

One of the hallmarks of a hermeneutic conception of rationality is that rationality is grounded in an understanding that is historically and lingually mediated. One of the tasks that Heidegger sets for himself in his early philosophical career is to investigate the hermeneutic character of human existence and human rationality. This paper examines Heidegger's attempt to do so in the context of his early readings of Aristotle's work, but also in light of what Heidegger understood as the pressing philosophical concerns of his time. In this respect, language and the notion of world played a pivotal role in Heidegger's thought.

In 1929/30, Heidegger summarizes what is, in his mind, the distinctive feature of human beings, namely, "Man is not merely a *part of the world* but is also master and servant of the world in the sense of "*having*" world. Man has world."¹ This pronouncement is the result of a decade of philosophical investigation by Heidegger into the being of human beings. Yet, his realization that human beings are characterized by having a world and that we are both master and servant of this world, as well as that we have a world through the medium of language, was a theme of his earliest philosophical work. His early, sustained attempt to understand the ontological connection between human being, world and language resulted from his highly original reading and appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy. Most specifically, Heidegger focuses on Aristotle's claim that human beings are uniquely characterized as ζῶον λόγον ἔχον, i.e., the living being that has language. Heidegger's return to Aristotle's philosophy was facilitated by his critique of a theoretical approach to philosophy driven largely by the attempt to make philosophy adhere to a scientific ideal of rationality, for instance, philosophy as it was envisioned by the neo-Kantians. And although Husserl is subject to this critique in his own way, Heidegger relied heavily on Husserl's own analysis of the notion of world.

Heidegger's first lectures were critically motivated by the privilege position neo-Kantianism gave to rationality as embodied in modern scientific conceptualization and the way in which they contrasted this to what they saw as the irrational and incomprehensible nature of immediate, lived-experience (*Erlebnis*). In working past this false dichotomy between scientific rationality and irrational life and lived-experience, Heidegger rejects the claim that human life in its immediacy is irrational and incomprehensible. Moreover, in conjunction with his own critical reading of Husserl, Heidegger argues that both scientific rationality and the rationality appropriate to human life depend upon Dasein *having* a world.

His early concern with the dominant influence of the dichotomy between rationality and irrationality is evident in the conclusion to his *Habilitation*. He notes that scholasticism and mysticism "belong together essentially in the medieval

¹ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 177.

worldview” and this division does not coincide with that between rationalism and irrationalism. Equating these two, Heidegger argues, “is based on an extreme rationalization of philosophy.”² As an example, Heidegger selects the concept of analogy, which plays a central role both in medieval scholasticism and mysticism. The concept of analogy “is the conceptual expression of the particular form of inner Dasein that is anchored in a primordial, transcendent relation of the soul to God and lived precisely in the Middle Ages with an unusual reserve.”³ The point being that science (e.g., scholasticism) and the understanding of life (e.g., mysticism) in the Middle Ages were both essential aspects of inner Dasein, and both were rational from the perspective of the medieval worldview.

The contrast Heidegger draws here is not between rationality and irrationality, but between rationalism and irrationalism. Rationalism and irrationalism do not coincide with rationality and irrationality. Rather, rationalism strives after “pure” rationality—or, to note the obvious Kantian overtones, pure reason—to the exclusion of that which lies outside this purified rationality. Irrationalism, on the contrary, embraces the irrational to the exclusion of rationality, e.g., in certain forms of Romanticism. Heidegger indicts both rationalism and irrationalism of an extreme rationalization of philosophy. In other words, irrationalism is merely the counter-position to rationalism, insofar as it presupposes a rationalistic understanding philosophy, which it rejects for the sake of the ineffable, mystical and “irrational” experience of life. Rationalism—especially in its neo-Kantian guise—admits that life and lived-experience is fundamentally ineffable and irrational, and consequently rejects any attempt to rationally circumscribe and capture life *as such*, but endeavors to provide humanity with an idealized and scientifically adequate conceptual “construction” or “reconstruction” of human life.

