Heidegger's Pragmatism Redux

"Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object."[1]

"The circumspective question as to what this particular thing that is ready to hand may be, receives the circumspectively interpretive answer that it is for such and such a purpose. If we tell what it is for, we are not simply designating something; but that which is designated is understood *as* that *as* which we are to take the thing in question."[2]

"In the projecting of the understanding, entities are disclosed in their possibility. The character of the possibility corresponds, on each occasion, with the kind of Being of the entity understood. Entities within the world generally are projected on the world – that is, upon a whole of significance, to whose reference-relations concern, as Being-in-the-world, has been tied up in advance. When entities within-the-world generally are discovered along with the Being of Dasein – that is, when they have come to be understood – we say that they have *meaning*."[3]

"We also come here to the further question whether, in general, anything is given *as a being* to animals. … On closer consideration we see that, speaking cautiously, since we ourselves are not mere animals, we basically do not have an understanding of the 'world' of the animals. But since we nevertheless live as existents – which is itself a special problem – the possibility is available to us, by going back from what is given to us as existents, to make out reductively what could be given to an animal that merely lives but does not exist."[4]

Introduction

As with every other philosophical tradition, Pragmatism has been characterized in a wide variety of ways. Probably the most pervasive of those characterizations turns on the distinctive way in which pragmatists have tended to understand the content of concepts, or determine the meanings of sentences or words. This pragmatic direction in semantics is well exemplified by the above quote from Peirce. Peirce prescribes a technique for determining an agent's conception of

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[1] Charles Saunders Peirce "How to Make our Ideas Clear". In *The Essential Peirce* vol1, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 132.
[2] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Roe, 1962), 189; H. 149.
[3] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 192; H. 151.
[4] Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 190-91.

an object, or understanding the meaning of a term. On this view the content of the conception of the object is fixed by the answer to the following question: If the conception of the entity was accurate or if it were the case that the term really applied appropriately to the object, then, under various circumstances, which effects would the entity have that would make a difference to us? If we want to know what it is for some object, say a slab of granite in my kitchen, to be harder than another object, say a knife blade, then we should ask what would happen, that would matter to us, were it really the case that the granite was harder and, for example, the blade was drawn along the granite. And the answer to that question tells us what we mean when we say that the granite is harder than the knife and what is involved in our conception of the granite as harder than the knife blade.

This pragmatic attitude towards linguistic meaning and conceptual content has two sides. First, pragmatists have a distinct tendency towards verificationism. Meaning turns on the conditions under which we would be warranted in asserting or believing that some sentence was true, or that some attribution was appropriate, rather than depending directly on the conditions under which the sentence was true. But this emphasis on assertibility conditions for a specification of meaning or conceptual content is not the primary aspect of the pragmatic view of meaning. It in turn arises out of the distinctively 'pragmatic' stance of the pragmatists. In general, pragmatists don't much care about how things 'really and truly' are 'in-themselves', if how they truly are makes no difference to our ability to cope with the world in ways that matter to us. And, in general, a difference between two possible ways in which something might be can make a difference to our ability to cope with things in ways that matter to us only if, now or in the future, we could *tell* that those two ways in which the thing might be *are* different. So, given the pragmatism expressed in the maxim I cited from Peirce, the content of a concept of an object is something like a prediction of what we would be able to detect, that would matter to our projects, regarding the effects of placing the object in various circumstances.

Pragmatist verificationism is thus distinguished from its positivist cousin by its distinctive kind of empiricism concerning evidence and warrant. For the positivist, the meaning of a term or the content of a concept is fixed by the conditions under which we would be warranted in ascribing the term or attributing the concept, just as it is for the pragmatist. But for

the positivist, as heirs of the classical British empiricists, those conditions ultimately are cashed out in terms of a set of possible sensations. For pragmatists, on the other hand, a different set of possibilities, the possible practical effects of operations with and on objects, fix the contents of our conceptions and the meanings of our words.

Stylistically and substantively there are a great many differences between the early 20th century American pragmatists and the Heidegger of *Being and Time,* Heidegger was a phenomenologist, the pragmatists were not. The pragmatists were empiricists who were suspicious of *a priori* investigations, Heidegger was neither an empiricist nor suspicious, in general, of the *a priori*. There is an important respect in which Heidegger was an anti-naturalist; the pragmatists could never be accused of that particular sin against modernity. Nevertheless, in my 1988 book, *Heidegger's Pragmatism*[5], I argued that there was a very real sense in which the early Heidegger was indeed a close kin of the American pragmatists. In particular I argued that, regarding linguistic meaning and conceptual content, Heidegger was a pragmatic verificationist. And I stand by that claim.

There is, however, a deeper and more important agreement between the Heidegger of *Being and Time* and the pragmatists, an agreement that accounts for the similarity of their views regarding linguistic meaning and the contents of concepts. This agreement concerns what it is for an agent to be intentionally engaged with a world, or, in more overtly Heideggerean terms, the basic constitution of the Being of Dasein. In this paper I would like to focus on this deeper similarity, as well as on the significant respects in which Heidegger's brand of pragmatism concerning the structure of intentionality differs from his American cousins.

1. Two Views of the *As* Structure of Engagement

Over the last several centuries it has become a philosophical commonplace that when we humans engage with objects, or events, or properties we engage with them *as* this or that. I see the entity that is sitting on my bird feeder as a goldfinch. I can infer certain things about my daughter's behavior because I believe her to be a teenager, and I can be depressed about some of

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[5] Mark Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 1988.

that behavior when I feel it to be rude. My granddaughter carries this object back to the kitchen because she recognizes it as a pot; my dog fails to take it as a pot and thus fails to do so. The structure of our language reflects this fact about our engagement with the world. Aside from the problematic case of our use of proper names, when we designate an entity linguistically we do so at least in part by specifying it as belonging to a certain class of entities. And when we want to say something about such an entity, which has already been designated as this or that, we further specify that it can also be taken *as* that or this; the pot is well designed, for example.

To say that our engagement has an *as* structure is at least to say that we can stand in certain types of 'relations' with an entity when that entity is taken to be in one way, while we fail to stand in those 'relations' when it is taken differently.[6] That is, we seem to engage with things not directly but rather insofar as those things are engaged *as* something or other.[7] I want to drink the liquid, but not the poison, even though the liquid is the poison. I believe that the beaver is not a pest, although I also believe that all rodents are pests, even though the beaver is a rodent. Indeed, there is a strong tradition in 20th century philosophy that takes this intensional dimension of our engagement with things as the defining mark of intentionality, which in turn is often seen as the defining mark of mentality itself.[8] This view, which identifies the mental with intentional directedness, and which treats the *as* structure as the defining feature of the intentional, is extremely wide spread in contemporary philosophical thought. A remarkably diverse group of philosophers, including phenomenologists and analysts, pragmatists and cognitivists, all share this basic conception of mentality.

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[6] I place scare quotes around 'relations' here for the obvious reason that all real relations involve relations between individuals no matter how described, while these intentional 'relations' lack this feature. For that reason it is anything but clear that for an agent to take some entity *as* this or that involves any real relation between the agent and the entity.

[7] I will use the blanket phrase 'engagement with' to designate the variety of ways in which we can be 'related' to things when we 'relate' to them as this or that, as when we want to use the hammer, but not the paperweight, although the hammer is the paperweight, or merely treat it as a hammer, by hammering with it, for example. Relations that are not engagements, such as being heavier than, lack this *as* structure.

[8] For example, see Donald Davidson's "Mental Events", in *Essays on Actions and Events*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 207-25, especially pp. 210-11, where the linkages are especially clear.

This very breadth of agreement, however, hides a crucial disagreement. This disagreement concerns the basic nature of the *as* structure that all agree is the essential feature of human engagement with the world. At bottom, this disagreement turns on whether or not it is a necessary condition for an agent to be able to treat something *as* something that that agent has the second order capacity to treat its own ways of treating things *as* this or that as *themselves* ways of treating things as something. Let me illustrate the different views that I want to highlight.

