Generic ways of functioning

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A. Introductory remarks

The following is a paraphrase of §18 of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger describes the understanding that we have of things when we think of them in terms of *what one does with them*, or more generally, in terms of their generic way of functioning. Some general comments need to be made in advance.

Genericity

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger commonly addresses beings in a *generic way*. He employs at least three different means for expressing this. This first and most important is the use of the *generic singular* "the such-and-such"; as for instance in "das Seiende", "das Zuhandene" or "das Dasein". These phrases do not stand for individual beings, tools, or humans, but for "the being", "the tool" or "the human" *in general*; in the way in which a statement about "the zebra", as used in a zoology textbook, may stand for zebras in general.[1] I have decided to render this generic singular by a generic *plural*. The plural suggests the generic reading more easily. Otherwise, the text would start somewhat like this: "The thing that we encounter in dealing with it shows itself within a world"—and the natural question to ask would be: which one of the things? Thus when I refer to "things" or to "us" in the following, I do not mean a set of things or a group of people, but *things in general* and *beings of our kind* in a generic way; as a zoologist may talk about "zebras", meaning that *kind* of animal.

I take it that Heidegger's use of the German particle "je", as in "Dasein ist je meines", constitutes a second way of expressing genericity. "Je" indicates repeatability in

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[1] Cf. Michael Thompson's "The Representation of Life", in R. Hursthouse, G. Lawrence, and W. Quinn, eds., *Virtues and Reasons*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1995.

a general, non-temporal sense: it is a way of addressing each particular in general.[2] The generic sense of "je" is important especially in the phrase "je schon", where it indicates an atemporal sense of "already": *a priori*.[3] Where I have not translated "je" as "in each case", I have added a qualification such as "in general".

Finally, Heidegger often talks about "world" while demonstratively omitting the article. This is also a means of addressing a thing in a generic way. I have chosen to supply the article in these cases in order to make the text sound less strange.

"Freigeben" and "Bewandtnis"

Two expressions that are prominent in §18 have been notoriously difficult to translate. The first of them, "freigeben", has not yet been adequately translated at all. It is commonly rendered as "to free" or "to set free", which would be wrong even regarding ordinary German. This translation is based on a guess that Macquarrie / Robinson put forward in a footnote (p. 114 of their translation). But no such guess was required. "Freigeben" is an ordinary German verb, signifying what you do when you declare something suitable for a group of users; as in rating movies or declaring zones for housing. I have rendered it as "making accessible", and an alternative translation would be "declaring suitable".

"Bewandtnis". Macquarrie / Robinson translate with "involvement", which is bad; Stambaugh uses "relevance", which is worse.[4] In contrast, Haugeland's "role" is already

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[2] Haugeland, in an unpublished draft translation of §18, consistently translates "je" as "in each case"; as do all translation regarding p. 84: "Mit ihm als Seiendem hat es je eine Bewandtnis". John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Translation of Being and Time, Harper & Row 1962) and Joan Stambaugh (Transaltion of Being and Time, SUNY Press 1996) tend to omit the "je" (e.g. p. 83, 88) or translate it as "always", as with "Dasein ist als solches je dieses" (p. 87).

[3] Macquarrie / Robinson and Stambaugh usually translate "je schon" as "always already" (p. 85) and, accordingly, "je" as "always" (p. 86–87); they are thus inclined to omit it in a formulation such as "je schon immer" (p. 86). In fact, Heidegger combines *three* independent elements here: "generically", "always", and "already" (a priori).

[4] She does so in agreement with Magda King, A Guide to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, SUNY Press 2001 p. 72 and 257-8. Strangely enough, Stambaugh offers an alternative translation that is *still* worse: "situation" (p. xv of her translation).

a good choice; and it may be safely used if it is kept in mind that a role in this sense can neither be a property nor a relation.

I translate this term as "generic way of functioning". This choice is partly intended to match other uses of "functioning", for instance in Ingvar Johanssons writings[5] and some of my own papers.[6] Moreover, there is an important difference between (1) the reference *between* pieces of equipment as described in §15 of *Being and Time*, which may be confused with their role, and (2) the nexus of generic ways of functioning described in §18, which is not a nexus of things, but of *generic doings* (how to use something, what to do with something, what something does). The "Bewandtnis" of a thing is something like its *ergon* in that it is a generic *process*. This is not brought out by calling it a role.

Where Heidegger introduces "Bewandtnis" as a technical term (p. 84), I skip two sentences including the one in which he introduces the "mit ... bei ..." phrase: literally "there is a Bewandtnis with ... at ...". I do this for two reasons. First, there is no natural way of preserving the particles "mit" and "bei" in combination with any of the suggested interpretations (involvement, relevance, role, functioning).[7] But it is not necessary to preserve the exact phrase. All that Heidegger wants is *some* two-place structure that has more intrinsic content than a mere relation. He uses the expression "mit ... hat es sein bewenden bei ..." only for this purpose.

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[5] "Functions, Function Concepts, and Scales", *Monist* 2004.

[6] E.g. "Functional Reasoning", on my website.

[7] It works with "involvement", syntactically speaking; but "involvement" does not capture the *meaning* of Bewandtnis. Macquarrie / Robinson produce a phrase such as "involvement with something in something", which is of dubious significance. By translating "mit ... bei ..." as "together ... with ...", Stambaugh would apparently make it "relevance together something with something"; which does not make *any* sense. She renders the occurrence of this phrase on p. 86 as "letting *something* be relevant to ... with ..."; missing the point that "..." already indicates *something*, and thereby causing the impression that Heidegger speaks of a *three* place relation involving (1) a thing that is relevant *to* (2) something else *with* (3) something further (whatever that means). But in fact, there is only the relation of something to its "relevance", i.e. its way of functioning. Haugeland has "role of something amidst something". This is much better but still does not capture the sense of "bei"; it seems as if the role of the thing would be amidst other things, whereas Heidegger attaches the Bewandtnis itself to the "bei". It is somewhat awkward to say that a hammer has a role *amidst* hammering. But at least, Haugeland's phrase is not misleading.