Heidegger works to move beyond rationalism and irrationalism, as well as the corresponding notions of pure reason and irrational, ineffable life. Yet today there are still scholars that maintain that Heidegger was an irrationalist.⁴ And in his hugely influential interpretation of Heidegger’s early philosophy, Theodore Kisiel maintains that Heidegger remains directly engaged with the problem of the irrationality and ineffability of life by his supposed attempt to find a way to gain access to life in its individuality and immediacy. According to Kisiel, Heidegger’s early examination of world is “the *Ur-sprung*, the primal leap which the early Heidegger makes into the subject matter of phenomenology and wishes to articulate, in defiance of the classical maxim *individuum est ineffabile*.”⁵ Kisiel maintains, “The bold claims induced by the spell of the Kantian transcendental philosophy apparently

² Martin Heidegger, “The Theory of Categories and Meaning in Duns Scotus” trans. Roderick M. Stewart and John van Buren in John van Buren, ed., *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 68.

³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴ See, for example, Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Peru, Ill.: Open Court, 2000).

⁵ Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1993), 54.

lead Heidegger to believe that something like a Kantian schematism of human existence is capable of *definitively articulating the evasive immediacy of the human situation, that is, of 'saying the unsayable.'*"⁶

Heidegger's descriptions of everyday life in its individuality and immediacy, e.g., his description of the "environmental experience" of coming into the lecture hall and taking his place behind the lectern in order to give his lecture and of students taking their seats in order to listen⁷ and his description of his room along with its familiar contents,⁸ demonstrate quite plainly the inadequacy of Kisiel's interpretation. These descriptions quite adequately capture life in its immediacy and individuality, as well as the rationality embedded in it, e.g., one proceeds to the lectern in order to lecture. Far from being under the spell of Kantian transcendental philosophy, Heidegger realized early on the severe limitations and problems that this philosophy, especially in its neo-Kantian variety, generated for understanding the rationality embedded in human life and, more important, the essential connection of this to language.

It is not the case that the human situation in its immediacy and individuality is problematically evasive or that articulating this situation involves the quixotic project of "saying the unsayable." The genuine problem is that philosophical interpretations of the human situation, the nature of rationality and of language can make it seem so. In this respect, both the Baden and Marburg schools of neo-Kantianism agreed that immediate lived-experience was ultimately incapable of being rationally or conceptually grasped. For Rickert, lived-experience is an "intensive infinity." For Natorp, it is "identical with the level of absolute indeterminacy. One may reason back to this, as to the original chaos, but one cannot lay hold of it in itself."⁹ According to both, what can be known—in fact, what can be experienced in any meaningful way—presupposes the transcendental subject's imposing conceptual form on the formless immediacy of lived-experience. Lacking any conceptual structure whatsoever, everyday life and lived-experience in its immediacy is unknowable even in the most minimal sense. Consequently, they argued that both scientific knowing and everyday knowing required conceptually constructing or reconstructing immediate lived-experience. Moreover, both argue that everyday knowing is merely an imperfect form of the knowledge exemplified in modern science. In other words, all conceptualization is abstractive, even the conceptualization that occurs in everyday language, but scientific conceptualization is more abstract, universal and exacting.¹⁰

⁶ Ibid., 457. Italics mine.

⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, trans. Ted Sadler (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 59 - 61.

⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Ontology - The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, trans. John van Buren (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1999), 67-70.

⁹ Paul Natorp, "On the Objective and Subjective Grounding of Knowledge," trans. Lois Phillips and David Kolb, *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 12 (1981): 263.

¹⁰ For instance, Natorp remarks, "even common representations seek [univocal determinations of objects]; in its naming, in the unified meaning of words." ("On the Objective

Commenting on the neo-Kantian theory of concept formation, Heidegger notes that, “The crudest, but already sufficiently threatening objection [to the description of experiences], pertained to *language*. All description is a ‘grasping-in-words’—‘verbal expression’ is generalizing.”¹¹ He argues that the ground for this objection lies in the “undemonstrated prejudice” that language is necessarily objectifying.¹² This goes hand-in-hand with another undemonstrated prejudice that “... the generalization of the meaning function, its character of universality, is identical with the theoretical and conceptual universality of the genus concept...”¹³ Heidegger pinpoints that a large component of the neo-Kantian problematic is driven by the view that language is essentially a means of conceptualizing the manifold that is delivered to the subject by means of experience. In other words, one of Heidegger’s most significant early insights is that immediate lived-experience, understood as an evasive, inchoate, and ineffable manifold, is itself a philosophical construct that results from a rationalistic understanding of language as a mere vehicle for the imposition of abstract concepts onto life. And this, in turn, is the result of a rationalistic understanding of the nature of knowledge and human reason.

