Is Heidegger's "Turn" a Realist Project?

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Abstract

In this essay I consider the relationship between Heidegger's famous "turn" (*Kehre*) and realism. I begin with Heidegger's critique of the problem of an external world, and I describe how this critique anticipates New Realism. I then provide a reconstruction of Heidegger's self-critique of *Being and Time*, showing how this work (written before the turn) exhibits a higher-order anti-realism. Next, I show how Heidegger's turn is motivated by the inadequacy of this earlier anti-realism. In his philosophy of the event he moves towards a realist ontology by developing concepts such as "destiny" (*Geschick*), which he understands to be independent of human attitudes. Nevertheless, Heidegger ultimately falls back into an anti-realism, because Being still remains dependent upon the involvement of human beings. I therefore conclude this essay by briefly arguing for my own version of New Realism, according to which objects are meaningful in a way that is independent of our attitudes towards them.

Keywords: Heidegger, New Realism, turn, realism, anti-realism, objects, fields of sense

The theme from *Being and Time* that is probably the most influential in today's epistemology is Heidegger's attempt to avoid a certain conception of the problem of knowledge – a conception that continues to be pernicious. This conception identifies the problem of knowledge with the problem of an

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external world.[1] As is well known, Heidegger – particularly in §§ 19-21 and 43-44 – calls into question the set of premises that in one form or another leads to formulating the problem of an external world. The basic idea is familiar to every reader of Heidegger: the problem of an external world is the result of impermissibly "skipping over" the genuine problem of the world, or the world phenomenon.[2] This skipping-over consists in the fact that Dasein tends to overlook the everyday conditions under which it is embedded in certain relations. These relations are what "Being in the world" – or what we might call "life" – consists in. Among these conditions is the fact that things we "handle" or work with are individuated by being integrated into our projected life plans. The famous hammer is a hammer because it occupies a certain place in the life of a craftsman, for instance. The blinker, in turn, obtains its function in road traffic. We regulate traffic by developing rules that are compatible with the plurality of life plans – plans that coexist and sometimes rival each other (unfortunately, at this point Heidegger's analysis neglects the social sphere).

Heidegger deftly calls into question the set of premises underlying the problem of an external world, and he shows that the problem is unnatural in this sense: the premises are not unavoidable when describing our capacity to orient ourselves in an environment whose structure is already present before us. The problem of an external world is the result of a biased description of our Being-in-the-world – a description that is not self-evident or in any way natural. The problem arises as the result of a confusion of two circumstances. First, there is the circumstance that we always already find certain structural properties before us, in which we orient ourselves. This circumstance is confused with a second circumstance, viz. that there is a huge, anonymous external world, which we enter through birth and leave through death. This confusion is based on the fact that an "existential", i.e. a structural property of ourselves, is identified with a category, i.e. with a structural property of essentially inanimate things that are merely present before us. In *An den Grenzen der Erkenntnistheorie* I designated the conception that lies at the basis of this world view a "naïve ontology of individual things" (*naive*

Einzeldingontologie) which fundamentally assumes that "the world" is a gigantic container filled with individual things. In particular, in this conception something is considered to be an "individual thing" if beings with beliefs have not made any contribution to its individuation.[3] Accordingly, let us give the name "old realism" to the thesis (1) that "the world" is primarily "the external world," and (2) that this consists in individual things that are already individualized, independent of any observer. The problem of an external world, as it arises in the old realism, takes as its starting point the assumption that the world is preeminently the world without any observers, thus raising the question of what the conditions of the possibility are for us to become observers in such a world.

This division of labor – world without observers vs. world of observers – is circumvented by Heidegger on different levels. In my view, two things should be emphasized here. The first is Heidegger's determination of the observer as Dasein, which leads to an integration of the observer into his seemingly anonymous environment. Second, it is necessary to keep in mind that this leads to construing the concept of world in another way. For the "external world" can no longer function as an anchor for our realistic intuition that we find things already there before us. For we now understand that we find ourselves and the environment that we determine already there before us with the same right as we find the sun, moon, and stars. If the world is not identical with the world without observers but includes us as participants, the question arises whether (and under what conditions) the isolation of a domain essentially independent of observers (the external world) is at all justified. The raising of this question is evidence against the naturalness of the problem of an external world. In other words, it is evidence that this problem has to do with an artifact of a certain theoretical construction in philosophy.[4]

With this critique Heidegger had – among other things – anticipated a decisive turn in the post-war discussion of realism – a turn that is usually associated with Michael Dummett.[5] This turn consists in having recognized that what the "old realism" wished to explain was the preexistence of structures. However, the universal preexistence or precedence of structures

cannot at first glance be reduced to the involvement of a certain type of structure. Realism is a topically-neutral or universal assumption – the assumption that there are some structures whose individuation is not dependent on our involvement: the moon would still be smaller than the sun, even if no one had articulated this fact – be it in a silent judgment, in an explicit assertion, or as a perspectively colored mental representation; there would still be more than one natural number between 2 and 5, even if no one had counted; killing would still be bad, even if this had not occurred to us, and so forth. Since realism is concerned with the individuation of structures which are independent of any human involvement, the current debate has revolved around new forms of "structural realism" (Sider 2012) or "structuralism" (Chalmers 2012). However, in the metaphysics of contemporary analytical philosophy, realism suffers from the fact that it is not topically-neutral in a sufficient and unprejudiced way. It doesn't question the central assumption of an (at least implicit) physicalism or naturalism. This is the assumption that existence can be reduced to the fact that in science – or in the best of all sciences – preexisting structures have to be supposed.[6]