The division in question is especially clear in the differing attitudes of the two camps of philosophers towards a certain traditional model of the nature and role of explicit judgments in the constitution of the *as* structure. One of the ways in which we are capable of treating something *as* something is by forming an explicit discursive judgment concerning that thing. For example, when I see a hammer I might assert, or at least judge, that that thing over there that I perceive is a hammer, and thereby intend it *as* a hammer. Since judgments are essentially acts that can and ought to be supported by evidence, when I form the judgment my judging ideally occurs for a reason, and, it might be thought, that reason counts as a reason only in virtue of the fact that I believe that any entity that satisfies some set of conditions counts as a hammer, and I believe that this entity satisfies those conditions. Kant attempted to elucidate this structure of judgment by introducing the technical notion of a 'concept'. Kant tells us that a concept "is always something general, and something that serves as a rule".[9] In another of his dicta, Kant clarifies the sense in which concepts are always rules. A concept, he says, is "a mark, that can be common to several things".[10] So on this Kantian conception of a concept, a concept is a mark, or standard, or criterion that can be used as a rule (which for Kant is always associated with the major premise of an argument) in a decision procedure to determine which of a group of things satisfies that standard. When we use such a concept to cognize an entity we *apply* that concept to the entity, and when we do so we treat that entity *as* an entity of the kind picked out by that

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[9] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 232; A. 106.
[10] Kant, *CPR*, 399; A. 320; B. 377.

concept or standard.[11] Similarly, the Fregean notion of *Sinn*, or sense or meaning, originally arose out of reflection on this same discursive variety of the *as* structure of human language and engagement with the world. It can be informative to me to find out that the morning star is the evening star because I think of that celestial object *as* this or that, as the morning star or the evening star, and when I do so my thoughts, and the language that is used to express those thoughts, have different senses, or meanings, or modes in which the object is presented, even though the object that is presented is the same for both of those modes. On this Fregean view, meanings are ways in which we engage with entities; if I refer to Venus with an expression that has the meaning 'the morning star', then I am engaging with Venus *as* the morning star. And, in determining which thing is the morning star, I use the sense embedded in 'the morning star' as a criterion or standard that supplies the premise in an argument that concludes with the judgment that <u>that</u> thing <u>is</u> the morning star.

Now, occupying one side of the divide regarding the *as* structure of human engagement are those who hold that the primary way in which an agent engages with an entity as something is in an act of judgment that involves a recognition of an entity as falling under a concept. For those in this camp, other ways in which we engage with things or properties in the world *as* this or that, such as perceiving something as, or using something as, depend upon and are derivative from this basic capacity to judge. Unless we had the concept of <u>bird</u> available to us, we could not see the gold finch *as* a bird, and unless we possessed the concept of a hammer, we could not take this thing *as* a hammer in hammering with it. Or so the story goes. On this view, no agent is capable of engaging with something as something unless they are capable of judging that that thing is of a certain type. But since on this view such an act of judgment intrinsically involves treating the concept that one is applying in the judgment *as* a concept, that is, as a mark or

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[11] It is important to note that the concept of a concept is itself ambiguous. While the majority of philosophers who invoke the concept of a concept treat it roughly in accordance with the Kantian heritage I have described, there is a distinct minority, (including myself on most occasions), who accept a more liberal usage. According to this looser sense of 'concept', vervet monkeys who strictly distinguish in their behavior between their matrilineal kin and all other vervets have something like the concept of 'being biologically related', although they are entirely ignorant of the inferential role of the analogous human concept in respect of the biology of reproduction, and my shape sorting granddaughter has something like our concept of 'triangular' although she doesn't in any sense know the conditions of application of that word.

criterion that serves as a rule for judgment, no agent who is incapable of treating their own principles for judging as principles for judging, that is as concepts, is capable of treating any entity *as* anything at all. For those who adhere to this view, the realm of those who are capable of intentionality is coextensive with the realm of those who engage with the world intensionally, and both are coextensive with the realm of those who judge by means of the application of a concept treated as a concept.

On the other side of the divide are those who are suspicious of the judgmental model of the *as* structure of engagement because they believe that there is another way in which an agent can engage with the entities within the world that is independent of, prior to, and necessary for judgment. Consider the case my two-year-old granddaughter, Betsy, who is a wiz at sorting blocks according to their shapes. She routinely places triangular blocks in triangular holes, spherical and cylindrical blocks in round holes, and cubical blocks in square holes. On the other hand, Betsy is quite shaky at linguistically identifying the shapes involved, and entirely hopeless at the task of specifying what it is about the blocks she handles that qualifies them to be put in their appropriate holes. Does Betsy engage with the sides of the various blocks *as* square, or triangular, or round? On the one hand, Betsy's lack of linguistic competence, and her inability to either articulate the conceptual inferential linkages among these concepts and other concepts or act on those links in her behavior drive us towards the view that she lacks the concepts involved. On the other hand, in her behavior Betsy surely seems to *treat* the blocks *as* round, etc., and this pushes us in the direction of accepting that Betsy is capable of engaging with shapes *as* shapes.

The answer to the question regarding whether or not Betsy engages with shapes as shapes turns on what is required for treating an entity *as* this or that, of course, and the answer to that question would seem to turn on whether or not for an agent to treat an entity as an x it is necessary that that agent be able to treat the concept of x *as* a concept, that is, as something that is general and can serve as a rule for judgment. We have good evidence that Betsy is incapable of treating her ability to sort things into round and non-round as facilitated by a concept, as enabled by something general that serves as a rule. She can neither say what it is that qualifies this block, but not that one, to fit into that hole, nor can she even *designate* that qualifying characteristic. So we have no reason to think that Betsy specifically uses some characterization

of that quality as a mark that supplies the rule for deciding between cases of round and cases of non-round. Her act of placing a block in the right hole is simply an expression of her generalized motor-perceptual ability. And, if the ability to treat some rule that is used in behavior for deciding cases *as* a rule for deciding those cases, (by articulating the content of the rule or representing the rule as such), is a necessary condition for possessing the corresponding concept, then Betsy lacks shape concepts. On the other hand, Betsy does in fact respond perceptually and in action to the roundness and squareness of things. Regardless of color and composition, she places all the cubical blocks in square holes and all the spherical blocks in round holes; Betsy seems to engage with the blocks *as* round and square.

Now, as the proponents of the necessity of the capacity to judge for the possibility of an intensional engagement with things are quick to point out, non-intentional entities are quite as capable of differential responsiveness as is Betsy. Iron bars respond differentially to the presence and absence of water vapor, after all. It is even possible for non-intentional agents to respond differentially to features such as shape, independently of color and composition, just as Betsy does. So what distinguishes Betsy's shape sorting from the mere differential responsiveness of the iron bar or the record changer, if it is not the capacity to judge?[12]

The implicit answer proposed to this question by those on the other side of the divide regarding the *as* structure from those committed to the judgmental model is that Betsy's shape sorting behavior is embedded in a purposive or teleological context – Betsy responds as she does to the blocks *in order to* sort them so that they can fit through the slots. On this alternative understanding of the *as* structure, the necessary and sufficient condition for an agent treating something *as* something is that the agent acts purposively in order to bring about ends. Such agents have practical interests, their activities are evaluable in light of those interests, and, when they respond to the properties of things *as* they ought to respond in order to facilitate the

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[12] It should be noted that there are those, and they are many, who hold that the capacity to judge is a necessary condition on intensional engagement with the world, but who also hold that the ability to self-consciously manipulate the inferential linkages among concepts is not necessary for the capacity to judge. There are many varieties of such views, and they differ markedly and pointedly amongst themselves. A taxonomy of these views is not necessary for my purposes here, however, as they all presuppose a basically representational understanding of the *as* structure.

achievement of those ends, they engage with those things *as* belonging to various types. On this view Betsy differs from record changers insofar as she has ends of her own, and in light of those ends, she has interests of her own.[13] And in light of those interests, things are revealed *as* they are relevant to those interests. Let me illustrate how this is supposed to work.