Second, the expression "mit ... hat es sein bewenden bei ..." is not even proper German. At best, the generic use of an item *is* its Bewandtnis, not something "at which" (wobei) it has this Bewandtnis. In fact, Heidegger uses an *artificial hybrid* of two German expressions:

(a) Mit ... hat es folgende Bewandtnis.

(b) Es bei ... bewenden lassen.

The meaning of both phrases is clearly distinct; Heidegger deliberately invokes both meanings at once.

(a) The first phrase may be translated as "the function / use / point / role of ... is the following".

(b) The second may be translated as "let ... suffice", as in "suffice it to say". (The "let" will be of some importance.) It is used when someone puts an end to a certain pursuit in the sense of considering it enough done.

One aim for introducing the "mit ... bei ..." phrase is thus to get a handle on the structure that connects a thing with its way of functioning. Second, by mixing (a) and (b), Heidegger manages to preserve the ambiguity of terms like "final cause" and "end": being a kind of purpose and setting an end. He needs to do this by artificial means, since the German "Zweck" and "Ende" are *not* ambiguous in the required sense. Such a maneuver would not have been necessary in English, where "end" is ambiguous as needed.

Minor introductory remarks

I have tried to render the text as self-contained as possible. For this reason, I have sometimes replaced Heideggerian technical terms by their definitions. For instance, I render "Dasein" by phrases such as "beings that are, in their being, concerned about their being", or simply "self-concerned beings".[8] "Zuhandenes" will be addressed as "things that we encounter in dealing with them". "In-der-Welt-Sein" is approximated by "being involved in the world".

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[8] This procedure would be difficult to sustain in translating p. 132.

I have also advanced a couple of non-standard translations; partly because I find them more illuminating, partly in order to avoid dangling references to the rest of *Being and Time*. For instance, at least in the present context, "ontologisch" may safely be translated as "fundamental", and "ontisch" accordingly as "actual" or "concrete"; on one occasion, I have used "contingent" (p. 84). I have accordingly replaced "vorontologisch" (p. 86) by "before we explicitly seek a more fundamental understanding", and "ontologisch-existenziale Interpretation" (p. 86) by a brief and sketchy description of that kind of enquiry, namely "interpretation on the basis of a fundamental analysis of our own way of being".

I have also skipped a few further passages, especially those in which Heidegger coins new technical terms. In a *phenomenological* investigation, such coinings cannot be of any intrinsic importance, and they are of use only in the context of the complete work, where they can be picked up again later. For instance, I have left out the passage where Heidegger introduces "be-deuten", and "Bedeutsamkeit" in their technical senses (p. 87). It can be safely ignored since Heidegger tries to find an expression for "signifying" in the medium voice (signifying something to oneself), which is rather naturally expressed as "making sense of something". In English, there is no need for a technical term here. I have also left out the passage where Heidegger addresses language (p. 87), since first, he does not say much here, and second, it seems to be mistaken; or at least, it would require further argument. Finally, I have skipped the very first passage and a passage on p. 86, where Heidegger mentions the task of an ontological-existential interpretation (without any apparent reason). In each case where I omit anything, however, I have added footnotes with quotes from other translations.

Let this suffice as an introduction. I have inserted further comments in the form of inline glosses in square brackets, sometimes of considerable length, where I felt they were needed. These glosses should be read as if they were written by the author of the main text.

B.   Generic ways of functioning

A more fundamental sense of "being appropriate"

[p. 83][9] Things that we encounter by dealing with them have, as such, a certain constitution. It may be called their equipmental constitution and may, in a first step, be called reference.[10] [For instance, pieces of equipment may refer to other such pieces in that one of them is used in order to produce another.] How can the world make beings of this kind accessible with regard to their being? Why is it that we encounter these things in the first place?

In particular, pieces of equipment may refer to something in that they are serviceable for something or unwieldy, usable and the like. They are then serviceable and usable *for something*, and along these lines, they may generally refer to something in a more concrete sense. [For instance, a sign is for indicating, a hammer is for hammering: this is what they are appropriate for.] But the indicating and hammering relate to the sign and the hammer not as one of their properties would relate to them. They are not properties at all, if by property we mean something that a given thing may either possess or not.[11]

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[9] I have left the first paragraph, since it concerns only the more general course of *Being and Time* and is not in any way informative. Haugeland translates: "The available shows up intraworldly. Accordingly, the being of this entity, availability, stands in some sort of ontological relationship to the world and worldishness. The world is always already "there" in everything available. Antecedent to whatever shows up, the world is already discovered—though not thematically. It can, however, also come to light in certain ways of around-worldly dealings. The world is that from out of which [*aus der her*] the available is available. How can the world let the available show up? Our analysis so far has shown that what shows up intraworldly is set-free for careful around-sight, for taking account of. What does this antecedent setting-free mean, and how is it to be understood as ontologically distinctive of the world?"

[10] Haugeland translates "assignment", which is too active. Heidegger tries to find a medium between active assignment and merely passive encountering. We do not assign uses to things, and we do not merely take their uses as given; rather, we are referred to their uses when we let them be what they are.