It is of course possible to argue which structures should be described in a way that we can claim a realism with respect to these structures. And exactly at this point, Heidegger can help us. In particular, Heidegger has shown that we cannot count on a grounding external world, that already consists in individuated objects, to which we just need to add values or numbers.[7] Heidegger ingeniously unmasks the unhappy consciousness that remains convinced that most parts of the human world (institutions, feelings, works of art, laws, friendships, ideologies, and such) have to be eliminated ontologically or have to be located in the brain. In particular, we can learn from Heidegger that the notion of the universe as a "cold home", as Wolfram Hogrebe recently has put it (Hogrebe 2009, 40), still entails the concept of a 'home'. When humankind pictures its dwelling place as a mindless and self-less sphere "on [which] a mouldy film has produced living and knowing beings" (Schopenhauer 1966, 3), this is not a neutral

observation or statement of fact, but a judgment from a certain perspective, which can be disputed.

This nihilist standpoint and self-description is not only full of presuppositions, but, on closer inspection, erroneous in many respects. Let's follow Heidegger one more step: the typical version of naturalism, which is based on a naïve ontology of individual things, overlooks the fact that it is made by human beings. It depends on projecting a property we encounter in dealing with things onto objects that are independent of an observer – namely the property of being able to break down or go to pieces. If things break down they attract our attention in multiple ways – as Heidegger has shown in his impressive analyses (GA 2, § 16, 97-101; Heidegger 2010b, 72-75). The naïve ontology of individual things conceives the object as something that has gone to pieces. Thus it is hardly surprising that everything should supposedly consist in elementary particles, including the moon, dinosaurs, Willy Brandt and the Chinese cultural revolution – simply everything.[8]

As mentioned above, from all that has been said, one should not draw the conclusion that the concept of realism is over and done. On the contrary, we learn from *Being and Time* the lesson that realism should not result in privileging certain structures over others, especially not those structures that tacitly are individuated with our involvement. The key point is to understand that the very idea of a thoroughly individualized external world, which essentially lacks observers, can only arise by *avoiding* observers. It is as if we try not to look at any of the things, and then we ask ourselves what those things are like. Heidegger convincingly leaves behind the debate about the proverbial tree that falls in the forest without anyone hearing or observing it – the debate that led to the split between Berkeleyan idealism and the realism displayed in the naïve ontology of individual things. The decisive question of realism is not whether a tree falls unobserved, or whether an unobserved atom decomposes. Above all, the relevant question is this: under what conditions can the structures of our involvement be just as "real" or "objective" as the falling tree? In other words, the problem of realism is universal; in particular, it also applies to the self-description of its own experimental design. What are

the conditions for the structures of our universal analysis of structures such that we discover them? Under what conditions does it make sense to conceive the structures as emerging spontaneously? The problem of realism thereby places itself on a higher level in its self-description – just as it does in every other region of objects that is postulated or presented systematically. What I call "New Realism" is the endeavor to describe the problem of realism under such conditions of self-application and reflection (cf. Ferraris 2012). In contrast to the "old realism," New Realism includes and integrates the conditions of its own truth within the region of what is real. The researcher in New Realism investigates what is real with respect to the conditions under which the real can appear perspectively. For this reason, the problem of appearing or "phenomenalizing" is also a central concern of New Realism. This is the problem of discerning the conditions under which things in themselves can be grasped by observers – things which are also individualized without human involvement. If the things are grasped by observers – that is, if they are somehow known, they appear under certain conditions, which are in part independent of human involvement.

In what follows I would like to pursue the question of whether Heidegger is able to ground the "turn" as a realist project. To do this I will first (1.) sketch a systematic reconstruction of Heidegger's self-critique with respect to *Being and Time*. Among other things, this self-critique in my view validates the claim that Heidegger's first major work ultimately fails because of its higher-order anti-realism. This anti-realism lies in the fact that the structures that Heidegger investigates are too closely tied to the investigation of structures in a certain mode (the mode of authenticity), which has to be conjured up spontaneously in the act of a free-floating creativity. Ultimately, there is no reason why one resolves to be authentic; one does this in the act of self-assertion, and Heidegger later views this self-assertion as the source of the forgetfulness of Being. The logical form of self-assertion, which is determined by the theoretical construction in *Being and Time*, rubs off on the objects, which are primarily presented as objectively present and thus as capable of being exploited. The theoretical set-up of

his work thus proves to be *Gestell* in the sense that Heidegger will later work out.[9]

Subsequently (2.), I will argue that Heidegger never fully succeeded in putting into operation a realist level of analysis which would include an unproblematic realism on the level of individual things and support his theoretical system as a whole. Again and again, he performs maneuvers of a higher-order anti-realism. By this I mean that a higher-order anti-realism trickles down to lower levels. (One of the features of this anti-realism is that Being cannot dispense with Dasein, even if they need each other in the event.) If the objectivity of the theoretical level, on which objects (or things) are discussed, is explained in an anti-realist way, this rubs off on the objects (or things).[10] As a consequence, the independence of things is never truly seen: even in his late philosophy the 'thing' is embedded in a project and never fully freed. The goal of releasement (*Gelassenheit*) is never fully reached, simply because the "realm of all realms" (*Bereich der Bereiche*)[11] or "open-region" (*Gegnet*)[12] rely on us as occurring in them. Ultimately, there is too much movement and – as it were – not enough space.