When an agent engages with an entity, she is responsive to some feature, property, or relation of that thing, and, crucially, she is responsive to that aspect *because* it is that aspect. When I form the judgment that that thing over there is a hammer, I form that judgment in response to the supposed fact that it satisfies the conditions that qualify the thing as a hammer. In addition to my relation to the hammer itself, my judgment depends upon my ability to sort things according to the principle embedded in the concept of a hammer, which supplies the norm for judging. On any given occasion the agent can misapply the concept of course, and judge a piece of wet pasta to be a hammer. But unless the agent were in general responsive to the hammerness of things, (and equally responsive to many other such properties) it would be wrong to say that she was judging, or treating something as something, at all. Similarly, when an agent uses an entity as an entity of a certain type, or avoids some entity as detrimental to the achievement of her goals, she needs to be responsive to the features, properties, or relations of the thing that qualify it as potentially instrumental or detrimental to her ends. If she *is* responsive to those properties in the appropriate way, the agent takes the thing *as* a hammer, or whatever. And, just as in the case of judgment, there is a norm associated with the type against which the agent's action is evaluable. The agent's act is correct in treating an entity as of some type just in case she can succeed in using the thing *as* it is taken to be. And, just as in the case of judgment, the agent can make mistakes when her acts are measured against their corresponding norm, but when she makes too many mistakes she no longer counts as acting for ends and no longer counts as taking anything *as* anything. In effect, in cases of purposive action, what is to be accomplished in the act provides a norm against which the act is evaluable. And, since to act for an end implies that

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[13] There is of course a sense in which instruments such as record changers also do things to achieve ends. Nevertheless, there are crucial differences between instruments of that sort and genuinely teleological agents who have ends of their own, and engage with things as this or that. For those interested in the details, see my recent book, *Rational Animals: The Teleological Roots of Intentionality* (Athens: Ohio University Press), 2007.

the agent has taken things *as* instrumental or detrimental in definite ways, this same end prescribes a norm against which those ways of taking things is also evaluable.

On this view, to treat a square block *as* square does not require that one can make the concept of square, or any other concept, explicit. All that is required is that the agent be capable of responding differentially to the shape of the block in order to achieve some end of that agent. So whatever conditions are necessary and sufficient for an agent to count as acting in order to achieve some end are also necessary and sufficient for that agent to engage with entities *as* something. And, for those who hold this view of the *as* structure, the types *as* which the agent engages with things are *primarily practical*. Such types are *practical* in the sense that they reveal entities as they are relevant to the interests of the agent, that is, relevant to the achievement of the agent's ends. Such types are seen to be *primarily* practical in the sense that it is held that nothing could engage with entities *as* anything at all unless they also engaged with them *as* practically relevant. That is, it is held that engaging with things *as* they are revealed to be in and by the practical interests of the agent is a necessary condition for an agent engaging with things *as* anything at all.

As I am using the term, anyone who adopts this basic view of the as structure is a 'pragmatist'. Using this standard, philosophers as diverse as Peirce, Dewey, the late Wittgenstein, the early Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Hubert Dreyfus, Daniel Dennett and Alva Noe all count as pragmatists. And using that same standard philosophers as diverse as Kant, Descartes, Frege, Russell, Husserl, Fodor, and Searle all count as anti-pragmatists. On this usage, pragmatic verificationism regarding linguistic meaning and conceptual content is not the defining characteristic of pragmatism. This semantic theory is merely a widely shared inference from the fundamental point of similarity among pragmatists.[14] Rather, the defining feature of Pragmatism is its peculiar variety of *anti-representationalism*. For the pragmatist, whether or not an agent engages with things as this or that is not a matter of how or whether it represents those

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[14] Nor is the crucial difference here between those who hold that what the agent is responding to when she responds to an entity *as* something is not in principle expressible discursively, and those who hold that it is, even if it is not expressible by the agent herself. This is the interpretation of what is basic and important in the early Heidegger that is associated with Hubert Dreyfus and his school. On the view of Heidegger's pragmatism I am presenting here, a decision on this issue is a mere technical detail.

things. It is a matter of whether or not the agent interacts with its surroundings as an environment in which it acts to achieve its ends and in which it responds to things as illuminated by its interests.

As it turns out, there are two main kinds of pragmatists. These kinds are delineated by their differing analyses of the necessary conditions on an agent genuinely acting in light of their interests in order to achieve an end. There are those, such as Merleau-Ponty, Alva Noe, and Dewey, who hold that both the teleology of action and the *as* structure are fundamental features of the perceptual-motor abilities that underlie normal human, and indeed, animal agency, where those abilities are defined in terms of the organic instrumental practical interests of the agent. There is another camp, however, including the early Heidegger, who hold that only agents that are capable of adhering to socially articulated ends, means, and proprieties, such as humans, are, in the crucial sense, capable of acting for the sake of some goal, and only such agents engage with the entities within the world as this or that. In the next section of this paper I will articulate the central structure of the biological-naturalistic style of pragmatism. Then, in the following section, I will go on to illuminate the distinctive character of the early Heidegger's pragmatism by contrasting it with the naturalistic form.

2. Naturalistic Pragmatism

The intuition behind the naturalistic form of pragmatism is that the notion of an organic agent itself only makes sense in terms of something like an intensional engagement of that agent in its environment. An organism is essentially something that literally must make a living. That is, to be an organism is to interact with an environment in such a way as to continue the processes that constitute the life of the organism. For this to happen, certain features of the environment must be utilized in very specific ways to achieve very specific ends. That is, the organism, as such, mines its environment for necessary resources, and only counts as an individual when it does so successfully. So to view a heap of structures *as* an individual organism is to view it as engaged in the process of utilizing various features of the environment to achieve various ends, all of which are part of or conducive to the achievement of the single integrated end of the agent maintaining its integrity as an individual, by keeping it alive. The organism has an 'interest' in features of the environment only insofar as those features are

conducive or detrimental to its continuance. Insofar as the organism continues it must successfully treat those features of the environment that are in some particular way potentially useful to the achievement of the necessary tasks involved in its survival *as* potentially serviceable in this way; it engages these features in their *serviceability*. The organism needs to avoid other features of the environment if it is to survive; insofar as they are avoided they are engaged as detrimental, in their detrimentality. As Kathleen Akins nicely puts it, the features that animals sense in their environment are 'narcissistic'.[15] And this is not an accident. For what distinguishes the sensation of an organism from a mere differential responsiveness is precisely this narcissistic standpoint.

Alva Noe (among others, including myself[16]) has recently argued that this narcissistic *as* structure is a necessary concomitant of life as such, as opposed to a sophisticated add-on. Consider the lowly bacterium. "The bacterium is geared into the world not merely in the sense that the presence of sugar causes a certain bacteriumlike congeries of atoms to migrate in the direction of greater intensity of sugar; the bacterial mesh with its surroundings are of a different quality than that. The bacterium needs sugar to live and is adapted to its surroundings, and that's why it is impelled toward the sugar. The bacterium is not merely a process, it is an agent, however simple; it has interests….The basic fact is that the bacterium comes into focus for biology as an organism, as a living being, once we appreciate its integrity as an individual agent, as a bearer of interests and needs. With the bacterium we find a subject and an environment, an organism and a world. The animal, crucially, has a world; that is to say, it has a relationship with its surroundings."[17]

Noe's suggestion is the naturalistic, organic, pragmatic suggestion. The suggestion has a number of aspects. First, the biological description of the bacterium's behavior appeals to the bacterium as an individual that responds to its environment in light of its interests and needs as a kind of organic agent. Second, treating the organism as a unit that has interests has *explanatory* power, and for that reason such understanding of the organism as agent is indispensable. The

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[15] Kathleen Akins, "Of Sensory Systems and the 'Aboutness' of Mental States," *The Journal of Philosophy* 93, No. 7 (Jul., 1996): 337-372.

[16] Cf *Rational Animals*, especially Chapter 4.

