as 'nothing' too seriously. That Da-sein is nothing only in the sense that it is a no-thing; that it is not a substance or an 'objective presence'. It is, however, an entity and so can be purposive and presumably accumulate a CV and be the bearer of a biography. This may seem possible for an (otherwise unspecified) no-thing; but not for something that is 'the null ground of its nullity'. Thus presented, it seems to this reader, nothing twice over, nothing nothinged, and, as such, doubly disqualified – a non-entity as well as a no-thing.
56. Quoted in Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 153.
57. I owe this lethally witty phrase to David Cooper, *Heidegger*. It is consistent with another unforgettable image of the Philosopher-as-Warrior:

The story was told of how a few students, led by the philosophy *Dozent* and former lieutenant-commander Stieler, were drilling with wooden dummy rifles in the clay pit of a brickwork when Heidegger drove up in a car and jumped out. Stieler, who was over six feet five inches tall, stood to attention before the stocky Heidegger and made a correct military report, and like a commanding officer, Heidegger, whose war service had been confined to postal censorship and a meteorological observatory, formally received his report and saluted. Such was the nature of Heidegger's battle scenes.

This is reported in *Martin Heidegger. Between Good and Evil*, by Rudiger Safranski, translated by Ewald Osers (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 267.

58. Polt, *Heidegger*, pp. 155–6.
59. Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger*, p. 58.
60. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961):

Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical. (6.45)

61. Petzet, *Encounters*, p. 93.
62. As Bertrand Russell put it so beautifully:

No egocentric particulars occur in the language of physics. Physics views space-time impartially, as a God might be supposed to view it; there is not, as in perception, a region which is specially warm and intimate and bright, surrounded in all directions by growing darkness. (Quoted in Colin McGinn, *The Subjective View*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982)

63. Yes, this was one place where your politics and your ontology did converge. When, in 1936, you met an ex-pupil of yours in Rome, Karl Löwith, a Jew and in exile, Heidegger 'pointed out that his concept of "historicity" was the basis of his political engagement'. This is reported in Safranski, p. 321.

64. Quassim Cassam, *Self and World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). Had you read this book and, indeed, the works of certain analytical philosophers such as Strawson who lie behind it, you would not have overlooked the centrality of the body in conferring identity upon the self. Indeed, you might have been persuaded by Cassam's brilliantly argued case that 'consciousness of our thoughts and experiences requires a sense of our thinking, experiencing selves as shaped, located and solid physical objects in a world of such objects'.
65. You do give some indication that you recognise the ordinary problem of the self:

The self maintains itself in a certain sameness throughout this constant change of experiences. Opinions diverge as to how this persistent self is to be defined and how one is to determine what relation it may have to changing experiences. The being of this persistently changing connection of experiences remains undetermined. But basically something objectively present 'in time', but of course 'unthinglike', has been posited in this characterisation of the connection of life, whether one admits it or not. (BT 342–3)

But I am not clear whether or not you entirely reject the validity of the problem. At any rate, you do nothing to resolve it.

66. Some scholars – notably Herbert Dreyfus – question whether you really are hostile to the claims of science to provide superior knowledge and whether you really do grant the ready-to-hand primordially over objective presences. I defend my interpretation of your position in the Appendix.
67. I am not, of course, original in this respect. Maurice Merleau-Ponty devoted many pages of his *The Phenomenology of Perception* to this theme. I will return to it in *The Mystery of Knowledge* (forthcoming).
68. Dreyfus, p. 10.
69. It is important to appreciate that their putative intrinsic (e.g. material) nature does not fully explain the meanings they have. It is only that they constrain those meanings. It is arguable that material objects do not have intrinsic natures sufficiently developed to account for the way they are experienced, never mind to account for the meanings they may have. I discuss this in 'The Elusiveness of Intrinsic Properties' in *On the Edge of Certainty*, pp. 175–7 and *The Mystery of Knowledge*.
70. Actually, this could be used to support an opposite interpretation; namely that being and Da-sein are different. Being the 'shepherd' or the 'house' of something is presumably different from being that something.
71. Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, p. 66.
72. Which we might, provocatively, describe as your denial that there is a question of being as such at all! (Better keep this as a footnote, as a whispered aside since reawakening our awareness of the question of being was your life's work.)
73. Not only in *Being and Time* but throughout your *oeuvre*, even after the *Kehre*. Your position, however, did become increasingly ambivalent as when you asserted that 'language is the house of Being', and that 'man is the shepherd of Being'?