[11] Haugeland translates: "if this term is supposed to indicate the ontological structure of a possible determinateness of things" (very similar to Stambaugh, who has "determination"). But Heidegger cannot mean that properties are supposed to be the ontological structure *underlying* possible determination, since that is what he goes on to contrast with properties. He must mean that properties are supposed to be the determinations that are made possible by these structures. This means, in simpler terms, that properties are determinations that are contingent: the things that have them may as

Things that we encounter in dealing with them may be appropriate or inappropriate. [By way of some sort of objective investigation we may identify such properties as weight, size, and shape that make them as appropriate as they are. But these properties are only discovered in a second step: they presuppose a more fundamental kind of serviceability of the things in question.] As long as we encounter things by dealing with them, their "properties" are fixed to their more fundamental appropriateness, as it were, as a chemical substance may be fixed to another one. [They may be revealed by a kind of chemical analysis.

If hammering and indicating are not actual properties but rather certain kinds of appropriateness, one might think that they are possibilities.] But as the constitution of the things that we encounter in using them, their serviceability (reference) is also not the same as an actual possibility of using them. [A piece of equipment that is broken may not even be *possibly* used.] Rather, their appropriateness should be taken to be the fundamental condition that makes it possible for them to qualify as appropriate in some way or other. [In this more fundamental sense, things may be appropriate even when they are in fact broken; that is, when they cannot even possibly be used. This is why being appropriate is not an actual or possible property.[12] It is also not a simple relation between a thing and its use, since again, such a use need not actually occur and need in fact not even be possible.]

But what is this reference, if it is not a property, possibility, or relation? As an alternative, one might say that the things that we encounter in dealing with them manifest a certain *structure* such that they refer to something. That is, they display in themselves

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well not have them. Thus Macquarrie / Robinson are on the right track: "...if the ontological structure designated by the term 'property' is that of some definite character which it is possible for Things to possess".

[12] In terms of late Jesuit scholastics, something that is appropriate has a *denominative moral being* – it is what it is because it is referred to something that has or pursues a value. A painting, for instance, is good or bad only when we consider it within a broader context including the intentions of the artist, its object, and its critics (Suárez, *De Bonitate* 1,2,17, Opera Vivès 4, p. 284b). This aspect of it cannot be reduced to any physical property.

[p. 84] the character of *being referred to* something.[13] In being the things they are, they are referred to something. We encounter them with a view to their being referred in that way. [There are certain questions that are natural to ask about the things that we encounter in the world by dealing with them. When we encounter such a thing, we may first ask: what is it for, what is its use? But not all such things have a use. There may be something that one does with them that is not their use in a literal sense. For instance, I use a hammer for fastening something, but I do not use the thing that I fasten for being fastened. Fastening it is something that I *do with it* in a more general sense. Further, there may be things that we do not do with such things, but that they rather do by themselves. We do not turn the wheels of our cars. This latter is not the use of an item or what one does with it, but rather *what it does when it works*: its normal way of functioning.[14] This way of functioning is not an actually occurring process, but rather a *prototype* according to which any actual function execution may be judged to be proper, natural, and successful or not. In order to keep this in mind, we will also call it the *generic* way of functioning of an item.][15] These ways of functioning belong to things, but not in the way in which properties or relations may belong to them. When we speak of reference, we mean this way of belonging to a thing.

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[13] Talking of *structures* and *being referred* are two preliminary attempts at avoiding the terms "property" and "relation". "Verwiesenheit" is also a direct translation of *denominatio*, which was used to describe the *esse morale* of things that have no intrinsic value. They have their moral being only by being referred to something. See the previous footnote on late Jesuit scholastics.

[14] This way of functioning of an item may be compared with what Aristotle calls the *ergon* of a living being. Aristotle, however, would not have called the functioning of an artifact its *ergon*. The crucial difference is that functionings occur for the sake of something other than the function bearer, whereas an *ergon* is what a living being does when it leads its *own* life. However, parts of living beings such as the liver also seem to have an *ergon* that is not for their own sake.

[15] This replaces the passage that Haugeland translates as: "It has a role—a role *of* it *amidst* something. The being-character of the available is its *role*. Roles imply: letting there be a role of something amidst something. The relationship "of ... amidst ..." ["*mit ... bei ...*"] shall be indicated by the term assignment."

The nexus of related ways of functioning

Things that we encounter within the world are such that they already have a certain generic way of functioning. They are accessible to us with a view to this functioning. As part of their general way of being, they each have a particular way of functioning. That things are associated with ways of functioning is thus a *fundamental* feature of their being, not a contingent fact about them.

The generic way of functioning of a thing is the end for which it serves, or that for which it may be used. The functioning may itself serve a further end.[16] Take, for instance, the kind of tool that we call hammer for the very reason that the natural way of using it is an act of hammering. Hammering, in turn, serves for fastening something, and this may serve for protecting oneself against bad weather conditions. This protection, finally, "is" for the sake of lodging beings like us, who are such that in their being, they are concerned about their own being. It is for the sake of a possibility for this self-concerned being to be.

Which way of functioning the things that we encounter in our dealings have is in each case predelineated on a background of an extensive nexus of related ways of functioning. [Since the use of the hammer contributes to our self-concerned way of being, our use of the hammer is at the same time an instance of fastening, building a shelter, and leading our life.] This nexus constitutes, for instance, the being of tools in a workshop in their availability. It is *prior* to the particular pieces of equipment, and also prior to the environment in which we encounter such equipment.[17] [We say that the use of a hammer has a further function. But the more accurate way of putting it is to say that a hammer is associated with a hierarchy of related functionings.[18] Hammering is a way of using the

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[16] Heidegger says that the functioning can have a further Bewandtnis, which fits German usage, but not our use of the term *functioning*. A way of functioning does not have a further way of functioning. But still, functionings may be related to other functionings in an important way; this will be characterized in the following.