Finally (3.), I will argue – in all brevity – for a New Realism in terms of sense, according to which Being has a sense even in a world without observers. Sense – even Heideggerian "unconcealment" – does not need a "shepherd" in order to *be*. Objects appear even without being attended to. Hence, I also argue against the main assumption of Deleuze's *Logic of Sense* that sense as such is always produced.[13] Some sense might depend on our involvement to be brought forth; but it is impossible that sense as such evolves from a senseless ground. This allows the presumption of an already existing sense, which instead of being produced by us can be brought to appearance by our experience of sense.

1. Anti-realism in *Being and Time*

In the introduction of this essay I defined realism as the topically-neutral or general assumption that there are some structures which do not depend on our involvement for their

individuation. Consequently, I understand "anti-realism" to be the negation of this thesis, i.e. the assumption that there are some structures that depend on our involvement. Now, one certainly has to acknowledge that these two assumptions do not contradict each other, as long as they are restricted locally. It is possible to be a realist concerning celestial bodies, but an antirealist concerning the taste of wine.[14] One can then draw consequences from this – e.g. the widespread opinion that beliefs about celestial bodies are objective, whereas beliefs about wine are subjective – whatever that is supposed to mean. Heidegger, however, is more ambitious. This can clearly be seen in his concept of "project" (*Entwurf*) in *Being and Time* as well as in his later work. Heidegger does not ask the question if certain regions of objects entail individual beings which are independent of our involvement: from his point of view there are only regions of objects insofar as they are embedded in a context of projects. According to the "history of Being" (*Seinsgeschichte*) – which is already implied in *Being and Time* – a plurality of regions of objects can exist only if it is located in a global projection.

For my purpose it is very important that Heidegger explicitly says the "in-itself" of objects is "handiness" (*Zuhandenheit*), whereas "objective presence" (*Vorhandenheit*) is a deficient or secondary mode.[15] I understand this as follows: The hammer as such is there to take care of this or that; the moon as such is there to be looked at, travelled to, worshipped, or despised ("It is just a stone!"). To Heidegger the assumption that hammer and moon are "always already there anyway" – as the exponents of the idea of the "absolute conception of reality" would put it – is an incorrect generalization of a rare experience, namely the experience of a breakdown of the context objects are embedded in.[16]

Above I aligned myself with Heidegger's position here, but with a tacit caveat. In my opinion, this position needs a certain adjustment. Heidegger assumes that things generally exist in a context (that of the world) only if this context is projected by beings like us. Thus, the belief that the general context of all things is to be found in "objective presence" appears as a projection of our own death (the breakdown of meaningfulness)

onto the world as a whole. Without Dasein there is no world: "Insofar as Dasein temporalizes itself, a world *is*, too. […] The world is neither objectively present nor at hand, but temporalizes itself in temporality. It 'is' 'there' together with the outside-itself of the ecstasies. If no Dasein exists, no world is 'there" either.' (Heidegger 2010b, 348; GA 2, 483).

"Beings as a whole", as Heidegger writes in other passages, exists just for Dasein – or possibly even due to Dasein.[17] To be sure, he later famously concedes that animals have some small piece of the pie as well – they are not "worldless", but rather "poor in world" (*weltarm*) (Heidegger 1995, § 42, 177; GA 29/30, 263). Stones remain worldless, though. Things that are just mutely present belong to the world only because of us, who bring forth the world by appearing in it. This is evidence of a residual Kantianism, which Heidegger never really shakes off. His position can be understood as a trimmed-down version of Kant's notion of the world as a regulative idea – an idea that is based on our projection, which according to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* consists primarily in judgment and knowledge of the world. As is well known, Heidegger does not accept the view that Dasein has to be understood as theoretical subject of cognition and knowledge. He disagrees with Kant's philosophical project, but he keeps the concept of projection (*Entwurf*). Heidegger conceives the notion of us as projecting beings in general, i.e. beings that are defined by the fact that they are responsible for their "projects". We continually make assumptions about the world as a whole. Heidegger does not just add another assumption on the same level, but he climbs the ladder of reflection upwards and addresses the fact that we are making such assumptions. Since he conceives us as projecting beings in general, *Being and Time* is different in principle from a differential anthropology: Heidegger does not conceive the human being as an "animal with a special ability" (Heidegger 2010b, § 10, 44-49; GA 2, 61-67).

Being and Time is a phenomenological work, and this means that it answers the question, under what conditions something can appear. In Heidegger's understanding these conditions cannot be fulfilled without our involvement; in fact,

they are located precisely in our involvement. However, this of course does not entail that they are necessarily transparent to us in the act of being involved. Recently, Quentin Meillassoux forcefully repeated an objection that has already been made by Adorno and Derrida, according to which phenomenology is prone to anti-realism on methodological grounds (Meillassoux 2008).[18] In addition, Meillassoux makes the highly problematic assumption that phenomenological anti-realism assumes the more specific form of "correlationism", by which he means that "we only ever have access to a correlation of thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other." (Meillassoux 2008, 5).