74. Petzet, *Encounters*, p. 92.

75. Besides, it is not true. The greatest creative moments do not have a home, and the greatest creative minds do not grow out of native soil. They are either at home in the entire universe – as in the case of thinkers such as Einstein – or they are homeless, as in the great poets of modernity, such as Hölderlin and Trakl whom you admired so much, and the great philosophers such as Socrates. Or (again as in the case of Socrates) they are creative *against*, in flight from, their native soil. Of course, I know what you are getting at: the ‘rootless’ cosmopolitans, supposedly exemplified by the Jews. How small is the step from your most impassioned beliefs to the rifle butt in the child’s face.

76. This is not exactly what you said. But you said something almost as daft:

For along with German the Greek language is (in regard to its possibilities for thought) at once the most powerful and the most spiritual of all languages. (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim, New York: Anchor Books, p. 47)

You published this in 1953, seven years after the full revelation of the horror of the concentration camps. You originally wrote it in 1935, when Goebbels’s German was filling every quarter of public space. Perhaps Elfride was right when she used to tell visitors that you weren’t really ‘that smart’. Less surefooted at any rate down amongst the onticalities than up in the ontological realm.

77. Polt, *Heidegger: An Introduction*, p. 116.

78. It is all confessed in my essay on ‘The Difficulty of Arrival’, *Newton’s Sleep* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

79. See ‘Building, Dwelling, Thinking’, in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978). The final sentence of this essay is worthy of note:

But how else can mortals answer this summons than by trying on *their* part, on their own, to bring dwelling to the fullness of its essence? This they accomplish when they build out of dwelling, and think for the sake of dwelling. (p. 339)

80. The nearby temptation to say that the feeling of warmth is a revelation neither of the sunshine nor of the arm nor of the physical interaction between the sunshine and the arm, but of the nerve impulses triggered, as a result of the interaction between the arm and the sunshine, in my arm but arriving somewhere in the central nervous system must be resisted because it leads to the explanatorily dead end of central state materialism and the other variations of neurophilosophy, which, Herr Professor, I have thoroughly trashed in many (too many) publications.

81. I owe this way of expressing it to Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World*, p. 247. There follows an interesting quotation from *Being and Time*:

Being is what shows itself in pure, intuitive perception, and only this seeing discovers being. Primordial and genuine truth lies in pure intuition. This thesis [of Parmenides] henceforth remains the foundation of western philosophy. (BT 160)

The point is made more forcibly by Dreyfus in that the version he uses translates 'pure intuition' as 'pure beholding' – which conveys more vividly the sense of detachment from the kind of engagement which characterises the 'absorbed coping' of everyday life.

82. Cooper, *Heidegger*, p. 54. One feels like saying: 'Tell that to the dinosaurs'. Nature has produced some pretty monstrous transformations without the help of technology. There is no need to specify them. Indeed, if it wasn't for the monstrosity of nature, technology would not have come into being.
83. See, for example, 'The Concept of the Enlightenment', the opening chapter of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's massively influential *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, translated by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1973).
84. It is the final, resonant sentence in your lecture 'The Question Concerning Technology', available in *Martin Heidegger. Basic Writings*, ed. by David Farrer Krell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 317. After you had uttered it, 'there was no reverent silence but a standing ovation' (Safranski, p. 294).
85. See my 'Explicitness and Truth (and Falsehood)', in *On the Edge of Certainty*, though there, as elsewhere in my thinking, I prefer 'explicitness' to 'Da-sein'.
86. *Ibid.*
87. See above, p. 16.
88. Cooper, *Heidegger*, p. 34.
89. Cassam *Self and World*, p. 62.
90. For further discussion, see 'Carpal Knowledge', in Raymond Tallis, *The Hand Book: a Contribution to Philosophical Anthropology* (forthcoming).
91. Quoted in Cooper, *Heidegger*, p. 58.
92. Petzet, *Encounters*, p. 224.