[17] I have omitted the rest of this sentence. Macquarrie / Robinson: "... so too for the farmstead with all its utensils and outlying lands".

[18] In §15, Heidegger has described a nexus of *things* that refer to other things, saying that a tool refers to a product. Here he is addressing a nexus of *uses*: the tool-use refers to the producing. The first is what he calls "Zeugganzes", a nexus of equipment. The second is the "Bewandtnisganzheit": a nexus of things that one *does* with such equipment. This

hammer, but fixing something is not a way of using hammer*ing*. Rather, it is another way of using *the hammer*. The two ways of using the hammer are related by an in-order-to relation: we hammer *in order to* fasten; conversely, we fasten *by* hammering.[19] Sticking to the example of a tool, there are two kinds of nexus: (1) the nexus of things, where tools are related to products and further tools, and (2) the nexus of ways of functioning, such that a tool may be related to several different, interrelated uses. The latter nexus embraces the first, since we encounter tools by embedding them into a system of possible uses.]

The whole nexus of ways of functioning ultimately goes back to a what-for that may have a way of functioning in the sense of an *ergon*, but no further function.[20] It points towards beings like us, who are not available or handy in the way in which things may be so. Such beings are not available in a world, but they are what they are by being involved in the world, such that the being of this world constitutes a part of their being. This primary what-for is an end in a different sense; it is not a purpose in the sense of a possible functioning of something. The primary "what-for" is a for-the-sake-of-which.[21]

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latter nexus is prior to the first. Heidegger does not always appear to distinguish both kinds of nexus.

[19] For a description of the hierarchical nexus between intentional actions, see Elizabeth Anscombe, *Intention* (Blackwell 1957), §§23, 26 and 42–3; and Michael Thompson, *Naive Action Theory* (on his website). With regard to functions, this kind of nexus has been described in various places, e.g. Ingvar Johansson, *Ontological Investigations* (Routledge 1989), chpt. 5; Ruth Millikan, *Language, Thought, and other Biological Categories* (MIT Press 1984), p. 35; and Karen Neander, "Misrepresenting and Malfunctioning", *Philosophical Studies* 79, 1995:109–141, p. 115.

[20] This distinction between *ergon* and functioning is my own. So far, there are three kinds of relations that hold the series of ends together: (1) the relation of a thing to its functioning, (2) the relation of a functioning to other functionings, (3) the relation of the functionings to the *ergon* of their final cause, which is the being of *Dasein*.

[21] This is a direct translation of the phrase that Aristotle uses for the *final cause*. In the series hammering – fastening – building a shelter – leading a life, the last item is the "most" final cause since it is the *last* end; in the case of actions, the last item in the series is what according to Anscombe has a somewhat better claim to be called "the" intention (*Intention*, p. 46). Dreyfus assumes that there is a multitude of for-the-sake-of-whichs publicly available (*Being in the World*, MIT Press 1991, p. 95). But it is difficult to see how we could choose such a-for-the-sake-of-which, since any choice seems to be something we do for the sake of something further. Heidegger will differentiate between the last element in an in-order-to series, the purpose, and the for-the-sake-of-which later in the present paragraph, saying that the for-the-sake-of-which constitutes the first and last instance in terms of which we make sense of things.

But the "for the sake of" always concerns the being of something that is what it is by being concerned about its own being. We have thus indicated a connection that leads from the structure of related ways of functioning to beings like us, who are such that they are concerned about their own being. Ultimately and properly, it is only for the sake of such beings that things have a generic way of functioning.[22]

However, we will explore the connection between ways of functioning and self-concerned beings only later. [Before doing so, we need to discuss the following issue. It might seem that we either impose ways of functioning on things, or merely passively encounter things as having functions. Neither is actually the case. Before addressing the way in which our own being is related to the being of the things that we encounter in dealing with them, we need to see our way through this apparent dilemma. We need to describe the way in which we encounter things as having a generic way of functioning in terms that do not cause the impression that we are either only passively accepting their functioning or actively assigning it to them. The middle way between these alternatives will be to say that we *let them have* a generic function. We "let things have a function" in the same way in which we "let something suffice" for a given purpose. We will use the phrase "letting something suffice" in the broad sense of letting it be something that has a generic way of functioning.][23]

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[22] This may sound like a version of the claim that all functions are ultimately *assigned* by humans. It is not. *All living beings* are such that their *ergon* is at the same time the very end that they pursue with that *ergon*. As a slogan, living beings are such that their formal and final causes coincide. Their very business is to continue doing their business; that is, they are concerned about continuing being concerned about etc. That the final cause coincides with the form or *ergon* of these beings makes it possible for a series of ends to stop; or to begin, depending on how we look at it. This means that although the final cause is in any case a living being, it need not be a living being that would be able to consciously assign functions to things. Heidegger suggests that we may understand animal life as a kind of reduced *Dasein* (*Being and Time* p. 58). That is, the being of animals is of the same kind as our own being. However, since animals do not understand themselves *as* beings of that kind, the structure can only be made *explicit* in the case of human life.