In fact, this description does not apply to Heidegger – though it may apply to Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, depending on its interpretation. In the strict sense, Meillassoux's notion of correlationism is even incoherent.[19] When we have access to a relation, we *ipso facto* have access to both *relata* that are in the relationship. Having access to a relation, even if it is unavoidable on epistemic grounds, implies having access to the *relata* – if only under the conditions of the description that only applies to them because they are in this relation. If I know that Wolfram is taller than Fernando, I know something about both of them – Wolfram and Fernando – even if I might not know anything else about them or if I cannot know anything else about them. At best what Meillassoux is accomplishing is a criticism of the anti-realist usurping of objects (of "Being") by thinking (language, Dasein, subject, logic, communication, mental representation, etc.). However, this kind of usurping is exactly what Heidegger is opposed to. He attempts to develop a phenomenology that does not entail any comprehensive view about the nature of our access to the world – this way he avoids the notion of a gap between our access to the world and the objects and avoids the concept of a "boundary […] that completely separates them" (Hegel 1977, 46). Heidegger's anti-skeptical strategy in *Being and Time* consists precisely in avoiding what Meillassoux calls 'correlationism'. Heidegger does this by showing that objects can appear only if we handle them, i.e. only if they are in a real relationship with us, which cannot be reduced to the fact that

they need to be filtered through a medium. Heidegger denies the view that we rely on a medium of interpretation to come into contact with objects (this is something Hegel already made very clear).[20] "Handiness" is not a medium, but a way in which objects can appear. It is not an interpretation of a purely existing world order that is in itself meaningless. Or more precisely, it has to be understood as an interpretation with the same right and for the same reasons as objective presence has to be. The assumption of a purely pre-existing, *res extensa*-like world order, which we transform by handling objects in our life-world, is at best one possible interpretation among many other interpretations that deal with the fact that we find ourselves in a life-world in which things are "first and foremost" appearing as "at hand" (*zuhanden*).[21]

And yet the conception of *Being and Time* remains prone to anti-realism, which Heidegger acknowledges in his later self-criticism. One of his own motives for turning away from *Being and Time* in favor of a realist theory is the fact that his description of the "work-world" in *Being and Time* can be read as a theory of modernity. It is no coincidence that Heidegger has difficulty addressing the concept of "primitive" or "mythical Dasein" in several passages (he explicitly refers to it in section 11).[22] The problem consists simply in the fact that the primacy of handiness depends on a historically-situated understanding of Being. This creates a tension with the claimed apriorism of the work. In later works Heidegger employs the understanding of Being from *Being and Time* for a self-description of modernity in the form of "technology". *Being and Time* does not describe the "substance of human being" (Heidegger 2010b, 300; GA 2, 416), which is something Heidegger explicitly claims to do towards the end of his treatise; at best it describes the substance of modern human beings, insofar as they shape their unobtrusive, yet useful environment and conceive it as something that has to be designed according to human purposes.

This notion is completely consistent with today's "Apple-world", the world of iGadgets, as I like to call it. In this world we constantly work with things that are determined by their handiness; they exist only in the mode of "handiness". Once

they have weaknesses and become conspicuous, the next iGadget is available on the market, and will cover up the "objective presence". "Handiness" as such is not necessarily connected to a natural everyday life; it can carry all the signs of alienation with it, which Heidegger describes in his analyses of fallenness. However, if Dasein as such opens up the world primarily through the "handiness" of objects, and if all objects are first and foremost conceived as equipment, it becomes impossible to leave them be. Thus, the critical distance that phenomenological analysis claims for itself becomes impossible: if objects are conceived as equipment, their mode of existence cannot be observed neutrally; they are already "at hand".

Consequently, Heidegger replaces this resolute decision for one mode of existence with the methodological concept of "releasement" (Heidegger 1966, 43-57; GA 16, 517-529). Moreover, it is no coincidence that he replaces equipment with the "thing" and gives it a mythical flavor. He had realized that *Being and Time* entails an anachronistic retrojection of modern life conditions; it applies a notion of modern everydayness to history as a whole. At this point, Dasein is not yet conceived historically, even if it interprets itself by means of a narrative, or in historical dimensions. Dasein itself remains historically invariant. This historical invariance is an inheritance of transcendental philosophy, to which *Being and Time* owes important fundamental ideas.[23] What transcendental philosophy continues to exclude is an event (*Ereignis*) that would fundamentally call into question the projecting-structure of Dasein and allow it to appear as variable and contingent. There is no way of escaping from modernity, if Dasein exhibits an invariable structure, and this invariable structure has above all the consequence that all things appear to us as equipment – or even should appear as equipment. *Being and Time* remains a modern project, an affirmation of a historically contingent structure. To be sure, Heidegger acknowledges this contingency in his short discussion of mythical Dasein, but he doesn't really have any room for it due to the transcendental character of the concept of Dasein.

The assumption that the world appears or "worlds" only when Dasein brings forth itself amounts to a higher-level anti-

realism, which sounds suspiciously like what Meillassoux labels as correlationism. But Meillassoux's label does not completely fit here, because "world" in *Being and Time* is the name for a "totality of relevance" (*Bewandtnisganzheit*) – that is, it is a name for the fact that all objects appear in a definite light, and this definiteness of their appearance is due to the respective project of an individual Dasein in connection with the totality of epochal projects. (Heidegger wishes to resolve this tension in favor of the epochal.) Nevertheless, Heidegger still adopts an ontological anti-realism. Heidegger's anti-realism here consists in the thesis that the ontological concepts that he employs are structured in a way that is dependent upon human involvement. For Heidegger, what ontology one adopts depends on "what kind of a human being one is," in the language of the much-cited line from Fichte.[24] The problem with this is that one then has to allow for conditional statements that claim that nothing (or more precisely, no one) would exist, if we hadn't discerned this state of affairs – or even that objects would not be connected if we hadn't endowed them with connections. Implicitly an ontology of individual things is thereby smuggled in, since it now looks as if before the arrival of Dasein (and thus the "substance of human being") individual things were present only in an isolated fashion, and only afterward do they appear to be connected to one another. Underhandedly, Heidegger adopts the thesis that there are atomistic objects without relations, and that through our arrival these objects become embedded in relations and thereby in facts – insofar as facts produce relations between objects.