[17] Alva Noe, *Out of Our Heads*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009) 40.

biological understanding of the bacterium's behavior appeals to the bacterium as an individual agent that responds to its environment as it does *because* of its needs and interests as the kind of organic agent that it is. But, third, for the organism to be a unit that has interests is the very same thing as for the organism to be a unit that, through its *actions*, unveils the things in its world *as* needed and to be avoided in specific ways and for specific purposes. Organisms are, essentially, agents that act on their environment in order to realize ends that are intrinsic to and necessary for their continuance. And, insofar as organisms act, that action *itself* amounts to the organism taking features of its environment *as* serviceable or detrimental to its interests. When the organic agent succeeds in using and avoiding things as they ought to be used if they are to serve its interests, the agent also successfully *reveals* the things in its world *as* really being serviceable and detrimental in the ways that, in its action, it takes them to be. This is the cash value, in this context, of the claim that the organism 'has a world'.

The biological basis of this kind of pragmatism explains certain of the characteristic tendencies of the pragmatic tradition of philosophy. In particular, in addition to being anti-representationalist, biologically based pragmatists have distinctive views of the way in which knowledge is integrated with and dependent upon action and tend to be semantic holists and pragmatic verificationists. And, while none of these positions are strictly implied by the basic, stripped down biologically based interpretation of the *as* structure I have presented, they are all suggested by that model. I will briefly discuss these linkages.

Because organisms are integrated units involving a variety of interlocking processes, and organisms engage through their actions with features of their environments as they are relevant to the continuance of those processes, biological pragmatists characteristically think that the 'world' of the organism has a holistic structure. If some organism takes some entity *as* of some particular type, this can only be because that type is salient and relevant for the organism's interests. But since those interests are relative to the ongoing life of the organism, and that life consists of continuing processes, in which each stage of the process is both dependent on the successful completion of earlier stages and necessary for the inauguration and completion of succeeding stages, the interests of the organism are defined holistically. From this holism of interests it is natural to infer a holism of the types revealed by those interests. A tiger needs a

source of energy, and in light of that interest reveals aspects of its world to be <u>food</u>. But since some of the sources of that energy are too large to be consumed at a time given the metabolic resources of the tiger, and the tiger will also need food tomorrow, its interests could be served if it could preserve some of that food for later use. But the world of the tiger also includes other animals that could use that food, and who are thereby potentially detrimental to the interests of the tiger. That is, they are revealed by the interests of the tiger *as* <u>competitors</u>; that is, as poachers of <u>food</u>. On the other hand, if competitors could be kept from discovering the food, the tiger's interests could be served, and this interest in concealment from others reveals features of the world of the tiger to be <u>camouflage</u>, that is, potential instruments for hiding <u>food</u>. And so it goes. It is the *things* in the world of the tiger that have meanings, and since those meanings are revealed only in light of the context of significance established by the interlocking interests of the organic agent, each of those meanings are defined only in relation to the meanings of the other things in the world of the agent. The world of the organism is not a collection of independent things. It is a context of significance, where that significance is relative to the organic interests and ends of the organism.

The continued survival of the organism depends upon its integration with its world and its successful utilization of the resources supplied by that world. This success amounts to the organism's exercise of the ability to respond appropriately, given its interests, to the presence and absence of the instrumentally important features of its environment. That is, to be alive is for the organism to *know how* to make a living and to successfully act on that know-how, to know how to do what it needs to survive, and to know when to exercise that know-how. But on the pragmatic understanding of the *as* structure, this very same know-how also amounts to a revelation of certain aspects of the way in which the things in the world actually are. At the organic level, knowing-how to cope with its environment is inextricably involved with the organism's knowledge that the entities in the world have certain features at certain times. But the features of things that the organism must successfully respond to are, as we have seen, holistically fixed through their relations with the other requirements of the organism. And, since for the organism to know how to cope with some feature of its world, and thus to know that the entity with which it is dealing has that feature, it is necessary that it also know how to cope with

other features of its world and to know that other entities have other instrumentally important properties. Thus, for the pragmatist, knowledge of the way in which the world is is essentially holistic, because knowledge of the way the world is is only exists in the context of knowing how to cope with the world, and knowing how to cope with the world is holistic.

Now none of this directly implies that semantic meanings need to be understood holistically. Nor does it imply that the meanings of sentences are fixed by their pragmatic verification conditions. After all, it is one thing for the ways that things are instrumentally significant for organisms to be holistically related to one another, and quite a different thing for the semantic significance of the words that human organisms use to represent things to be holistically fixed by pragmatically salient conditions of appropriate use. We humans not only treat things *as* this or that by coping with them, we also engage with them *as* this or that by forming justified, conceptual, discursive, judgments. Nevertheless, since pragmatists understand the *as* structure as such as derivative from the conditions on action, in understanding language pragmatists tend to start from the action of actually using language to accomplish various tasks. That is, pragmatists tend to make the strategic bet that the semantic features of language are derivative from the pragmatics of language use. And since action as such has a holistic structure, and in at least non-linguistic action the meanings of things and acts are fixed only by their roles within a context of pragmatic significance, pragmatists are prone to think of the linguistic meanings of linguistic types as also holistically fixed by their roles in language use; that is, pragmatists tend to think that semantic meanings are fixed by inferential roles.

3. Heidegger's Brand of Pragmatism

The early Heidegger's phenomenological methodology predisposed him towards a certain skepticism regarding the ontological significance of the fact that we humans are biological creatures. If the primary access to what it is to be an entity to which things are given *as* something is through a self-examination and self-interpretation, then it is at best unclear whether or to what degree 'mere' animals, who perhaps lack the possibility of such self-access, and certainly lack the possibility of sharing the fruits of this self-access with us, share with us this basic *as* structure. Perhaps more importantly, lacking *phenomenological* access to the 'world' of the mere animal, it seems to Heidegger that the only way in which we can approach

an understanding of that world is by examining the way in which animals show up for us. And, for Heidegger, animals thus reveal themselves as in some respects *deficient* co-inhabitants with us of that world. So the early Heidegger firmly rejected the tradition, (which he most closely identified with Aristotle), that understood the *as* structure characteristic of our being as a fundamentally biological phenomenon. And, in this rejection he also rejected the type of naturalistic pragmatism prevalent among American pragmatists. Instead of understanding the human way of engaging with the world as a development and modification of a basic organic inheritance, Heidegger held that to the extent that animals exhibit an *as* structure in their dealings with their environment this biological engagement must be seen as a deficient mode. "Life must be understood as a kind of Being to which there belongs Being-in-the-world. Only if this kind of Being is oriented in a privative way to Dasein can we fix its character ontologically."[18]

Nevertheless, Heidegger's understanding of the basic structure of human engagement with the world is, in the crucial sense, thoroughly pragmatic. As Heidegger sees it, the fact that humans engage with entities *as* this or that depends upon the fact that humans *understand* the world and the things in it, and this basic understanding in turn is an aspect of the fundamental constitution of entities like us; we are 'being-in-the-world'. Although the terms translated here as 'world' and 'understanding' are common ones, they serve as part of Heidegger's technical vocabulary. The claim that beings with our kind of being (or 'Dasein') are in-the-world has two sides, but Heidegger insists that the two sides are inextricably connected and only formally abstractable from each other. What we are is 'being-in', and what we are 'in' is the world. In Heidegger's usage, to 'be-in' is to 'inhabit' or to be familiar with. "'I am' thus amounts to saying, I dwell, I abide in the world as with something familiar. Being as in-being and 'I am' means dwelling with …, and 'in' primarily does not signify anything spatial at all but means primarily *being familiar with*."[19] The character of this 'dwelling' or 'familiarity' is indicated by the paradigm ways in which it occurs: "Such possible modes of in-being belonging to

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[18] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 290; H. 246. There are other thinkers who count as pragmatists under the criterion suggested above who, for reasons different from Heidegger's, also reject a biologically based understanding of intentionality. Wilfred Sellars and Robert Brandom come immediately to mind.