[23] I have drastically changed the end of this passage, which contained some rather void phrases. The main reason for doing so is that in German, one may quite naturally turn from "Bewandtnis" (functioning) to "bewenden lassen" (let something suffice); whereas in English, this step needs some motivation. The original reads, according to Haugeland: "As yet, we cannot enter any further into this indicated nexus, leading from the structure

Letting things suffice

On the level of concrete things, we let things suffice by dealing with them in the context of actually taking care of something. We let them be as they actually are and treat them as a certain endpoint. We are here interested in the [p. 85] fundamental structure that makes this concrete way of "lettings things be" possible. Our aim is to thereby set out the sense in which the things that we initially encounter in the world by dealing with them are made accessible beforehand. That we let things "be" a priori does not mean that we cause them to be or that we produce them, but that we generally have discovered "beings" in their availability and that we thus let them be encountered as beings of that kind. [As we have said, there is a fundamental sense in which something can be appropriate, whether it may actually be serviceable or not. Being appropriate in that sense is the condition for possibly serving an end.] Letting things suffice "a priori" in this way is the condition for the possibility of encountering things by dealing with them, such that beings like us, by actually dealing with them, can let them suffice in the more concrete sense specified above. In contrast to that, letting things suffice in the fundamental sense concerns the possibility of making *anything* accessible to us such that we may encounter it in dealing with it; whether it actually suffices for some task or not. Primarily and for the most part, things are accessible to us that are precisely *not* sufficient, but are rather the objects of our concern. Upon discovery, we do not let such things "be" as they, but rather manipulate, improve, or destroy them.

The a priori prefect

That we must in general already have let something suffice in order to make it accessible in its generic ways of functioning should be expressed by a kind of *a priori perfect*, such as Aristotle appears to use when he calls the essence of a thing it "what it was to be" (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι).[24] This a priori perfect is characteristic for the way in which beings like us are, who are concerned about their own being. Understood on a

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of roles to the being of dasein as the owned and only for-the-sake-of. First, we must get clear enough about 'letting-have-a-role' to bring the phenomenon of worldishness into such determinateness that can formulate its general problems."

  [24] The reference to Aristotle is taken from Heidegger's later marginal notes.

fundamental level, letting things suffice amounts to making them a priori accessible to our dealings within the surrounding world. Bearers of generic ways of functioning are made accessible with a view to that for which we let them suffice. We encounter them in our taking care of things as particular items with which we are dealing. Insofar as we encounter *beings* at all, that is, insofar as we discover things in their being, they are generally already something in our surrounding world with which we deal. They are certainly not "primarily"[25] some merely occurrent "brute matter".

The generic way of functioning, as the being of the things that we encounter in dealing with them, is generally something that we only discover on the basis of a prior discovery of the whole nexus of ways of functioning that we have described above. When we discover generic ways of functioning, that is, when we encounter things by dealing with them, we will thus already have discovered how such things fit into a world. The nexus of ways of functioning that must be discovered a priori bears a fundamental relation to the world. When we let things suffice and thereby make them accessible with a view to the whole nexus of related ways of functioning, we must already have disclosed this nexus in some way. Things with which we deal in our environment are made accessible to us with a view to this nexus, such that we may approach them *as* beings within the world in the first place. But the nexus itself cannot be taken to be an instance of the discovered kind of being. Provided that we use "discoveredness" for the case in which we situate something within the nexus of ways of functioning, we cannot discover the nexus itself.[26] [If this is what discovering means, we can only discover things by integrating them in our life. We cannot discover our own life.]

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[25] The "zunächst" should be taken in an atemporal sense, since this is precisely what Aristotle says in *Metaphysics* Z3: matter is not the *primary ousia*; the "what it was to be" has a much stronger claim for being that.

[26] Heidegger proposes to define "discoveredness" as only applying to beings that are not Dasein. This should not be put into a definition, but rather follow as a consequence. I have changed his proposal accordingly.

C.   Making sense

Understanding the nexus

[The nexus of generic ways of functioning is known before its elements may be isolated. This is possible because as a whole, the complete nexus turns out to be our own self-concern. We need to deal with things other than ourselves only in order to take care of ourselves. The world is discovered, as it were, as what stands between us and ourselves. In this sense, it is covered by the nexus of ways of functioning that we exploit in our self-concern. But we had reason to postpone the discussion of the relation between the nexus of ways of functioning and our own way of being. We will now see that human life is not the final *purpose* of all functioning. The world is not "made for us" in *that* sense. But at least, our own life is the ultimate basis on which we may make sense of the beings in it.]

There is thus a certain nexus with a view to which beings in the world must have been made accessible to us in the first place. What does it mean that this nexus must be disclosed a priori? It belongs to the way in which a self-concerned being is that it possesses a certain understanding of what it is to be. To have an understanding is to understand. [p. 86] If we self-concerned beings are essentially such that we are in a world, then understanding what it is to be in a world will belong to the essential lasting stock[27] of our understanding. The a priori disclosure of the nexus with a view to which the things that we encounter in the world are made accessible to us is nothing but the understanding of the world to which we always already relate as beings that are concerned about their own beings.

[Letting things suffice, both in the fundamental and the concrete sense, is letting them have a generic way of functioning. In a slightly technical sense, the way of functioning will be taken to be that *for which* we let something suffice.] Letting ... suffice for ... in the a priori sense is only possible on the basis of an understanding of what it is to let something suffice in general, what generic ways of functioning are, and what sorts of things may have them. In addition, an understanding is required of that which provides

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[27] "Bestand" is ambiguous, meaning (1) continued existence and (2) supplies.

the basis for these phenomena: the purpose, as the possible end that a functioning has,[28] and the for-the-sake-of-which, to which all purposiveness ultimately refers as to its foundation. All this must be disclosed a priori as admitting of a certain understanding.

[To understand something is to situate it in a familiar context. This context, providing the basis for any other understanding, need not be explicitly understood beforehand.] What is the familiar context within which we understand ourselves as being in a world, even before we explicitly seek a more fundamental understanding? When understanding the relational nexus that has been outlined above, we refer ourselves to an in-order-to. We do so by taking departure from a possibility of leading our life, for the sake of which we are, which we may have seized expressly or only implicitly, and which may be our own proper possibility or not. The in-order-to indicates a purpose, as a possible functioning for which we let something suffice, thus establishing a structure that provides a slot for a bearer of a generic way of functioning. [That is, we encounter things as having a way of functioning by relating them to a nexus of ways of functioning that are related to each other by the in-order-to relation. For instance, we encounter a hammer as such by associating it with a nexus of related ways of using it—hammering, fastening, building a shelter—, such that we may hammer *in order to* fasten something *in order to* build a shelter. Conversely, we build the shelter *by* fastening something *by* hammering.]