Here basic ontological concepts, which we use to present any kind of connection in which objects appear, are only applicable as a result of our contributing to them. But this amounts to introducing ontological structures *ex nihilo*. It is precisely this element left over from the traditional theology of creation that Heidegger later recognizes in his original project. This recognition leads to his endeavor to undermine onto-theology and the accompanying view that the whole of beings must be interpreted as created (*creatum*). Against this background, one can interpret the turn as an attempt to accomplish a realist project: Heidegger attempts to carry out a

program that consists in understanding ontological structures in such a way that they are 1) variable and contingent and 2) independent of our involvement. The historicity of Dasein is transformed into a destiny (*Geschick*) independent of our involvement, though this destiny remains tied to Dasein, without which destiny would not come to appearance.

2. The Turn as Realist Project

The concept of "turn" (*Kehre*) in Heidegger has several different functions. In my view, the term primarily designates the possibility of "change in Being" (*Wandel im Sein*) (Heidegger 2012a, 65; GA 79, 69). In the period after *Being and Time* that is sometimes called "the turn", Heidegger reconsiders the "apriorism" that he had previously regarded as the defining feature of scientific philosophy as such.[25] In particular, this means that he departs from the notion that Being is an invariant structure that depends on our understanding of Being in such a way that we bring forth this structure by understanding it – i.e. in a way that depends on our involvement. In other words, the turn is Heidegger's attempt at a realist project, which describes ontological structures as genuinely independent of our contribution, even if they do not transcend our contribution. This becomes clear in passages like the following, which can be viewed as linking up with Platonism below the surface:

> Man can, indeed, conceive, fashion, and carry through this or that in one way or another. But man does not have control over unconcealment itself, in which at any given time the real shows itself or withdraws. The fact that the real has been showing itself in the light of Ideas ever since the time of Plato, Plato did not bring about. The thinker only responded to what addressed itself to him." (Heidegger 1977b, 299, GA 7, 18)

Here Heidegger suggests a ground-breaking analogy. Plato affirms the pre-existence of the ideas, which make possible our involvement with objects but are not themselves dependent on our contributions. With the pre-existence of the

ideas Plato ultimately describes his own mode of philosophizing and not just a region of his theory. By describing the ideas, Plato refers indirectly to the realist presupposition of philosophical descriptions – namely, that philosophical descriptions are not constructions. (Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger also argues against viewing philosophical descriptions as constructions.[26]) Philosophical concepts would be constructed if we were to bring them forth without having to worry about their having an independent reality. Heidegger assumes just such a creation *ex nihilo* in his concept of "resoluteness" (*Entschlossenheit*), which is an attitude that one has to have so that one can philosophize creatively. In contrast, "the they" (*das Man*) refers to the mere retelling of historically pre-existing theoretical material. Such a "retelling" is unfortunately widespread throughout all historical periods and in all areas of the academic discipline called "philosophy." (Today in Germany this mostly takes the form of reporting pro- and contra-arguments that are gleaned from English-language essays.)

Now Heidegger poses once again the question: under what conditions can basic ontological concepts touch a reality that exists independent of our involvement? He answers this question with his theory of truth as unconcealment: "But the unconcealment itself, within which ordering unfolds, is never a human handiwork, any more than is the realm man traverses every time he as a subject relates to an object." (Heidegger 1977b, 300, GA 7, 19).

In this reflection we can see the following argument. Truth-apt statements, and thus true or false references to objects, imply that there is a region of objects to which they refer. For example, beliefs about elementary particles imply that there is a region in which these appear, and this region is associated with a methodologically distinct discipline – in this case, nuclear physics. If we can make a discovery in this region, we are justified in assuming that something or other is really the case in this region. Let's use the word "facts" to refer to truths about objects. Something that is true about atoms is that they consist of several elementary particles. This truth is neither an atom nor an elementary particle but rather a fact

that links these objects together. Objects are embedded in facts, and facts are again divided into different regions of objects (the last point is a thought that runs through Heidegger's entire corpus[27]). We can only have truth-apt (in Heidegger's language: "correct") beliefs if we presuppose that there are regions of objects with factual structures. Furthermore, we have to assume that these areas are not completely closed off to us; otherwise our capacity for truth would "stop anywhere short of the fact", as McDowell has aptly stated (McDowell 2000, 29). We would also not be capable of truth if none of our beliefs could reach the structures that our beliefs are supposed to be about. From this brief analysis of our capacity for truth and the emphasis on a certain "realist platitude" (Koch 2006, 54f.), it is clear that not all objects can be completely withdrawn from us. For we know the conditions for their being minimally accessible to us, i.e. as objects of truth-apt reference. The region of these conditions is not open to debate in the same way as individual claims to knowledge or truth. And Heidegger calls this region "Being" (among other things). Being is not open to debate in the same way as individual truth claims. Consequently, we have to assume a different attitude toward Being than the one we assume in the case of our usual, fallible claims to knowledge.

Now the question is: how can this attitude be described without making Being or truth in the sense of unconcealment dependent on our involvement? For it looks as if Being is a presupposition of our fallible reference to objects and facts. Then one could again think that Being is dependent upon us – although if we consider it precisely, this conclusion does not follow. In a (not completely inconspicuous) reference to the late Schelling, Heidegger expresses this as the suspicion that the human being can presume to be "master of Being"[28] – a suspicion that has hidden within itself the particular danger that the human being misunderstands himself as "lord of the earth." (Heidegger 1977b, 308; GA 7, 28). "In this way the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself" (Heidegger 1977b, 308; GA 7, 28).