[19] Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 158.

everydayness include: working on something with something, producing something, cultivating and caring for something, putting something to use, employing something for something, holding something in trust, giving up, letting something get lost, interrogating, discussing, accomplishing, exploring, considering, determining something."[20] Heidegger identifies the common factor among these various ways of being-in as concern – we are familiar with something when we are concerned with or have an interest in that something. But in this context another commonality among the items on this list is salient. All of these ways of being-in are ways of *acting*, and most of these ways of acting are necessarily ways of acting overtly with and on things. To be us is to be familiar with an environment and to be familiar with an environment is to know how to cope with it by acting on and with things in light of our concern, or in light of what matters to us.

According to Heidegger, being-in is always primarily being-in the world; being familiar with the world is the precondition for familiarity with things. The 'world' in turn is a context of a certain kind of teleological significance. "Circumspective concern includes the understanding of a totality of involvements, and this understanding is based on a prior understanding of the relationships of the 'in-order-to', the 'towards-which', the 'towards-this', and the 'for-the-sake-of". The interconnection of these relationships has been exhibited earlier as 'significance'. Their unity make up what we call 'world'."[21] Heidegger's technical terminology is never denser than when he is discussing his notion of the world, but the underlying concepts are straightforward enough. The overall context for interpreting the phenomenon of 'world' is that Heidegger is talking about the ways in which we can be familiar with the kinds of things that he calls 'ready-to-hand', tools or pieces of equipment that are to be used for bringing about possibilities that matter to us. 'Involvement' is a catch all term for the various ways in which what a tool is can depend upon how it is to be used along with other things to get things done. When one tool type is defined in terms of what is to be accomplished with it along with other tools with which it is involved it is said to be 'in-order-to' bring about the output of that teleological function. Hammers are 'in-order-to' hammer nails. When the various 'in-order-tos' of a tool chest are

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[20] Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, 159.
[21] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 415; H. 364.

interrelated in light of some possible way in which potential users of the tool complex might be, they are said to be 'for-the-sake-of' that possible way of being Dasein. Putting this together, hammers, for example, are involved with nails insofar as hammers are to be used in order to pound nails, so that boards can hang together … for the sake of providing shelter for Dasein. According to Heidegger, when an agent engages with her environment by being familiar with the teleological roles of different kinds of equipment the agent is familiar with the significance of those tools, and, since such significance is holistic in that each tool type is defined only in relation with the others, and the entire complex taken as a whole only makes sense in relation to the human possibility for the sake of which it is, the agent can only be familiar with the particular significance of different kinds of entities by having a prior understanding of the whole structure of significance in which it is embedded. This holistic structure of significance is the 'world'. So Heidegger's overall claim is that what we as Dasein are is a kind of familiarity with how things are to be used as equipment for the sake of bringing about possible ways in which we might be that matter to us.

Heidegger's views regarding the *as* structure of intensionality and intentionality are derived from this basic orientation. 'Understanding' is a fundamental and essential aspect of our being-in, or familiarity with the world, and it is primarily practical. No agent can engage with things or the world without understanding the world and things. An agent is said to understand when it is competent at living (or 'being') in the possible ways of being for the sake of which the world is structured, and the agent's understanding of particular things is part and parcel of this holistic practical competence. "When we are talking ontically we sometimes use the expression 'understanding something' with the signification of 'being able to manage something', 'being a match for it', 'being competent to do something'. In understanding, as an *existentiale*, that which we have such competence over is not a 'what', but Being as existing."[22] One understands just insofar as one can cope with the world and treat the things in it as equipment to be used for the sake of bringing about possibilities of our own being that concern us. It is crucial to Heidegger's view that understanding is not primarily a theoretical understanding that such and such piece of equipment can possibly be used in such and such way, or even an understanding that it is to be

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[22] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 183; H. 143.

used in that way. Rather, the fundamental form of understanding without which there is no other kind of understanding, is understanding how tools are to be used, and such understanding discloses things as capable of being used and to be used in certain ways by actually using them in that way. "Equipment can genuinely show itself only in dealings cut to its own measure (hammering with a hammer, for example); but in such dealings an entity of this kind is not grasped thematically as an occurring thing…"[23] The actual use of equipment as equipment requires a perceptual sensitivity to the ways in which tools are usable and to be used, and Heidegger calls this ability to perceptually respond to these aspects of things 'circumspection', which has a definite kind of priority over mere sensation or the perceptual recognition of non-teleological properties of objects; no agent could be perceptually sensitive to non-teleological properties who was not circumspectively engaged with things. And, for Heidegger, the primary way in which we display the *as* structure of our engagement with things is through coping with the world by actually displaying the perceptual-motor abilities involved in our circumspective understanding of those things, by using those things as they are to be used. And for this, judgment that appeals to concepts as concepts is not required. "In dealing with what is environmentally ready-to-hand by interpreting it circumspectively, we 'see' it *as* a table, a door, a carriage, a bridge; but what we have interpreted need not necessarily be taken apart by making an assertion which definitely characterizes it."[24]

It should be obvious even from this brief summary that Heidegger shares with his naturalistically motivated cousins a core commitment to the fundamental anti-representational pragmatic thesis, that the *as* structure of intentional engagement is primarily practical. For Heidegger, as for naturalistic pragmatists, the capacity to judge is not necessary for engaging with things as this or that, and the ability to engage with things as this or that by coping with them for the sake of realizing ends is a necessary condition on the capacity to judge. For Heidegger, the types *as* which the agent engages with things are *primarily practical*. Such types are *practical* in the sense that they reveal entities as they are relevant to the interests of the agent, that is, relevant to the achievement of the agent's ends. Such types are seen to be *primarily*

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[23] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 98; H. 68.
[24] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 189; H. 149.

practical in the sense that it is held that no agent could engage with entities *as* anything at all unless they also engaged with them *as* practically relevant. That is, it is held that engaging with things *as* they are revealed to be in and by the practical interests of the agent is a necessary condition for an agent engaging with things *as* anything at all. The ability to practically cope with things in the world is a necessary condition on being able to form discursive judgments, both 'mentally' and in the overt act of making linguistic assertions. But being capable of making such judgments is not a necessary condition on being able to intend things *as* this or that in and through coping with the world.

The key similarity between naturalistically informed pragmatism and Heidegger's brand of pragmatism is thus the insistence that the *as* structure of engagement is primarily a feature of a practical coping with things in a holistically, teleologically, structured world. For both, treating things *as* something is a by-product of dealing with an environment in order to achieve ends that the agent cares about or in which she has an interest. But there are striking differences between Heidegger's articulation of the structure of the world of Dasein and the structure of biological environments, and these structural differences are tied to differences regarding both the minimal requirements for an agent engaging with entities *as* something and differences concerning the nature of that intensional engagement.

For Heidegger, there is a teleological structure implicit in the world of Dasein, but that structure does not embody simple means/end relations, nor is that structure anchored in the biological character of the agent. The 'ends' implicit in the world are not states of things that could be realized at a time, such as 'the agent ingests the liquid'. Rather, the for-the-sake-of-which that orients the tool complex of equipment that gives that equipment its significance and gives the world its structure is always a possible way of Dasein's being, and Dasein's way of being is quite different from the way in which tools are.[25] The possible ways of Dasein's being

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[25] Tool types are defined by a function that specifies what state of affairs is to be brought about by the use of the tool. This function is the defining 'in-order-to' of the tool type. Hammers are in-order-to hammer nails in the process of making boards fast to one another. Since this defining function is specified in terms of relations with other tool types, Heidegger says that they have an 'involvement' with one another. The *telos* ('*towards-which')* of the entire complex of such involvements, the 'for-the-sake-of-which' of that complex, is a possibility for Dasein's being that has *no* further involvement. That is, the specific for-the-sake-of is not defined by a function that

that are the for-the-sake-ofs of the world are always modes of activity that can only occur over time, with the aid of the equipment that is for the sake of that activity. For example, in a classroom the chalk is there in order to write on a blackboard, and the board is there in order to be written on so that students can see what the teacher writes, and the chairs are where they are so that the students can see what's on the board, etc. But the entire complex is for-the-sake-of teaching and learning, which are ongoing activities that are possible ways for Dasein to be. Notice, the actual use of the classroom equipment isn't merely instrumental to the bringing about of some state of affairs. The use doesn't *precede* the teaching in order to bring it about as an accomplishment. Rather, the teaching and the use of the equipment is simultaneous even though the use is for the sake of the teaching, because the use happens in the course of the teaching; that use is part of the activity of teaching itself.