In attempting to undermine this position, Heidegger maintains, following Aristotle, that what one encounters immediately in life is *πράγματα*—“that is to say, that which one has to do with in one’s concernful dealings (*πρᾶξις*).”¹⁴ These concernful dealings constitute what Heidegger calls “factual life,” the “basic sense of the movement” of which is caring.¹⁵ According to Heidegger, what makes factual life possible is world, which is not a conceptual form or system of conceptual forms imposed upon irrational life and lived-experience. The importance of the notion of world was familiar to Heidegger from Husserl’s work. Although Heidegger recognized, as Husserl did not, the true import of world in recapturing factual life.

Husserl’s lectures in the late teens and early 1920s profoundly influenced Heidegger. At the time, Husserl was elaborating upon ideas already present in the first book of his *Ideas*, e.g., the role that the world plays in the life of the ego, including the “motivations” and “tendencies” that guided the life of the ego. For instance, Husserl argues that, “The concepts of Ego and surrounding world [*Umwelt*] are related to one another inseparably.”¹⁶ An ego always has its surrounding

and Subjective Grounding of Knowledge,” 263)

¹¹ Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 93.

¹² *Ibid.*, 93 - 94.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 96-97. Cf., Martin Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation,” trans. John van Buren in John van Buren, ed., *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to Being and Time and Beyond* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2002), 127-128.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁶ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, Second Book, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), 195. Hereafter, *Ideas II*.

world, a world populated with “mere things,” but also with “*objects with values, a world of goods, a practical world.*”¹⁷ According to Husserl, there are other worlds apart from the surrounding world, such as the arithmetical world in which one “busies” oneself with arithmetical objects.¹⁸ Generally, whenever an object is “on hand” for me a world makes this possible. In other words, world is the transcendental condition for the possibility of an object “being-there-for-me [*Für-mich-da-sein*].”¹⁹ Husserl holds that worlds are constituted in and through the meaning-giving activities of the ego, most generally according to “attitudes,” such as the natural attitude, with its corresponding surrounding world, and the arithmetical attitude, with its corresponding arithmetical world.

Husserl’s refusal to reduce meaningful objects to the formal and universally abstract conceptual structures of a formal transcendental logic and his suggestion that the meaningful structure of given objects is conditioned by a concrete attitude of the ego with its corresponding concrete world sets him radically apart from the trend in post-Kantian philosophy. Most important for our purposes, Husserl’s view suggests that different objects are given to us in a concrete fashion according to our ability to *deal* with those objects. That is, objects are given insofar as we “busy” ourselves with them. Husserl argued that reflective, higher-order structures, e.g., those embodied in judgments, were founded upon this concrete activity of busying oneself with objects.

Husserl had shifted the focus of the theory of categories and of judgment to the concept of world. In doing so, he had put the issue of the givenness of objects in their concreteness and immediacy front and center. This deflected the common tendency of transcendental logic to focus solely upon the most abstract, formal and universal elements of objectivity. Moreover, for Husserl, a world is neither conceptual nor is it an abstraction, but is rather a concrete structure that circumscribes the possibility of encountering concrete objects of a given kind insofar as they are within the horizon of the ego’s attentive regard. Moreover, he maintains that through world one can encounter objects in a pre-reflective, pre-conceptual and pre-judgmental fashion. This is most evident with respect to those objects that we encounter through the natural attitude and in our surrounding world.

Husserl’s emphasis upon world also has important consequences for his notion of the ego. In addition to the ego as the unity of apperception, Husserl characterizes the ego according to its ability to move and be moved according to what it encounters within a world. In its “being free” this movement is circumscribed by the horizon of possibilities of an “I can” and realized in an “I do” or “I act.” In being moved, the ego is solicited by objects within a world.²⁰ For Husserl,

¹⁷ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, First Book, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983), 53. Hereafter, *Ideas I*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 54

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Husserl, *Ideas II*, 269-277.

reasoning itself comprises a manner in which the ego is able to move and be moved. One moves to construct judgments and create arguments and is moved by inferential or evidential elements in what one encounters in a world. In this respect, Husserl has rethought the traditional, Kantian characterization of the *pure*, transcendental ego of apperception as the “I think” that accompanies all of my representations. For thinking represents a manner in which the ego moves and is moved. Husserl characterizes the pure ego as that which makes lived-experiences one’s own.²¹