With the turn Heidegger moves away from this way of thinking. For the turn consists in grounding our understanding of Being in a realist manner. For this purpose Heidegger introduces the concept of destiny (*Geschick*), which simply means that we each find ourselves in what is ultimately a completely groundless and thus arbitrary understanding of Being, which is simply *there*. The event (*Ereignis*) has no source, no agent – this is Heidegger's interpretation of the death of God. For this reason he insists on the history of the concept of *causa*, which, like the word *casus*, he derives from *cadere* (Heidegger 1977b, 290; GA 7, 10). With this background in mind, we can see that it is absurd when Meillassoux presents his own thinking of chance and his renunciation of the principle of sufficient reason as a critique of Heidegger. This is absurd because Meillassoux's basic ideas in *After Finitude* can be understood as a well-grounded interpretation of Heidegger himself. Ultimately, what Meillassoux does is employ Heidegger's concept of the "event" for understanding the physical universe and thereby extend it to the non-human, inanimate part of nature. This cannot be understood as a criticism of Heidegger, especially since Heidegger – in dialogue with Heisenberg – shows in his works on the principle of sufficient reason that every understanding of Being is based on contingency. He thereby pursues the intention to keep open the "possibility of a turn" (Heidegger 2012a, 67; GA 79, 71). If the forgetfulness of Being is just a contingent, accidental epoch of the history of Being, a contingent interpretation of beings as a whole, that has a long line of antecedents, but ultimately became what it is only in modernity in the seventeenth century, then we can hope for another coincidence (*Zufall*). In Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy* this other coincidence is called the "last god" – this philosophy of future is concerned with "what will be" (Heidegger 2012a, 72; GA 79, 77) and thus undeniably echoes the late Schelling.[29]

Heidegger presents the "turn" as a well-founded supposition: "If positionality is an essential destiny of beyng itself, then we may suppose that, as one essential way of beyng among others, positionality changes." (Heidegger 2012a, 64; GA 79, 68). Paradoxically, this supposition is grounded in the fact

that our understanding of Being is ultimately groundless. But what does this mean? And how can we distinguish this state of having no reason or being groundless from the arbitrariness of an anti-realist conception?

In my reading, the groundlessness Heidegger insists on can be interpreted as the realist motive of the turn. Nowadays, when thinking about the justification of philosophical theories, it is common to assume that we can increase the validity of our beliefs or their probability of being true by participating in the "game of giving and asking for reasons". But one can immediately raise the simple objection that no inference or inferential network can guarantee that one's premises are true. When the truth of the premises is guaranteed inferentially, this is always tautological – merely a matter of truth-preservation. In order to break out of the tautological effectiveness of an argument, some of the premises have to have a truth that depends on conditions of a non-inferential nature. Since the grounds or reasons for an argument's conclusion consist in the premises plus a mode of inference, we can assemble as many grounds as we want without ever ensuring that our beliefs are true – or even probably true (in an objective sense). At best we can work on optimizing the process by which we hold something to be true, but at any time this could completely miss the mark due to the obvious limitations of the information we are able to process (a finite corner of the infinite). For this reason, the game of giving and asking for reasons stands in contrast to the concept of truth, which Brandom would like to get rid of (following his teacher, Rorty: cf. Brandom 2009, 156-177). Thus, whether a philosophical theory proves to be true depends only partially on the theory itself. In particular, every theory, no matter how complex, is extremely limited when measured against the totality of what is possible, and in this sense every theory is also finite. For this reason, it always remains to a certain extent outside our reach to find which mechanisms of selection will lead to the acceptance of a certain set of premises, since we obviously cannot ground everything. In this sense it is true that "every way of revealing" is "ordaining of destining" (Heidegger 1977b, 306; GA 7, 25).

Every philosophical theory makes use of a projection that offers a certain overview of the whole – an attitude (*Haltung*) that Heidegger designates as "insight" (*Einblick*). This is even true for a theory concerning the grounding of philosophical theories, which understands grounding in inferential terms. Even such a theory presupposes an "unconcealment" "in which everything that is shows itself at any given time" (Heidegger 1977b, 307; GA 7 27). Here we can pose the question: what are the conditions for taking Heidegger's contribution as an impetus for an ontological realism? If one doesn't succeed in making an ontological realism plausible (or even grounding it), everything that exists is in danger of becoming our own "machination" (*Machenschaft*). If the basic ontological concepts apply to things *only* if there are beings like us who spontaneously produce these concepts through their involvement, then connections between things (and thus facts) only exist by means of our contribution. Ontological anti-realism thus trickles down from the level of philosophical theory to the level of objects.

By this I mean the following. If there were only regions of objects and facts insofar as we distinguish them, then there would be no facts if there were no beings like us. Therefore, it would not be a fact that the moon is smaller than the earth if there were no beings like us. The objects (those things that *are*) would be without any connections (without Being). From this it immediately follows that all connections that we now discern turn into constructive hallucinations – a piece of nonsense, that once again appears all too plausible in a time of neuroconstructivism.[30] Heidegger's concept of *Gestell* can also be interpreted as a constructivism that regards all truth conditions as internally generated hallucinations or illusions, which alight upon free-floating objects.