In general, we self-concerned beings always already refer ourselves to things that have a generic way of functioning on the background of a for-the-sake-of-which (or *final cause*). That is, in leading our lives, we have in general always already let things be encountered as things with which we deal. The familiar context *within* which we achieve an a priori understanding of our self-concerned being by referring ourselves to things in the specified sense is that *with a view to which* we let things be encountered a priori. *The context within which we understand by way of referring ourselves, which is that with a view to which we let beings be encountered as sufficing for a generic way of functioning,*

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[28] Heidegger is now introducing a distinction between two different kinds of Bewandtnis. The first is the "Wobei der Bewandtnis", which I take to be the generic way of functioning. The second is the "Dazu, als wobei es die Bewandtnis hat". At this stage, we can only guess what the difference might be, since the words are virtually the same. I add "possible" in accordance with the later explanation of "Dazu" as "mögliches Wobei des Bewendenlassens".

is the world as a phenomenon. The structure of that to which we refer ourselves is what makes the world a world.

That within which we generally always already understand ourselves is something with which we are familiar in a natural way. This familiarity with the world does not necessarily require a theory that would render transparent all the relations that constitute the world as world. However, where we give an explicit interpretation of these relations on the basis of a fundamental analysis of our own way of being, we in turn rely on our implicit familiarity with the world that is constitutive for our being, and that constitutes a part of our understanding of what it is to be.[29]

[We have said that we cannot discover our own life, but only that which somehow fits into our life. The world however is not our life; it is rather something that we confront in our life. There must be a way of understanding it. That is, there must be a further context within which it may be situated.][30] So far, however, our investigation has only laid open the horizon within which we may look for such things as the world and its [p. 87] way of being. Before proceeding, we need to set out in more detail how the nexus is to be grasped within which we refer ourselves to something.

Making sense and its converse

We will give a more detailed analysis of *understanding* elsewhere.[31] [For our present purpose, the following will suffice.] Our understanding keeps the relations and references

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[29] Heidegger goes on to praise his own project in its profoundness and originarity. Haugeland translates: "This possibility can be grasped explicitly insofar as dasein has set for itself the task of an originary interpretation of its being and the possibilities thereof, or even of the meaning of being in general".

[30] Heidegger writes that we have not yet discovered the world; which may come as a surprise. It seemed that the world *is* the horizon within which we situate things. This is my attempt at motivating the claim that the world itself has not yet been properly addressed.

[31] In §31 of *Being and Time*, understanding will be defined as the ability of beings like us to be as we are; that is, as the ability for being such that one is concerned about ones own being in its being. Understanding is thus nothing but the ability to be self-concerned

that we have indicated so far within sight; it does so a priori. ["A priori" may mean: "beforehand" or "ahead of".] It keeps itself within these references, such that it is familiar with them, by keeping them *ahead* of itself,[32] such that it may refer along these lines. Understanding lets itself be referred within and by these relations. [Again, it does not only passively take these relations as given, or actively impose or assign them. We use the *medium voice* in order to express that: we make sense of things by letting us be referred along the lines that we keep ahead of ourselves.][33] In being familiar with these references, we "let ourselves understand" our own self-concerned being. That is, we make sense of our being and our potentialities in a fundamental sense, with regard to our being in a world.

[Making sense of things is usually the converse of letting them suffice. For instance, when I let a hammer suffice for hammering, hammering is that in terms of which I make sense of the hammer. More generally, this means that our life is the starting point from which we make sense of things, whereas it is the endpoint of their generic functioning.[34]

But the relation between our life and the things that we deal with is complex. It involves at least four different kinds of steps. We have said that ways of functioning

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(p. 143). It proceeds by projecting the world and our own being ahead of us, such that we are confronted with our own being by being confronted with the world (p. 145).

[32] "Vorhalten" may be an allusion at "Vorhaltung", which may mean *objection*; referring to the literal meaning of object as something that is put in front of us (and also alluding at *projection*). "Vor" also alludes at "vorgängig", which I translate as *a priori*.

[33] I have left out what Haugeland translates as: "We take the relationship-character of these relationships as *signifying*."

[34] This is a roundabout way of putting what Aristotle says about practical deliberation: that the end of practical deliberation (making sense) is the beginning of the action (functioning), and the end of the action the beginning of deliberation (e.g. *Nicomachean Ethics* VI,2 and *De Motu Animalium* 8, 701b3). When I deliberate what to do in order to fasten something, hammering is that with which my reasoning concludes. Conversely, when I hammer, fastening is its intended result.