Nevertheless, Husserl maintains the view that the ideal of the ego’s activity is embodied in thinking or, more precisely, in reason seeking evidentiary fulfillment. That is, notwithstanding his nuanced examination of the life of the ego (and even of our everyday life), Husserl remains committed to the superiority of the life motivated by the “norms of reason,” which are driven by insight and evidence and are exemplified in the motivation to draw conclusions from premises according to inferential structures and connections. In other words, he is committed to the superiority of the theoretical attitude and even comments that being of entities is revealed solely within the theoretical attitude.²² Thus, like those others whom Heidegger criticizes, Husserl is beholden to the task of seeking the ideal of scientific rationality in every aspect of life. Moreover, he remains faithful to the transcendental approach insofar as both the life of the ego, the world(s) toward which it is directed, and the worldly objects that solicit its attention are constituted in sense-bestowing acts of the *pure*, transcendental ego, which is the unity underlying one’s stream of lived-experiences and is grasped in reflective apperception. Although a detailed account of this lies beyond the scope of this paper, because of the dominance of the theoretical perspective in Husserl’s philosophy, he ends up positing a formless, sensuous $\upsilon\lambda\eta$.²³ In the end, the key components of the Kantian problematic remain at the most fundamental level of Husserl’s transcendental philosophy.

For all of the progress that Husserl had made in recognizing the significance of the notion of world, he had failed to investigate the fundamental nature of world, at least up until his very last work. Husserl remains committed to the view that world is that by which *objects* are given to consciousness. He fails to realize that this is belied by his own claim that a world circumscribes a realm in which the ego “busies” itself with entities. That is, Husserl never realizes that the world of which he speaks in the *Ideas* is in truth, as Heidegger will later put it, “... that ‘*wherein*’ a factual Dasein as such can be said to ‘live.’”²⁴ Heidegger realizes that world is the site of one’s concerned dealings. In many respects, this reflects Husserl’s inability to confront the issue of life itself. He talks about the “ego-life” of the pure

²¹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 102, 132-133.

²² Husserl, *Ideas II*, 13.

²³ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 203-207.

²⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 93.

ego which cannot be excluded by the *epoche*,²⁵ and even maintains that, following the *epoche*, there is “an evidently infeasible positing of [the] *factual existence*” of one’s pure ego and ego-life.²⁶ But this remains, even for him, somewhat mysterious.

On the contrary, Heidegger recognizes that “The world is there in life and for life.”²⁷ Both aspects of the world, that it is there *in* life and *for* life, is essential for understanding Heidegger’s later claim that human beings have a world in the sense that they are both master and servant of the world. To see why, Heidegger believes that we must begin with a new understanding of our concerned dealings and with the being of the entities present in our concerned dealings. We begin with the latter. Following Aristotle, Heidegger maintains that “The domain of objects supplying the primordial sense of being was the domain of those objects *produced* and put into use in dealings.”²⁸ So that, “in Aristotle and also after him, οὐσία still retains its original meaning of the household, property, what is at one’s disposal for use in one’s environing world. Οὐσία means *possessions, what one has* [die Habe].”²⁹ Heidegger later came to call this primordial sense of being, being ready-to-hand.

As important a development as this is in our understanding of the being of entities, it is not nearly as significant as the fundamental reworking of intentionality that takes place here. Heidegger is arguing that our originary relationship toward entities within the environing world is that of *possessing* them, of *having* them and of having them at one’s disposal. Heidegger recognized that Husserl’s own analysis of intentionality was confined to the manner in which we possess entities by means of theoretical “grasping” them, to use Husserl’s own terminology. To be able to theoretically inspect entities within the world requires that we possess them in a unique manner, e.g., as objects *for our* thinking. This also determines the character of the one who possesses entities in this manner, namely, as consciousness. This is exemplified by Husserl’s theory of categories. He says, “The theory of categories must start entirely from this most radical of all ontological distinctions—being *as consciousness* and being as something which becomes “*manifested*” in consciousness.”³⁰

Heidegger, in dialogue with Aristotle, comes to understand that possessing entities in a theoretical fashion represents but one of the ways in which we possess entities. More fundamental than the traditional notion of intentionality, which even Husserl suggested consisted of our busying ourselves with objects, is our ability to possess entities such that they are at our disposal in the broad sense that includes entities being at the disposal of reason and judgment. Moreover, the possible

²⁵ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 102.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Heidegger, “Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation,” 116.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

³⁰ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 171.

manner in which we possess entities and have them at our disposal is essential to our directedness-toward entities. As early as 1919, Heidegger highlights the importance of the “event of appropriation” (*Ereignis*) in environmental experience.³¹ The way in which one possesses entities is in and through one’s concerned dealings, which is to be contrasted with Husserl’s “attitudes.” For an attitude is an *irreducible* manner in which objects are given to consciousness and according to which consciousness can be directed toward objects.