In this respect there is substantial similarity between Heidegger's description of the teleological structure of Dasein's world and certain aspects of Aristotle's characterization of the processes of living things.[26] But Dasein's world is crucially distinct from that of merely biological entities, however that is described, in several other critical respects. The first of these differences can be brought out by first noting a superficial similarity between the for-the-sake-of of a Dasein and the Aristotelian biological essence of an organism. For Aristotle, the answer to the question 'What is it?' when asked of an organism is supplied by appealing to the organism's essence, and that essence coincides with the type of organism the individual is. This type prescribes a certain pattern of organic activity and a certain way of making a living. What Sammie, my pet Sheltie, *is*, is a dog, and being a dog involves him in surviving as a dog by living in a doggie way, structurally, metabolically, and behaviorally. No doggieness, no Sammie. Similarly, for Heidegger, the answer to the question 'Who is she?' asked of a Dasein, can be given by alluding to those for-sake-of-whiches that specify a certain pattern of human activity; she is a teacher, or a mother, or an American. But, (and this is the crucial difference) none of

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specifies some state of affairs to be brought about as an output. This is Heidegger's way of putting the traditional point derived from Aristotle by way of Kant that beings like us (whether we are conceived as living beings, or rational beings, or Dasein), are ends in ourselves rather than mere means.

[26] For example, see *Metaphysics*, Book IX, Chapters 6-9.

these ways of being are *necessary* to the being of the individual Dasein. Sammie can only be by being a dog. But even if my partner Charlotte is a firmly committed philosopher, it just is not the case that for her to be, she must live the life of a philosopher. Even if Dasein is actually in the process of being a philosopher, being a philosopher is never a necessary way of being that Dasein; it is always a *possible* way of being. And, at some level, every Dasein knows this about herself, if only in and through the temptation to adopt an alternative possible for-the-sake-of-which on which to orient the structure of significance. Who she is is thus an *issue* for every Dasein, as Heidegger puts the point. As opposed to living beings treated as living, the ends that ground the norms that must be satisfied to be in the world in the particular way that the agent is are, for Dasein, always options that are opposed to other possibilities.

This first difference of Dasein's world from the 'world' of biological agents is tied to a second one. As Heidegger sees it, the norms that constrain Dasein as Dasein display a different, essentially non-biological type of normativity and binding power. Both the norms that govern the evaluation of biological action and what things in the environment can be taken to be in and through that action are grounded in the essential biological nature of the organism. As we saw when we were discussing Noe's example of the bacterium, the interest of a biological organism in its own survival, and the fact that the organism can only survive in and through utilizing its environment as a resource in very specific ways in the course of undergoing its continuing life processes, establish a norm against which the actions of the organism, as such, are to be measured. Lions are only as lions, and lions need to eat on a regular basis in order to continue being lions. In light of this fact, various aspects of the lion's behavior emerge as having a proximate goal, that is, the lion acts in various ways. Acts are acts only if they have a goal, and those goals are always relative to the description of the organism as a type of organism. In light of the fact that it is a lion, some of what the lion does reveals itself as an act with the goal of capturing, killing, and ingesting a springbok. That is, the lion hunts, and hunting as hunting prescribes a norm against which the success and failure of the hunting act is to be measured. Because hunting has the goal that it does, when a lion hunts, the lion succeeds if and only if it captures, kills, and ingests the springbok; otherwise its hunt fails. The norms that govern the

evaluation of the actions of organisms are thus grounded in the biological nature of the organisms that act.

Similarly, when an organism takes something in its environment *as* something in particular, what it takes that thing to be is fixed by its role in the life process of the organism. By hunting, the lion takes the springbok to be food; by hiding its half-eaten prey for another day by placing it under brush, the tiger takes the brush to be camouflage. Since the organism as living can only take the items in its environment as something by acting on and with them, and they can act only in relation to their organically determined essential natures, organisms can only treat things as instrumental or detrimental to their biologically fixed interests.

As we have seen, on Heidegger's description, the world of Dasein differs from the environment revealed by the biological activity of organisms in at least one critical respect. In order for an individual Dasein to exist at all, it is never necessary for that Dasein to be in any particular world, oriented by any particular for-the-sake-of which. An organism is embedded in its environmental niche in such a way that it cannot be at all unless it is as it is, as the kind of organism that it is. One might say, what the animal actually is determines and fixes its possibilities. But for Heidegger this is never true of Dasein. As Heidegger puts it, (in an obvious reference to and reversal of Aristotle in *Metaphysics* Theta) for Dasein "Higher than actuality stands *possibility*."[27] No matter how embedded an American philosopher is in the world of American philosophy, with its concerns and instrumentalities, it is always possible for that philosopher to cease to be a philosopher and yet still remain Dasein. Every Dasein must be in a world; no Dasein must be in any particular definite world.

For Heidegger, this modal fact about Dasein correlates with a distinctive aspect of the way in which Dasein engages with its world. For organisms, what things in the world *can be*, what those things can be treated *as*, is prescribed by their biological natures. An individual organism can make a mistake regarding whether or not some thing is <u>food</u> for it, but that it treats some things as food, and what it is to be food, are fixed by what sort of organism it is. For the organic agent as organic, all categories as which things can be engaged are defined by the capacity of an entity to satisfy some instrumental role prescribed by the form of life of the

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[27] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 63; H. 38.

organism. This is not true for the categories revealed in and through Dasein's being-in-the–world. The criteria for being a token of an equipmental type, such as 'hammer', are not defined in terms of an entity's capacity to be useful for a human being in fulfilling some instrumental (biological or non-biological) function, and the form of the organic life of the human organism does not prescribe the equipmental function itself. The function that is involved in the definition of 'hammer' is surely something like 'instrument used to pound nails into wood'. But (1) no individual Dasein must hammer nails into boards on pain of termination, (2) not every entity that can satisfy that function is a hammer (rocks aren't, for example), and (3) not every hammer is capable of satisfying the function (broken hammers might not be, for example). Rather, it is important for understanding what it is to be a hammer to see that hammers are things that are *to be used* to perform the function in question, not things that *can* be used to perform the function. And that something is to be used in this way is not determined by any biological fact about the user.

So what, exactly, does ground the distinctive kind of normativity involved in equipmental types? What can it mean to say that hammers, as hammers, are *to be used* as hammers and thus that to treat some thing as a hammer is to treat it as to be used in acts of hammering? Heidegger's answers to these questions turn on his recognition that Dasein are always historical entities that find themselves always already existing in ongoing culturally constituted and maintained worlds. The structure of the various possible ways of being Dasein that are available for any individual are already determined for that individual by her cultural milieu. What is involved in being a teacher in early 21st century America is already largely prescribed when the individual moves into that social role and practice. How one should act, with what one should act, how one should act with those things, are already built into that form of life in a normative fashion. To be Dasein is to live in a world that is organized in such a way that what is to be done is what any member of the community in which that Dasein exists, what any Dasein with that for-the-sake-of, ought to do; it is to do what *one* does. Heidegger uses the impersonal singular pronoun with a definite article, *das Man* [the One], to express the phenomenal sense of the source of this kind of normativity. "Dasein is for the sake of the 'one' in an everyday manner, and the 'one' itself Articulates the referential context of significance. When entities are

encountered, Dasein's world frees them for a totality of involvements with which the 'one' is familiar, and within the limits which have been established with the 'one's' averageness."[28]

Given this understanding of the normative dimension of Dasein's world, to say that some entity is a hammer is to say that it is to be used as one uses 'hammers' to perform the standardized function that is prescribed for 'hammers' within some historically constituted social practice. An act of hammering is successful if it is performed as one hammers within that practice. That these norms arise and are maintained does not depend on the biological character of Dasein. Rather, this kind of normativity depends upon the self-policing ability of the members of a community of Dasein to organize and regularize standardized ways of coping with each other and the non-Dasein environment. For Heidegger, no mere non-Daseinish animal can establish its own niche, and because of this fact, that *as* which the things in the animal world are encountered are limited to those features of things that are directly or indirectly instrumental to the continuing life of the organism. But, for Heidegger, Dasein is not limited in this way. Although no individual Dasein can make up her own form of life from scratch, communal Dasein, through the social capacity to establish norms for what one does, and how one does it, is capable of introducing novel for-the-sake-ofs, novel constellations of practices, equipment, and ways of being.