At the end of the day, however, Heidegger does not succeed in holding the realist line that he conceives with the turn, since he still wants to give the human being a special status. This special status consists in the fact that the human being proceeds with an understanding of Being and can make this understanding explicit. To the extent this is made explicit, it can be debated – and this is what Heidegger himself intended

in order to oppose technology's projection of Being with the "possibility of another Being," as Schelling named it.[31] Heidegger writes explicitly that "the essence of Beyng" needs "the human being" "in order to remain guarded in the midst of beings as being, and thus needs it in order to essence as beyng" (Heidegger 2012a, 65; GA 79, 69). In this Heidegger remains bound to the analysis of apophantic *logos* from *Being and Time*. In addition, he assumes that beings can be interpreted or appear under definite descriptions *only* if they are considered *as* this or that. He thereby overlooks the possibility of a realist ontology of sense.[32] For Heidegger, there appears to be a sense of Being only if we involve ourselves with it. For this reason, the turn remains dependent upon the human being in order for it to take place: "The great essence of the human lies in its belonging to the essence of being. It is needed by the essence of being so as to guard it in its truth." (Heidegger 2012a, 66; GA 79, 70)

3. Towards a New Realism of Sense

Although space does not permit me to develop all the details, I would like to end with the claim that Heidegger overlooked the option of admitting sense that is independent of our contribution. As Jens Rometsch has convincingly shown, Heidegger tends to assume a previous (or "ancestral," as Meillassoux would put it) concealment of unconcealment, and this assumption is insufficiently grounded.[33] Heidegger situates unconcealment exclusively with human beings. But this corresponds to the modern scientific view of the world as an essentially inanimate, nakedly extended and non-transparent universe "in itself," in which at some point our capacity for truth suddenly appears – and with it, sense. One can presume that this also lies behind Heidegger's lightning metaphor, though the metaphor recedes in the very-late Heidegger in favor of an experiment with a resting openness.[34] Suddenly and without any reason the light comes on, or – to be more precise – suddenly and without reason the clearing opens up, i.e. the region of our capacity for truth, the ability to be true or false. But here arises the problem of the integration of our capacity

for truth into our environment in a way that already presupposes a lot.

On the contrary, I hold the view that the object in itself appears – in all relevant ways we can make sense of the expression "in itself". In conclusion, let me explain the basic idea that motivates my view. By "existence" I understand the fact that something appears in a field of sense. "Field of sense" is the name by which I designate a region of objects that is different from other regions of objects. The sense of a region of objects is the reason for its individuation; it distinguishes one region from another. Drawing on Frege, I understand by "sense" (*Sinn*) an objective mode of presentation of objects. That Vesuvius – seen from Naples – looks one way or another, or that a blue cube in a certain light looks green, is just as objective as Vesuvius or the blue cube themselves.[35] Objects exist only in regions of objects, from which they emerge and against which they stand out. For their part, regions of objects exist only by standing out as objects in other regions. If anything exists at all, several regions of objects have to exist: this is the basic thesis of the version of ontological pluralism that I am arguing for. The regions of objects are distinguished by the ways in which the objects that appear in them are present. It is impossible that an elementary particle, which appears in the region of atomic physics, is literally a part of myself as a citizen of Germany. It is senseless to put elementary particles – which appear in my body at a certain point in space and time – under a specific political jurisdiction. But we cannot draw from this the conclusion that I am not subject to a specific political jurisdiction. This is because I am not identical with my appearance in that field of sense to which elementary particles belong. This is a lesson we can learn already from Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. One of the conditions the inhabitants of the *Magic Mountain* are suffering from is rather particular: they identify themselves with their X-ray images. Thus it is a mystery how on this inanimate mountain the magic of love and insight can appear – this is nothing else than the basic problem of modern nihilism. Since Heidegger was drawing on Kant till the end, he was looking for the conditions of the identity of objects on "our" side, i.e. from

the perspective of truth-apt attitudes; for this reason, he did not consider the possibility of appearances that are meaningfully structured in themselves, or an uninterpreted unconcealment in itself.[36] However, this failure on Heidegger's part leads to a nihilism that entails the idea of a senseless atomistic world of extension – a view that was simultaneously appealing and repellent for Heidegger. We have to realize that the myth of an essentially meaningless world – of a planet populated by ants and intelligent killer apes in the midst of a black, rapidly growing vastness – is completely baseless. This realization is the only way to achieve a "change in Being" (*Wandel im Sein*). Such a change in Being is desirable, because the Being with which we are satisfied at the moment is based on an error. As philosophers, we want at least one thing: the undisguised truth, which – to my mind – is the central topic of Heidegger's thinking as a whole. We owe Heidegger for being ahead of his time and reminding us that we have to resist the temptation of postmodern constructivism and its denial of truth and facts, if we do not want to fall prey to the delusion that human beings are at the center of everything, just because they are partly responsible for the fact that things come into being. Perhaps Heidegger never fully overcame this view because of the time he was living in. But he did lead in the right direction. And, for this reason, we cannot afford to forget him.

NOTES

[1] Barry Stroud has an influential argument along these lines (Stroud 1984).

[2] "One look at previous ontology shows us that one *skips over* the phenomenon of worldliness when one fails to see the constitution of Dasein as being-in-the-world." (Heidegger 2010b, § 14, 63-66, here 65 and §21, 93-99, esp. 98f.; GA 2, § 14, 85-89, here 85)

[3] On the concept of the "ontology of individual things" cf. Gabriel (2008b), especially 64-65. In this connection, Heidegger speaks of an "ontology of things" (*Dingontologie*). Cf. Heidegger (1977a), § 21, 134, (2012) 98.

[4] On this point, cf. Williams (1996). Also cf. the piece by Jörg Volbers, Volbers (2012).

[5] Cf. for example Dummett (1978) and Dummett (1991). To be exact, Dummett's project is to work out a logical criterion for realism. In particular,

this is a criterion that certifies the realistic assumptions for a theory with respect to its realm of objects. Dummett famously attaches this criterion to the bivalence of a relevant type of assertion.