On the contrary, our concerned dealings are, as Heidegger will put it in *Being and Time*, directed toward Dasein as the ultimate for-the-sake-of-which of those dealings. Such concerned dealings, or involvements, mediate between two entities, namely, something ready-to-hand, e.g., equipment, and Dasein.³² For Heidegger, world is the concrete nexus of references and assignments that structure and make possible our concerned dealings. It is in this sense that the world is *in* life, i.e., that world is that wherein factual life is possible. For, unlike the “ego-life” of Husserl’s pure ego, which occurs in a transcendental vacuum, Dasein’s concerned dealings require that a nexus of references and assignments, equipment, and work is always already *available*. Put differently, the conditions that allow one to possess entities and have them at one’s disposal are understood by Heidegger as a concrete ordering of entities, including ourselves, in such a manner as to make possible human activity. Kinds of equipment, types of work, and accepted ends and purposes, are all components of our factual (and historical) world. Without such a “tradition,” a “handing down” of typical equipment, work, and ends we would be incapable of doing anything.

Heidegger highlights this point about the conditions required for factual life with respect to Aristotle’s analysis of sight. Aristotle contends that light is one of the conditions for the possibility of sight, in addition to a entity capable of being seen, an entity capable of seeing and a source of light, e.g., the sun. Commenting on this, Heidegger remarks, “Speaking in a Kantian fashion, daylight is the condition of the possibility of the perceptibility of color. Precisely in this Kantian use of language, one can recognize the difference between what, in both cases, is understood by ‘condition.’”³³ He stresses the fact that “The thing seen must be at daytime. Daylight is something that is part of the being of the world itself” and, therefore, that “‘Being a condition’ applies to a manner of being of the world itself.”³⁴ Likewise, the nexus of references and assignments that constitute the world, as well as equipment and work, condition factual life.

But Heidegger also argues that the world is *for* life. In this respect, he will maintain that Dasein transcends world. Dasein transcends the world insofar as it is the ultimate for-the-sake-of-which of the totality of references and assignments that

³¹ Heidegger, *Towards the Definition of Philosophy*, 63.

³² Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 116-117.

³³ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, trans. Daniel O. Dahlstrom (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2005), 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

constitute the world and is the ultimate for-the-sake-of-which of our concerned dealings in the world. As the for-the-sake-of-which of the world Dasein does not transcend the world in the sense that it is separable from the world or could be without a world. Dasein's transcendence means that, in its being the for-the-sake-of-which of the world, its being cannot be exhausted by being an entity within the world and its being "outstrips" the referential structures of the world. Yet, interestingly, Heidegger remarks that "Dasein always assigns itself from a "for-the-sake-of-which" to the "with-which" of an involvement."³⁵ More explicitly, he argues that "As an entity for which its Being is an issue, Dasein *utilizes itself primarily for itself...*, whether it does so explicitly or not."³⁶ This is clear from the fact that Dasein engages in work for-the-sake-of Dasein, but it still presents an interesting duality in Dasein's being, namely insofar as Dasein is both a with-which and for-which. This is key to understanding Heidegger's remark that Dasein is both the master and servant of the world by *having* a world. And Dasein *has* its world through language. To understand this, we turn more directly to Heidegger's appropriation of Aristotle's philosophy.

Others have argued that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is the central text that guides Heidegger's appropriation of Aristotle as well as his early philosophy.³⁷ Without intending to downplay the influence of the *Nicomachean Ethics* in Heidegger's early philosophy and the similarities between Aristotle's account of φρόνησις and Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's understanding of the world, it is crucial to note that in 1921 Heidegger argues that Aristotle's "physics" succeeded in working out a new fundamental approach to principles, and what grew out of this was his ontology and logic, which in turn permeated the history of philosophical anthropology..."³⁸ Heidegger remarks that because of this, "Beings in the how of their being-moved became the central phenomenon for Aristotle."³⁹

Given his focus on the factual life of human beings as constituted by concerned dealings one can see why Heidegger would inquire into the characteristic manner in which human beings are moved and can move. Heidegger characterizes Dasein as being always already ahead-of-itself. And this not just in the sense in which Dasein is ahead-of-itself insofar as it might be a certain way in the future

³⁵ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 119.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 381.