Now, it is fairly obvious that most such standardized ways of coping, those that engage with things within the world, could not maintain themselves unless they integrated reasonably well with the non-Dasein environment. These practices are techniques for doing things, not games; one doesn't find grossly ineffective traditions of carpentry. But given those limits, once the social style of normativity is established, there is quite a degree of latitude for how in particular the norms of the 'one' can be determined. And, given that fact, that *as* which Dasein can engage with the entities within the world, the categories in terms of which Dasein can engage with things, are wildly various when compared with the categories as which animals can engage with things. And, from Heidegger's perspective, this increased variation extends not only to the number of categories, but also to the kinds of categories. An animal can use a rock to achieve one of its biologically prescribed ends, cracking a nut, for example, and thus treat it as

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[28] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 167; H. 129. Translation modified.

instrumental to achieving that end, but no mere animal can be a carpenter who treats something as a hammer, as something that is to be used in a given way.

Dasein's ability to engage with things as they are to be engaged with is correlated with several other basic aspects of the structure of Dasein's world that, for Heidegger, distinguish it fundamentally from the 'world' of mere animals. Because Dasein can engage with things as they are to be used, Dasein is also capable of a type of second order engagement with the roles that those things occupy. It does so when it no longer uses the things in its world as they are to be used but instead *repairs* or *improves* those things so that they can better perform their functions. Heidegger calls such engagement 'interpretation'. The hammer itself is improved in order to better fulfill its role, and through this interpretive involvement the role of the hammer itself becomes an explicit link in Dasein's world. "To say that 'circumspection discovers' means that the 'world' which has already been understood comes to be interpreted. The ready-to-hand comes *explicitly* into the sight which understands. All preparing, putting to rights, repairing, improving, rounding-out, are accomplished in the following way: we take apart in its in-order-to' that which is circumspectively ready-to-hand, and we concern ourselves with it in accordance with what becomes visible through this process. That which has been circumspectively taken apart with regard to its 'in-order-to', and taken apart as such – that which is '*explicitly'* understood – has the structure *something as something.*"[29] According to Heidegger, Dasein's capacity to make the significance of the things in its world explicit through interpretation also opens up a new possibility for Dasein's engagement with things. Dasein can interpretively engage with a thing by making its significant role explicit in the course of making an assertion regarding that thing: 'This is a hammer'. For Heidegger, assertion is a "derivative mode of interpretation",[30] Finally, for Heidegger, this ability to make assertions opens the door for the possibility of engaging with things in ways that are essentially *not* practical, *as* mere objects of possible perception or cognition, *as* merely 'present-at-hand': "This leveling of the primordial

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[29] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 189; H. 148-149.

[30] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 195; H. 153. I have argued elsewhere that the ability to use equipment as equipment and the ability to make equipmental roles explicit in interpretation are necessary conditions on the capacity for linguistic assertion, because language use is best seen as a kind of tool use. See my *Rational Animals: The Teleological Roots of Intentionality,* Chapter 6.

'as' of circumspective interpretation to the 'as' with which presence-at-hand is given a definite character is the specialty of assertion."[31]

So, for Heidegger, Dasein's world has a complex of interrelated essential features, features that correlate with distinctive ways in which Dasein can engage with the things in its world, and with distinctive modes as which things in its world can be revealed. Dasein is constrained by social as well as biological normativity; the specific character of Dasein's world is not determined by the fact that the Dasein we are familiar with are biologically human, so no particular world in which Dasein finds itself is ever necessary for that Dasein; Dasein can engage with things as they are to be engaged with within particular cultural social contexts; Dasein can engage with things as belonging to non-biologically instrumental kinds; Dasein can interpretively make explicit the significance of things, that is, make explicit the roles that things are to occupy, that as which things are to be interpreted; Dasein can engage with things as having significance by and through making linguistic assertions regarding them; Dasein can engage with things as belonging to non-instrumental, non-teleological kinds. Heidegger's pragmatism is thus rooted in the social, rather than biological, normative evaluation of action.

4. Conclusion: Engaging With Beings As Beings

Heidegger's brand of pragmatism insists that only agents that engage with the world and with the things within it in the full-blown way in which Dasein does, engage with the things in the world *as* anything at all. It is for this reason that Heidegger holds that animal 'worlds' can only be understood as deficient modes of Dasein.

Heidegger is not the only recent philosopher with pragmatic tendencies to hold that only entities that are capable of language use are capable of genuine intentionality, of course. Davidson, Sellars, and Brandom all come immediately to mind. But Heidegger's reasons for holding this position are unique. Davidson, Sellars, and Brandom all offer versions of an argument that they inherit from Kant. They all hold, first, that it is impossible for an agent to engage with anything *as* something unless that agent can recognize their own mistakes *as* mistakes, second, that no agent can engage with mistakes as mistakes unless they are capable of

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[31] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 201; H. 158. I outline the steps in Heidegger's argument in somewhat more detail in Chapter 3 of *Heidegger's Pragmatism*.

second order intentionality and intend their own intentions as their own intentions, and, third, that no agent who is non-linguistic can be capable of second order intentions. Heidegger, on the other hand, is deeply skeptical of the ontological importance of the capacity for second order intentions, even denying that such reflective self-awareness is the primary way in which Dasein intends itself *as* itself. Rather, he holds that Dasein engages with itself *as* itself primarily in its engagement with the things within its world that matter to it, through the for-the-sake-of that orients that world. "The self is there for the Dasein itself without reflection and without inner perception, *before* all reflection…. In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and the things we take care of."[32]

So, whatever reasons Heidegger has for his insistence that only Dasein genuinely engages with things *as* something, they don't turn on the special role of self-directed intentionality. Instead, Heidegger's argument depends, first, upon the claim that only Dasein's form of being-in-the-world allows an agent to engage with things *as* things that *are*, or as *beings*, and, second, on the assertion that only agents who can engage with things as things that *are* are able to genuinely engage with things as anything at all. In conclusion, I will briefly discuss this line of argument.