The converse of self-concern in general is what Heidegger later (§31) calls projection: we are concerned about our being by dealing within framework of understood possibilities. We are confronted with the possibilities and we make use of them in order to take care of our being. That is, we are directed towards the world in that we deal with things in it, within a framework of possibilities. Conversely, when understanding projects possibilities ahead of us, this is a movement by which we confront ourselves with the world: the world is directed at us. These are two opposite circular movements that begin at our being and end there.

relate to other ways of functioning by an in-order-to-relation, and that the converse of this relation is the by-relation: we hammer *in order to* fasten, and we fasten *by* hammering. However, the hammer as a thing is related to the hammering as its use by a different kind of relation. We do not fasten by the hammer, but rather by hammer*ing*, by *using* the hammer. This is the relation of the hammer to its interrelated generic ways of functioning. The *purpose* of hammering is related to the hammering in still another way. One may call fastening the purpose of hammering, thereby explaining the in-order-to relation in terms of purposiveness. But the purpose of hammering is not necessarily another way of using the hammer. The purpose is, for instance, protection. But where we hammer in order to protect ourselves, protection is not necessarily something that we literally do with a hammer, whereas hammering is something that we do with it. The purpose is thus not a proper element of the nexus of ways of functioning.[35] It is related to it neither as a way of functioning to a thing, nor as one functioning to another. Finally, there is a fourth relation that things, ways of functioning and purposes have to their final cause, which is our own being. Protection devices figure in our lives; they make sense in the context of our lives. But it is not accurate to say that our life is their way of functioning or their purpose. The relevant relation should rather be called "fitting in".

Accordingly, we may distinguish three kinds of nexus, each embraced by the next one. First, there is a totality of things that we encounter in dealing with them (as described in §15). Second, there is a nexus of ways of functioning that are all connected by the in-order-to relation together with its converse, the by-relation (as described above). The third nexus is the one introduced now.[36]

A hammer fits into our life by having a certain way of functioning, which is related to further ways of functioning that have a purpose, which fits in our life. In making sense of things, we proceed along these lines, but in the opposite direction. We start with

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[35] This is the "break in the series" that Anscombe describes in *Intention*, p. 38: If pumping water leads to poisoning people, it *is* poisoning people; but if it leads to a change of politics, it is not literally changing politics. Likewise, I hammer in order to protect myself, but I do not literally protect myself by hammering. Protecting myself is what results from a use of the hammer, but it is not another way of using the hammer.

[36] A fourth nexus, between producers and users of things, will be introduced in §26 of *Being and Time.* Other beings of our kind are accessible to us as beings that share the world with us.

ourselves, and end up with such a thing as a hammer. That is:] We make sense of the in-order-to by relating it to the for-the-sake-of-which, and of purposes by relating them to an in-order-to. We make sense of the generic ways of functioning of things in terms of purposes, and we make sense of the things with which we deal by relating them to a way of functioning.[37] This complex relational structure, in terms of which we make sense of things, is held together as a natural totality. [The relations that we have distinguished are the lines along which we make sense of our being in this world in an a priori way.][38]

*We are familiar with this totality that constitutes the structure of our worl*d. That we are so *provides us with the concrete opportunity of discovering beings that we encounter within a world as having a generic way of functioning; that is, as they manifest themselves "an sich" or in themselves.* As such, self-concerned beings are generally *this* being.[39] In their being, they have always discovered a particular nexus of things to be encountered in dealing with them. Hence in general, in leading our lives, we have already referred ourselves to a "world"—as a totality of present things[40]—that confronts us. That we are *referred to* such a world is essential to our being.[41]

[When first addressing the relation of the nexus of ways of functioning to our own being, we had to postpone this topic. The reason for this has now become manifest. In the sequence specified above, making sense is most often but *not always* the converse of a teleological relation. We may use a hammer in order to fasten something, and conversely,

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[37] I have evidently read a lot into a single sentence here.

[38] Replacing what Haugeland translates as: "The relationship-totality of this signifying we call *significance*. It is what makes up the structure of the world—the structure of that where-in dasein as such in each case already is."

[39] "Dasein ist als solches je dieses". I take this to be a pun on Aristole's phrase *this such* (τόδε τι), of which the literal German translation would be "dieses solches". Stambaugh translates "as such, Dasein always means that...", which lacks any justification.

[40] In §14, Heidegger had announced that he will put "world" in quotation marks when he uses the word in this sense.

[41] I have left out two paragraphs. Haugeland: "Significance itself, however, with which dasein is in each case already familiar, harbors in itself the ontological condition of the possibility that the dasein that understands, as the dasein that spells-out [auslegendes], can disclose something like "significations"—on which in turn are founded the possible being of word and language. That disclosed significance, as the existential make-up of dasein—of its being-in-the-world—is the ontical condition of the possibility of the discoverability of a role-totality."

fastening is that in terms of which we make sense of the hammering and its purpose. But whereas we make sense of the whole system of things, ways of functioning, and purposes in terms of ourselves, the whole system does *not* stand in any teleological relation to us. The world is not there in order that we live. We are related to the whole world *only* by making sense of it, not by using it for anything.[42] This has two important consequences.

First, this is why we may also make sense of the world in merely objective terms, without considering any teleological relations at all. We already have a basic, nonteleological access to the world as a whole.

Second, our ability to make sense of the whole world is something that animals (and plants) do not share with us. They are *merely teleologically* embedded into their environment. A tree may not make sense of its leaves, but it may at least *do* something with them; they will have a way of functioning and a purpose in its life. But there is nothing that one could do with the world, apart from making sense, and making sense is not its purpose. Therefore, there will be no relation whatsoever between the tree and its world. Trees are entirely worldless. In this sense, being referred to a world is a distinctive feature of our being.]

A note on desert landscapes

One might object that we have thus reduced "substantial reality" to a system of relations, and even more, to a system of relations that only exist in someone's mind. For we have described the being of things that we encounter in dealing with them and, indeed, the being of the world itself, as a nexus of relations in terms of which we make sense of things. [p. 88] [These relations, however, appear to be *entia rationis* in a quite literal sense: they are relations in terms of which we *reason*.[43]] Have we thus dissolved the being of beings in the world into mere thought?

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[42] Heidegger writes in §26, p. 123, that the whole nexus of making sense is anchored in the being for the sake of which Dasein is. That is, we make sense of things for the sake of our own being, but not necessarily *as* things being there for the sake of us.