³⁷ See, for instance, Franco Volpi, "Being and Time: A Translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*?" trans. John Protevi in Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren, ed., *Reading Heidegger From the Start: Essays in His Early Thought* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1994), 195-211; Walter Brogan, "The Place of Aristotle in the Development of Heidegger's Phenomenology" in *ibid.*, 213-227; Jacques Taminiaux, "Heidegger and *Praxis*" in Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis, ed., *The Heidegger Case: On Philosophy and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992); Jacques Taminiaux, *Heidegger and the Project of Fundamental Ontology*, trans. Michael Gendre (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1991); and Robert Bernasconi, "Heidegger's Destruction of Phronesis," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 48 supplement (1989): 127-153.

³⁸ Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," 126.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

that, at present, it happens not to be. As, for instance, a rock is not at the bottom of a cliff, but it might be in the future or a horse might desire to quench its thirst, but presently is not, and might do so in the future. The way in which Dasein is always already ahead-of-itself is not that it has possibilities grounded in its present being that might be realized in the future. Rather, as being for-the-sake-of-which in its very being, Dasein's being always outstrips those possibilities.⁴⁰ As Heidegger says, Dasein is fundamentally futural. Whatever it presently is is ultimately for-the-sake-of-itself. Thus the characteristic movement of human beings is, according to Heidegger, grounded in a "projection" of its being. We are moved by futural possibilities *as* possibilities or, as Heidegger puts it, Dasein's potentiality-for-being.⁴¹

These possibilities do not simply happen to be realized depending on the way in which present circumstances unfold into future realities, but are such that one can fail to bring them about based on what one *will* do in the interim, viz., what actions one takes in order to succeed at them. Aristotle's description of the subject matter of τέχνη and φρόνησις, namely, "what can be otherwise," captures this notion well. He says that τέχνη is concerned "with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and whose origin is in the maker..." and that it is not concerned "... with things that are, or come into being, by necessity, nor with things that do so in accordance with nature."⁴² Heidegger emphasizes Aristotle's point when he remarks, "The movement of concern is not an *indifferent* actualizing, one that is of such a kind that by means of it things simply happen in life and as if life itself were a process."⁴³ Highlighting that this movement is not an indifferent actualizing serves to correctly situate what Heidegger says here within his broader claim that the basic sense of the movement of life is care. In an ontological fashion Heidegger captures this by noting that our being is such that "... in its being, that very Being is essentially an *issue*."⁴⁴

To co-opt one of Aristotle's metaphors, it is analogous to an archer aiming at a target. It is not the archer's present abilities or circumstances or desires that *fundamentally* characterize the being of his actions, but the futural possibility of hitting the target, i.e., the possibility of hitting the target *as a possibility*. In some

⁴⁰ Consequently, all of the interpretations of Heidegger's philosophy that ground Dasein's being in social practices, such as Hubert Dreyfus' influential interpretation, or "forms of life" miss Heidegger's understanding of Dasein, for they exhaust Dasein's potentiality-to-be in the present circumstances and possibilities that are grounded in already existing social practices or forms of life. In other words, they confuse human *behavior* with human *action*.

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 285-287.

⁴² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross in Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), 1140a10-15. And one could legitimately add to this list, things that come to be in accordance with second nature, or habit, or social conditioning.

⁴³ Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," 117. Italics mine.

⁴⁴ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 117.

ways this is not a perfect metaphor for capturing Heidegger's point, since once the archer releases the arrow then the possibilities inherent in the present merely unfold into the future. Closer to the ideal is the kind of action where one continually acts in such a manner that one is aiming at the possibility as a possibility, e.g., when one is building a house. On the other hand, in a larger sense the archery metaphor is apt, for Heidegger believes that we become absorbed in our work, i.e., we fall into the world, and thus lose sight of the for-the-sake-of-which of our work. In such absorption, we are more or less akin to the arrow that has been released, simply unfolding present possibilities into the future, e.g., we merely behave according to social conditioning or habit, etc. Throughout much of our lives this is probably the case. In the end, Heidegger will argue that it is only in anxiety that we encounter ourselves individually as the ultimate for-the-sake-of-which that we are, precisely in the recognition of "the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein," namely, Death.⁴⁵