Early and late, Heidegger always claimed that the most distinctive feature of Dasein is that only Dasein is capable of an understanding of *being*, and as such, only Dasein can engage with anything *as a being*. "*Understanding of Being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's Being.* Dasein is ontologically distinctive in that it *is* ontological."[33] At first sight there might seem something odd about the notion that an agent could engage with something as a being. After all, doesn't any engagement by an agent with a thing involve engaging with something that is, on pain of there not being anything for the agent to engage with? Isn't it the case that one can't treat a springbok as food, unless there is a springbok? From Heidegger's standpoint, (and plausibly, in fact,) this skeptical intuition is doubly misguided. First, it is essential to engagement as such that it doesn't follow from the fact that an entity is of some kind that when an agent engages with that thing it is engaged with *as* that kind of thing. An agent who is ignorant of the

[32] Heidegger, *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 159.
[33] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 32; H. 12.

game of lacrosse can engage with a ball as a ball, or a spherical thing, without intending it as a lacrosse ball, even if the ball *is* a lacrosse ball. So there is no obvious *a priori* reason that an agent couldn't engage with a thing that is, but not engage with it as a thing that is. But, second, it is of course also possible for an agent to intend something that is not, in the sense of something that is not actual, and in that sense 'engage with' that which is not. I can contemplate Hamlet, my granddaughter can want to see the tooth fairy, and I can believe my redeemer liveth, even if there is no Hamlet, tooth fairy, or redeemer. Indeed, as we are currently demonstrating, it is even possible to intend the tooth fairy, or Hamlet, or my redeemer, even though one knows full well that they do not exist, and so in that sense intend them not *as* actual beings at all, but rather as merely possible. But if it is possible to engage with something as not (actually) being, then perhaps it is not so strange to think that it is possible to engage with a thing *as* something that is. In that case, to engage with something as something that *is* involves engaging with it against the background of the possibility that it not be. And this is Heidegger's thought. Only Dasein is capable of engagement with the merely possible as not being, and engagement with the merely possible is a necessary condition on engaging with beings *as* beings, so only Dasein is capable of engaging with beings as being. And this possibility for Heidegger is in turn wrapped up with Dasein's most distinctive engagement; Dasein is the being that understands Being, or what it is to be.

It is at least plausible to maintain, as Heidegger does, that only entities with Dasein's kind of world can engage with possibilities as possibilities.[34] Our only example of Dasein is the human organism, our best example of engaging with possibilities as possibilities involves language use, and we only have experience of human language use. But Heidegger doesn't follow this argumentative strategy to get to the conclusion that only Dasein can engage with possibilities as possibilities, and thus engage with beings as beings. Perhaps surprisingly, he holds that Dasein's being-in-the-world is a necessary condition on language and assertion, and that Dasein can only engage with things linguistically because it has already engaged with beings

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[34] Despite Heidegger's and other's skepticism concerning the ability of animals to engage with possibilities as possibilities, and beings as beings, there is now much better evidence than there was in Heidegger's day that some animals do indeed have these capacities. If this is indeed true, then Heidegger would need to count such animals as Dasein.

as beings non-linguistically. "Assertion does not as such primarily unveil; instead, it is always, in its sense, already related to something antecedently given as unveiled….Only because the Dasein exists in the manner of being-in-the-world is some being unveiled along with the Dasein's existence in such a way that what is thus unveiled can become the possible object of an assertion."[35]

Instead, Heidegger's strategy here goes in a quite different direction. For Heidegger, the capacity to use language to represent beings as beings is itself made possible by a deeper ability of Dasein, the ability to engage with *oneself* as something that is. And this ability in turn depends for Heidegger on Dasein's capacity to engage with its own death. So as Heidegger understands it, it is this last ability, the ability of Dasein to engage with its own death by engaging with itself as possibly not being, that grounds the possibility of engaging with any being as something that is. And since only Dasein can engage with itself as possibly not being, only Dasein can engage with beings as beings. In slightly more detail, here is how the argument is supposed to go.

Famously, for Heidegger, Dasein is the being that relates itself to its own being. And, when it does so it engages with itself as a possibility. "That entity [Dasein] which in its Being has this very being as an issue, comports itself towards its Being as its ownmost possibility."[36] As this citation makes clear, on Heidegger's reading, Dasein's being is <u>problematic</u> for Dasein (Dasein's being is an issue for Dasein), and Dasein engages with its being <u>as a possibility</u>. The manner in which Dasein is supposed to engage with its own being as a problematic possibility is made evident in another famous aspect of Heidegger's early thought. For Heidegger, only Dasein can engage with itself as *dying*. 'Dying' is here used as a technical term in Heidegger's vocabulary, although its use is clearly related to the common use of the word. When it engages with itself as dying, Dasein engages with itself in terms of its 'ownmost possibility', the possibility of its not being, and when it engages with itself as possibly not being it engages with its own being as an issue, as problematic. So for Heidegger, the initial engagement with the possibility of non-being, and thus the possibility of engagement with things as beings, is the engagement of Dasein with the possibility of its own death. "Let '*dying*' stand for the *way of*

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[35] Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 208.
[36] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 68; H. 43.

Being in which Dasein is *towards* its own death."[37] "With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Its death is the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there. If Dasein stands before itself *as* this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being."[38]

As Heidegger sees it, Dasein's ability to engage with itself as a being that is, that is, as a being that is not not there, in turn depends upon the unique structure of Dasein's world. Dasein is that for-the-sake-of-which things in the world have the significance that they have, and are as they are. That is, Dasein is in every case a way of being that implicates things and other Dasein in patterns of activity. Because Dasein's world is structured in terms of social rather than biological normativity, however, no for-the-sake-of, no way of Dasein's being is anything other than contingent, and that contingency is evident in the various social roles and various social worlds that Dasein encounters in the course of being itself. Dasein thus always engages with itself as possibly not being as it is. By its very character as Dasein, Dasein's being is an issue for it, or problematic for it, because Dasein always engages with itself as possibly not being there. And, because the for-the-sake-of that Dasein is is also that in terms of which things have their significance, the problematic character of Dasein's being extends to the problematic character of the being of other entities. Things have their significance only in light of a for-the-sake-of, but any for-the-sake-of is engaged by Dasein as possibly not being, so the significance of every thing is engaged by Dasein as possibly not being. And these possibilities in turn allow for the possibility of engaging with the things that in fact *are*, as things that are, as *entities*, as *beings.*[39]

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[37] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 291; H. 247.

[38] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 294; H. 250.

[39] As should be obvious, as presented here there is a certain slippage in Heidegger's argument between two senses of 'to be', and two senses of 'not being'. That slippage is roughly between what is usually characterized as 'essence' and what is usually characterized as 'existence'. It would seem to be one thing to engage with oneself, or any other thing, as not being as one in fact is, and another thing to engage with oneself or any other thing as not being at all. Early Heidegger has fascinating things to say about this issue, and how it relates to the possibility of Dasein intending beings as beings, but a consideration of that discussion here would take us too far afield.

This conclusion leaves the issue between Heidegger and naturalistic pragmatism unresolved, however. For the naturalistic pragmatist, all meaning, all content, all engagement with things as this or that is impossible except for the ability of organisms to utilize their environment, in accordance with their interests, as a resource in order to realize their ends. For this kind of pragmatism, organic activity is both the foundation for and the necessary condition on all kinds of action, and as such, the foundation for and necessary condition on all types of intentionality and intensionality. Heidegger, on the other hand, holds that Dasein is no mere rational animal. As such, he holds that the *as* structure of meaning first enters the world with the social normativity characteristic of Dasein's way of being, which, for Heidegger, is no mere form of life. To get to Heidegger's conclusion, that without Dasein's way of being-in-the-world no mere organic activity can count as an engagement with anything *as* something, one would need an additional argument. The premise for this argument would need to be the preliminary conclusion we have now reached, that only Dasein is capable of engaging with beings *as* beings. It is anything but obvious, however, how this premise leads to Heidegger's claim that engagement with the entities within the world as this or that is the exclusive preserve of Dasein. And, to be honest, it is unclear to me that Heidegger ever provides the necessary argument. Since the capacity to engage with beings as entities, as things that *are*, correlates with the ability to engage with non-beings *as* mere possibilities, and this ability in turn correlates with the capacity to judge, there is no question that the ability to engage with beings as beings is qualitatively different from any kind of merely organic engagement. And this qualitative difference arguably might be thought to license the decision to terminologically restrict the use of intensional and intentional discourse to the description of Dasein and their activities. But, as Heidegger recognizes, such a terminological decision doesn't relieve one of the burden of coming up with some way of appreciating and accounting for the evident similarities between Daseins' engagement with the things in their world and organisms' engagement with the things in their environment. And, far more importantly, no mere terminological fiat can decide the real issue between naturalistic and Heideggerean forms of pragmatism. Is the Daseinish form of engagement with the world a *sui generis* way of being that uniquely unveils things as this or that by unveiling them as things that are, or is it merely a very distinctive *form of life*?