Appendix

1. Heidegger seemed to have comparable views with respect to time. Dreyfus (who elsewhere argues that Heidegger was *not* an idealist, that he was a realist who conceded the superiority of scientific over everyday knowledge in certain areas) cites the following passages (Herbert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World. A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, Cambridge Mass: MIT Press, 1991), p. 259:

There is no nature-time, since all time belongs essentially to Da-sein. (*Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, p. 262)

Strictly speaking we cannot say: There was a time when man **was** not. At all *times* man was and is and will be, because time temporalizes itself only insofar as man is. (*Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 71)

2. Richard Polt, *Heidegger, An Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1999) p. 47.
3. Dreyfus sometimes represents Heidegger's views as being more unequivocally ontological-hierarchical, as for example in this passage:

Heidegger proposes to demonstrate that the situated use of equipment is in some sense prior to just looking at things and that what is revealed by their use is ontologically more fundamental than the substances with

determinate, context-free properties revealed by detached contemplation. (*Being-in-the-World*, p. 61)

The ready-to-hand revealed by absorbed coping is more fundamental stuff than the present-at-hand revealed to detached contemplation.

Heidegger, in giving priority to practical activity as a guide to what is 'really' there, acquires some interesting bedfellows. Not only obvious examples such as Wittgenstein and James and Dewey but one or two surprising ones, such as Karl Marx:

The chief defect of all previous materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that things, reality, sensuousness, are conceived only in the form of the *object* or of *contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity*. (*Theses on Feuerbach. The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, Vol. 5, Progress Publishers, Lawrence Wishart, London 1975, pp. 3–5)

4. Heidegger might argue that, on the contrary, ontology is not about 'the kind of beings that there are' because it is about being and not about beings in the plural. The latter are the subject of ontical, not ontological, enquiry. The usual definition of ontology – that it is about 'the kinds of things there (fundamentally) are' – would however be a reasonable description of Heidegger's actual ontological enquiry.
 5. The opposite epistemological-hierarchical interpretation of his views on the relationship between the ready-to-hand and objective presences – in which the latter have primacy – seems to be ruled out by Heidegger's assertion that the kind of being of these beings is 'handiness'. But it must not be understood as a mere characteristic of interpretation, as if such 'aspects' were discursively forced upon 'beings' which we initially encounter, as if an initially objectively present world-stuff were 'subjectively colored' in this way. (BT 67)
 6. The situation here is a little complex, if only because, according to Dreyfus, Heidegger's ontology is phenomenological and we are concerned in phenomenology not with 'the nature of Being' – for only beings have natures – but with 'the being of being' (ibid., p. 32). Perhaps I should leave out the insert 'nature of'!
 7. Heidegger does address the charge of circularity at various places in *Being and Time* but it seems to me that he misses the essential viciousness. For example, when he argues that the 'circle' in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and this phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of Da-sein, in interpretive understanding. (BT 143)
- This seems to underline, rather than to dissolve, the circularity.
8. The emphasis on intelligibility leads to the social context as the foundation of intelligibility. Heidegger thus shares with Wittgenstein 'the view that most philosophical problems can be (dis)solved by a description of everyday social practices' (p. 10). Just as I feared!
 9. I can't resist again quoting Heidegger when he speaks of that 'conspicuousness which presents the thing at hand in a certain unhandiness' (BT 73). It always makes me smile.

10. I have argued for an analogous position. See Raymond Tallis, 'Explicitness and Truth (and Falsehood)', in *On the Edge of Certainty* (London: Macmillan, 1999). I have no difficulty, for example, with this passage from *Being and Time*:

Before there was any Da-sein, there was no truth; nor will there be any after Da-sein is no more. For in such a case truth as disclosedness, discovering, and discoveredness *cannot* be. (BT 208)

Or this:

Is it the case that a being, so far as it is, is independent of the truth about it, but that truth exists only when Da-sein exists? (*Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, quoted in Dreyfus, p. 265)

So long as we make absolutely clear what is meant by 'independent of'. For me it means that a pebble exists independently of being the truth condition of the assertion 'There is a pebble'.