This is crucial for understanding Heidegger's early understanding of the essence of language. For Heidegger argues that language gives us the ability to aim at futural possibilities *as* possibilities. Aristotle famously remarks in the *Politics* that what distinguishes human speech from the sounds made by other animals is that human speech allows humans to discuss what is expedient or inexpedient, and what is just or unjust.⁴⁶ Heidegger attempts to deepen this Aristotelian thought, by noting that human beings *have* world through language. As a first approximation, and given what has been said about Heidegger's notion of world, this makes sense. The for-the-sake-of-which of the world is directed toward Dasein's potentiality-to-be. In other words, the nexus of references and assignments that constitute a world are directed toward futural possibilities as possibilities. Language emerges as the medium that makes this possible.

How is language able to play this role? Heidegger argues that it can do so because language is a medium for sight, or perhaps more accurately, for sighting. Heidegger's breakthrough comes through his reading of Aristotle's claim that each mode of human "intellectual" activity involves νοεῖν. But, Heidegger notes, in accordance with Aristotle, that human beings cannot have "pure" νοῦς, but only διανοεῖν, that is, νοῦς through λόγος.⁴⁷ Heidegger concludes that "Λόγος i.e., λέγειν is the way νοεῖν [perceiving] actualizes itself..."⁴⁸ He maintains that human understanding consists of διανοεῖν. We are able to sight futural possibilities as possibilities through discourse and, by means of this sighting, are able to direct our actions toward what is sighted. This is evident at some level in all human action, namely, one discourses with oneself or others about what is to be done and how it

⁴⁵ Ibid., 294.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, Ch. 2.

⁴⁷ Cf., Martin Heidegger, *Plato's Sophist*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and André Schuwer (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1997), 41.

⁴⁸ Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations in Connection with Aristotle: An Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," 132.

is to be done. Builders do not spontaneously build houses as ants spontaneously build an anthill, rather human action is always immersed in discourse that allows one to sight future possibilities as possibilities, as well as to see how one can realize those possibilities through one's actions and what is at one's disposal for doing so. And the same can be said regarding our "theoretical" pursuits, e.g., our concerned dealings in science or arithmetic.

Applied most generally, it is through language and discourse that the world is formed and sustained, precisely insofar as the world is a nexus of assignments and references. Moreover, Heidegger notes that this is a historical process. Language is "historical and grows by itself."⁴⁹ A world, along with its references and assignments, is not created at every moment, but is preserved in the medium of language and thus can be called upon to facilitate sight. In a later work, Heidegger distinguishes humans from inanimate beings and animals as that being which is "world-forming."⁵⁰

Applied to the Kantian philosophies of the time, Heidegger's rethinking of understanding as sighting through language broke the stranglehold that the dichotomy between thought and sensibility had on philosophy, and, perhaps more significantly, the hold that the dichotomy between conceptual form in opposition to sensible material had on transcendental philosophy. In place of the form-matter model that pervaded discussions about thought, understanding and sight, and which ultimately led to the notion of the irrationality and ineffability of life and lived-experience in its immediacy, Heidegger maintains that language is the medium in which sight actualizes itself. In this manner, discourse (e.g., thinking) and seeing are no longer juxtaposed to one another. Moreover, both could be understood and situated within the $\pi\rho\acute{\alpha}\xi\iota\varsigma$ of human life.

Through the articulation of his "principle of all principles," Husserl had already come to realize that sight was not limited to sensibility and that "*seeing in the universal sense as an originally presentive consciousness of any kind whatever, is the ultimate legitimizing source of all rational assertions.*"⁵¹ As the quote demonstrates, Husserl was still beholden to a notion of sight that situated it within the framework of consciousness. With Aristotle's help, Heidegger was able to recognize that sight is mediated through language and, subsequently, that the legitimizing source of rationality is found in understanding. And this understanding is both historically and linguistically situated, i.e., rationality is ultimately hermeneutic. In the process, he was able to argue that human life itself, the being-moved of human beings, is historically and linguistically situated.

⁴⁹ Heidegger, *Introduction to Phenomenological Research*, 14.

⁵⁰ Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Chapter Six.

⁵¹ Husserl, *Ideas I*, 36, 44.