[43] *Entia moralia* have already figured between the lines.

In the present context, there are several distinctions that must be kept in mind.[44] [There are three ways of being that interest us here.] First, there is the way in which things are when we encounter them in dealing with them within the world. [We encounter a hammer in this way when we hammer with it.] Second, there is the way in which *those* beings are that we consider apart from dealing with them. This kind of consideration may be derived in that it is based on a more fundamental dealing with things, but we may indeed look at things in a second round, as it were, discovering and describing them as things apart from our dealing with them. [A hammer "is" in this way when it is the object of a disinterested investigation or description.] Third, there is the being of the concrete condition of the possibility of discovering things within the world at all, and the world in its worldliness. [Whereas the fundamental condition for the possibility of discovery is not an entity, that which constitutes the *concrete* possibility of discovering things in the world is an entity; it has a way of being.] This last-mentioned way of being is a part of the *fundamental* structure of being-in-a-world; that is, of our own self-concerned being. [It is not a way of being in which things are, since things are not concerned about their own being.] The first two ways of being, in contrast, are ways of being of *things*;[45] they concern beings that are not concerned about themselves.

Now consider the nexus of references that makes up the totality in terms of which we make sense of things, and that thereby constitutes the structure of the world. In a formal way, this nexus may be understood as a system of relations. But we should notice that this sort of formal representation often levels off the phenomena, to an extent that their distinctive phenomenal content gets lost. This is especially so in the case of such "simple" relations outlined above, in terms of which we make sense of things. With regard to their phenomenal content, these "relations" and their "relata" – in-order-to, for-the-sake-of-which, that which has a way of functioning – do not admit of a mathematical

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[44] Heidegger writes that the distinctions must be kept *apart*. This is not what he wants to say. I have also abridged the sentence. Haugeland: "Within the present field of investigation, the following repeatedly marked distinctions in the structures and dimensions of the ontological problematic are to be kept fundamentally separate from one another:..."

[45] I omit the reference to categories, since the distinction between categories and existentials is not available in this context.

formalization by means of mappings. [For instance, predicates may be formalized as mappings from things to truth values, such that the predicate "white" corresponds to a function F that yields *true* if and only if it is applied to a white thing; that is, F(a) = *true* if and only is a is white. A relation, being a two place predicate, will then be a mapping of pairs of things to truth values; such that R(a,b) = *true* if and only if a and b are related in the relevant way. This may do as a formal way of representing a relation that we already understand. However, such a formal representation of relations makes us believe that we may start with a set of individual things {a,b,c,...} and then establish relations within such a set. This is misleading. We do not first encounter things and then establish relations between them in our thoughts.] Rather than being mere thought or being imposed in "thinking", these relations are the natural niche, as it were, in which our heedful circumspection generally already dwells. [We encounter things as already being related; we need to carve them out, as it were, in order to isolate them.[46] The actual universe of discourse is not adequately represented by a set of constants.

The objection was that we have reduced the world to a system of mere relations. The answer is that starting with relations is in fact to begin *in medias res*. In contrast, we would start with mere abstracta if we began by postulating the reality of isolated things that "are" in one of the first two ways distinguished above.] The system of relations that is constitutive for the way in which the world is does not at all evaporate the being of the things that we encounter in the world by dealing with them. The very opposite is true. The structure of the world as we have described it here is the only possible basis on which these things can be discovered in the first place, as they are "substantially" in themselves ("an sich"). [We have already alluded at the connection between the a priori perfect and Aristotle's term for essence, the "what it was to be". The relations that constitute the intelligibility of the world are prior to the things of which we make sense in terms of these relations. This may be indicated by the perfect: for this to be, there must have been something; namely its ultimate relation to us as its final cause. If this is true, it constitutes a direct connection between substantiality and the a priori structure of the

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[46] By such means as described in Robert Brandom's *Making it Explicit*, chpt. 6-7.

world. The relations constitute the essence, and something is a substance only if it has an essence.]

We can only access things as isolated objects that merely happen to be there when we may encounter things in the world. [We can do so only by singling out and carving out some few things, as it were, out of the nexus of things in terms of which we make sense of them. Once we are able to isolate objects in this way, we may assign variables and constants to them, group them together in mathematical sets, and define relations as special sets of things. But this is a derived mode of dealing with things.][47] It is only possible provided we understand things as *mere* substances; that is, as a thing minus all its properties.[48] Mappings are only possible as formalizations that presuppose an understanding of mere substances.[49] [Variables and constants are taken to refer to such mere substances, since they are to be associated with properties and even essences only after having been assigned to bare particulars. In predicate logic, we pretend to be able to identify things before attributing properties to them, and we pretend to be able to relate things to properties before we relate them to other things. This may do for some purposes, but it should definitely not be mistaken for an account of "what there is", let alone our best one.][50]

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[47] Replacing what Haugeland translates as follows: "The latter entities can be determined mathematically in 'function-concepts', with respect to their 'properties', on the basis of their mere-occurrentness."

[48] There is a contrast between a "good" and a "bad" talk of substances here. Phrases like "a priori perfect" and "this such" refer to the good one; the occurrence above seems to a reference to the bad one. I assume that the bad use of the term is Locke's, as it is so often the case. This bad use is precisely the one presupposed in predicate logic.

[49] The terms that Heidegger uses, "Funktionsbegriff" and "Substanzbegriff", allude at Ernst Cassirers book *Substanzbegriff und Funktionsbegriff.*

[50] I have left out the last paragraph that announces §19. Haugeland: "In order that the specific ontological problematic of worldishness may be brought into still sharper relief, we should—before proceeding with our analysis—elucidate a diametrically opposed Interpretation of worldishness."