11. Heideggerians may wince at my talking of Da-sein as being 'collectivised' in its falling prey to the world and in its movement from the immediacy of disclosedness (which seems to be able to deliver only truths and incapable of generating falsehoods) to the mediated world of truth, half-truth and falsehood. They may protest: 'This man has fallen back into the old ways of thinking. He imagines that Da-sein is an isolated point consciousness which somehow has to engage with other point consciousnesses in order to acquire a collective or social dimension! Doesn't he realise that Da-sein "initially and for the most part" is collective, is "they"?!'

This may be how Heidegger envisages Da-sein; but if he does, then he takes *everything* off the shelf, as it were: world, society, etc. If all of these are included in Da-sein's starter-pack, most of the major epistemological problems, including the ones that taxed Husserl, are simply bypassed rather than solved or (legitimately) dissolved. Moreover, putting everything in the starter-pack stores up problems for later, when it is necessary to try to get a grip on Da-sein's individuality, and how it is that each Da-sein discloses a different 'there'.

The notion behind the generous filling in the starter-pack – that it is inadmissible to question the existence of certain things or even to try to prove their existence – was one of the most ubiquitous themes in twentieth-century philosophy. It was a conspicuous feature of the thinking of Heidegger and many of his philosophical disciples, of Wittgenstein and many of his philosophical disciples, to Ordinary Language philosophers (such as J. L. Austin) and of the pragmatists. There is buried within it something close to contempt for what is seen to be the futility and insincerity of traditional philosophy.

One of the tasks that faces philosophy now is to determine how far philosophy can go in questioning the (necessary) presuppositions built into pre-philosophical experience without running into pragmatic self-refutation or sacrificing the framework of agreement necessary for questions to make sense and for answers to be possible. One could, after all, argue that their job description requires of philosophers that they do *not* presuppose the presuppositions of ordinary experience; even less should they turn the

presuppositions of ordinary experience or of Da-sein in its average everydayness into assumptions that underpin their own philosophical systems.

At any rate, it is time for a reaction against the form of philosophising that simply reasserts, with a triumphant told-you-so, the ordinary unreflective beliefs of our most ordinary moments. The challenge is to return to the profound questions while still remaining sincere; and to accept the preservation of what we cannot genuinely disbelieve as a constraint on philosophy without making it a free gift, or an assumption, or a reason for by-passing or losing the hard questions.

12. Professor David Cooper (*vide supra*) has suggested to me that we can understand Da-sein's incomplete (and reformable) knowledge of its world by comparing the difference between truth and falsehood with the difference between different readings of a text which light up different things and leave other things in darkness. This analogy may capture the fact that disclosedness is not complete: as when two people examine an elephant and one reports a tail while the other reports a trunk. It does not capture, or so it seems to me, error and the progression from error to truth, or from immediate impressions to objective truths of science, or even from subjective sensation to impersonal fact. The difference between critic A focusing on one aspect of a book and critic B focusing on another is not the same as the difference between one Da-sein disclosing the sun as an object moving just behind the clouds and another Da-sein knowing it to be 93,000,000 miles away and the apparent movement being of the clouds and the earth, not the sun. Or to take a more homely example: it is not the same as the difference between a detective thinking (incorrectly) that Suspect 1 committed the crime and then later (correctly) coming to believe that Suspect 2 committed it. The analogy of a light picking out some parts of a field and leaving others hidden doesn't, in my view, capture the dappled world of truth and falsity we live in – and the journey from getting things wrong to getting things right.
13. Professor Cooper has also suggested to me that it may be possible to get round the difficulty of reconciling the seeming imprisonment of Da-sein in truth with its relative, partially amendable ignorance, by invoking the difference between the transcendental conditions of Da-sein's knowledge or understanding and the empirical conditions of Da-sein's understanding/knowledge. The empirical truths of science – such as that the material world existed long before there was Da-sein – are not undermined by the dependence of science and all other forms of knowledge upon the prior disclosedness of Da-sein. This latter is merely the transcendental condition permitting knowledge to exist at all and so making it possible for there to be empirical truths. It does not legislate over the nature of those truths: it is merely the transcendental condition for there being empirical truths.

I have some difficulty with this suggestion, though I am sympathetic to it – indeed it shares some similarity with my own distinction between 'explicitness' understood as an existence condition of truths and the objective states of affairs that are the truth conditions of true statements. (See 'Explicitness and Truth (and Falsehood)', in *On the Edge of Certainty*). I am probably more sympathetic to it than was Heidegger, of whom more presently.

Kant, of course, used a distinction of this kind in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, when defending his position that the spatio-temporo-causal world was mind-dependent. This dependency did not, he argued, imply that the world would disappear with the disappearance of mind and would miraculously re-emerge if mind came back again. I am not too sure this works even for Kant. The trouble is that it leaves unexplained – even undescribed – how the transcendental relates to the empirical; how, in other words, the transcendental opens up not just the general enabling framework of the nexus of spatio-temporo-causal happenings but underpins the actual happenings that happen, so that they happen at a certain place in a certain time and in a certain order. Looking at this another way: I can't see how the spatially uncommitted, temporally unlocated, causally innocent noumenal reality exfoliates into particular configurations of spatio-temporal events, except by courtesy of empirical, actual minds. (Transcendental) mind-in-general won't deliver anything *precisely* because it won't deliver anything *in particular*. Now these empirical minds must themselves be located in the spatio-temporo-causal nexus they themselves uphold.

It's no using invoking a further distinction – between transcendental and empirical *mind(s)*. This will simply move the problem on: instead of having to worry about how transcendental mind relates to empirical reality, we shall then have to worry about how transcendental and empirical minds relate to each other; how specific empirical minds (now assumed to be themselves located in the spatio-temporo-causal nexus) are related to the spaceless, timeless, causally disconnected transcendental mind. The fact that many of the things science tell us are actually consistent with, or woven in with, the immediate deliverances of Da-sein – and ultimately they all have to be consistent in this way (the audit trail of verifiability ends with the experience of individuals) – makes it even more difficult to apply this profound transcendental/empirical distinction: the immediate knowledge of Da-sein through disclosedness of the world of the ready-to-hand seems too much on the same plane as the mediated knowledge we acquire through scientific inquiry. In other words, the world prior to Da-sein – revealed by science – may seem similar in some respects to the world when Da-sein has emerged, or at least to fit with it. Indeed, this is ultimately a requirement of scientific truth. This however is rather like a rose in total darkness being required to have a similar appearance to a rose in ordinary daylight.

In short, while Kant might give us some kind of idea why there are spatio-temporo-causal contents to the world we are conscious of, he gives us no clue as to how the possibility of this very general kind of content plays into actual, specific contents. Unless the empirical world is somehow internal to mind (which, of course, is precisely what Kant denies in order distance his idealism from magic thinking), it is difficult to see how the one could get a purchase on the other. Transcendental mind may help us to understand how there is the possibility of an empirical world; but it gives us no clue as to how that possibility entrains specific content; and without specific content, there is no empirical world.

It also seems doubtful that Heidegger himself would have embraced the transcendental/empirical distinction as a way of reconciling the philosoph-

ical claim that science has to fit into the ground plan of Da-sein with science's (true) discovery that Da-sein cuts only a small figure in the world as science portrays it. First of all, he would have spurned a helping hand from Kant. (And even more robustly from the para-Kantian transcendental idealism of Husserl.) He is not very complimentary about Kant in *Being and Time*. He saw him as an unreformed Cartesian and consequently neglecting 'something essential: an ontology of Da-sein'. He specifically distinguishes the direction of his own philosophy – universal phenomenological ontology – from 'the transcendental-philosophic direction of Kantian critical idealism' (BT 34). And he rejects Kant's transcendental I and emphasises that (contrary to Kant's opinion) 'world time is found *just as directly* in what is physical as in what is psychical' (BT 384).

Dreyfus (p. 344) specifically warns against the notion that Heidegger was developing a transcendental analytic in the Kantian sense in *Being and Time* because 'it implies that Da-sein as the condition of *possibility* can be understood, apart from the question of whether any objects actually exist'. This is why, Dreyfus argues, Heidegger called his investigation an *existential* as opposed to a *transcendental* analytic. Unlike the transcendental ego, Da-sein must exist factually and it must be necessarily involved in, and dependent upon, the world it opens up.

It seems reasonable, therefore, to expect that Heidegger would have hated anything that invoked a transcendental realm and would have judged granting 'transcendental' status to Da-sein a travesty of his thought. One could even argue that invoking the distinction between a transcendental Da-sein and the empirical world it is in, actually highlights a fundamental weakness of Heidegger's ontology: the potential separation of 'disclosedness' (as a general possibility) from what is actually disclosed. The transcendental/empirical distinction would raise the (philosophically disastrous) spectre of Da-sein as a free-floating something/nothing that descended upon and lit up a pre-existing world at random points. In other words, it would give credence to the caricature version of Heidegger's ontology I played with in the *Conversation* in the section on Da-sein in 'A Breath of Fresh Air'.

It might be argued that Heidegger's rejection of both Kant's transcendental idealism and his particular conclusions from it does not prove that the Kantian distinction between the transcendental and the empirical wouldn't bale Heidegger out. Heidegger may simply not know what's good for him. Even if this were the case, it would go against the suggestion that the failure to recognise this distinction misrepresents Heidegger. Heidegger, whether or not he knows what's good for him, is still left with the problem of reconciling a science that is (according to him) in some important sense internal to Da-sein with the deliverances of that science that show that the material world it uncovers far outspans Da-sein.

14. What Heidegger has most fundamentally discovered is that there is something called 'the world' which cannot be put together out of perceptions and individual agents and that material objects rubbing up against one another, and the energy exchanges associated with this, cannot generate the Dasein that makes the world 'be'. There has to be a 'there' for there to be anything there and this 'there' is an underivable given. Nature – natural

forces and processes as revealed by science – cannot explain the ready-to-hand, even though it may trace the causal powers of things.

This limitation on science, however, is easy to understand only if one assumes that handiness is not clearly connected with the causal powers of things. Such an assumption unfortunately seems to stand in the way of trying to make sense of how body-based perception gives the ‘there’ a particular content. Likewise, while the nature revealed by science may not be able to account for ‘significance’, the actual, particular significances things have must depend (at least in part) upon their intrinsic nature (scorpions vs. potatoes; or, closer to home, sick body vs. well body) that science helps us to understand.

The limitation that Heidegger places on science and scientific understanding is to some extent founded on a truism: since the present-at-hand is created by stripping off all significances one cannot build significances out of objective presences, the present-at-hand. One cannot build the phenomenon of the meaningful world out of elements approached as intrinsically meaningless. So while one might agree with Heidegger as regards the limitations of an ontology founded on objective presences (‘the constant presence of self-sufficient substance’), it still remains a valid aim to develop a view of the world, an ontology, that takes account of the fact that the world ‘out there’ seems to be made of objects other than us that seem to have an intrinsic nature resistant to change by Da-sein.

15. Martin Heidegger, ‘The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics’, in Walter Kaufmann (ed.), *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 270–1. Quoted in Dreyfus, p. 13.
16. Frederick A. Olafson’s Heideggerian account of a human being – a Da-sein – as ‘a locus of presence’ still leaves the question open as to how, by what means, Da-sein acquires, is committed to, is condemned to, a location. (See *What is a Human Being? A Heideggerian View*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 145.)
17. There is another manner of having it both ways:

The best way to understand what Heidegger means by Da-sein is to think of our term ‘human being’, which can refer to a way of being that is characteristic of all people or to a specific person – a human being. (Olafson, *ibid.*, p. 14)

This looks like seeing Da-sein both as a category (in this case a general property) and as a collection of people. The category account doesn’t seem to square with the assertion (quoted by Dreyfus, *ibid.*, p. 68) that ‘Because Dasein has in each case mineness one must always use a *personal* pronoun when one addresses it: “I am”, “you are”’.

18. P.F. Strawson, *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics* (London: Methuen, 1959).
19. See Raymond Tallis, *The Mystery of Knowledge* (forthcoming).

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