[6] Cf. against this notion of existence Gabriel 2013a and 2013c.

[7] This is the tenor of Heidegger's criticism of Descartes: "Descartes does not allow the kind of being of innerworldly beings to present itself, but rather prescribes to the world, so to speak, its 'true' being on the basis of an idea of being (being = constant presence) the source of which has not been revealed and the justification of which has not been demonstrated. Thus it is not primarily his dependence upon a science, mathematics, which just happens to be especially esteemed, that determines his ontology of the world; rather, his ontology is determined by a basic ontological orientation towards being as constant objective presence, which mathematical knowledge is exceptionally well suited to grasp." Heidegger (1977a), 128, (2010b), 94.

[8] Drawing on Heidegger's ideas Graham Harman has introduced the concept of the "undermining of objects" . In Graham's view objects are undermined precisely by reducing the things of the human world, or the tools Heidegger describes, to particles they consist in. Cf. Graham Harman (2013), 40-51.

[9] On this question cf. the recent publication Rometsch (2012). Cf. Heidegger on a slightly self-critical note: "Beings, in the sense of the objectively present at hand, are taken to be unassailable and unquestionable, and the most appropriate way of relating to them occurs when the present at hand becomes entirely and utterly ready to hand and the latter is established in a completely technical sense." (Heidegger 2012b, 350; GA 65, 189, 444).

[10] Cf. Crispin Wright's concept of "leaching", which originates from an interpretation of Wittgenstein, but can be applied in this context too (Wright 2004). Cf. my general reconstruction of this thought in Gabriel (2009) and Gabriel (2008b), 134-175.

[11] Cf. Heidegger (1975), 121 (GA 16, 285).

[12] Cf. Heidegger (2010a). The concept of the "open-region" is introduced by the scholar on page 74 (GA 77, 114) and developed further by the guide with respect to "the history of the open-region" (91; GA 77, 141).

[13] "Le sens n'est jamais principe ou origine, il est produit. " Deleuze (1969), 89f.; cf. 116.

[14] Cf. for this purpose the collective volume Smith (2009).

[15] "*Handiness is the ontological categorical definition of beings as they are 'in-themselves'*." (Heidegger 2010b, 71; GA 2, 96).

[16] Cf. Brandom (2002), 298-323; Williams (2005); Moore (1997); Gabriel (2008b) and (2013a).

[17] Cf. for instance the following passage from the essay "The Age of the World Picture": "Where the world becomes picture, beings as a whole are set in place as that for which the human is prepared; that which, therefore, he correspondingly intends to bring before him, have before him, and thereby, in

a decisive sense, place before him. Understood in an essential way, world picture does not mean 'picture of the world', but rather the world grasped as a picture. [...] The world becoming a picture is one and the same process as that whereby, in the midst of beings, the human becomes a subject." Heidegger (2009), 207-223, here 218 and 220 (GA 5, 89, 92).

[18] Cf. for exactly the same criticism Adorno (1990); Derrida (2011).

[19] For more detail, see Gabriel (2014).

[20] Cf. Brandom (2002).

[21] For a more extensive elaboration of this issue, see Latour (2012).

[22] Heidegger (2010b), 298-301 (GA 2, 414-416). On the consequent problem of the anachronism of modernity cf. Gabriel (2006); Gabriel/Žižek (2009), as well as more recently Gabriel (2013c), chapter V.

[23] In *Being and Time* this is sufficiently clear from the analogical use of the terms "category" and "existential", as well as Heidegger's frequent reference to the *a priori*. The debt to transcendental philosophy is even clearer in the essay "On the Essence of Ground", which appeared one year after the publication of *Being and Time*. "We name *world* that *toward which* Dasein as such transcends, and shall now determine transcendence as *being-in-the-world*. World co-constitutes the unitary structure of transcendence; as belonging to the structure, the concept of world may be called *transcendental*." Heidegger (1998), 109 (GA 9, 139).

[24] "The kind of philosophy one chooses thus depends upon the kind of person one is. For a philosophical system is not a lifeless household item one can put aside or pick up as one wishes; instead, it is animated by the very soul of the person who adopts it. Someone whose character is naturally slack or who has been enervated and twisted by spiritual servitude, scholarly self-indulgence, and vanity will never be able to raise himself to the level of idealism." Fichte (1994), 20.

[25] Cf. "'*A priorism*' is the method of every scientific philosophy that understands itself." Heidegger (2010b), § 10, 49n (GA 2, 67)."The question of being thus aims not only at an a priori condition of a possibility of the sciences, which investigate beings as this or that kind of being and which thus always already move within an understanding of being, but also at the condition of the possibility of the ontologies which precede the ontic sciences and found them." Heidegger (2010b), § 3, 10 (GA 2, 15).

[26] Cf. Heidegger's explicit opposition to identifying apriorism and construction: Heidegger (2010b*)*, § 10, 49n (GA 2, 67).

[27] In his habilitation Heidegger already speaks of "areas of objects " (*Gegenstandsgebieten*), and on this basis he argues "for a variety of *realms of validity* (*Geltungsbereichen*)". Cf. Heidegger, GA 1, 210, 404. On this point, see my reflections on "fields of sense" in Gabriel (2014).

[28] Cf. Heidegger (2012a), 65 (GA 79, 69), translation modified; Schelling (1998), 8. On Heidegger and Schelling see Gabriel (2008a) and Gabriel (2011).

[29] For this aspect of Schelling's late philosophy, see Gabriel (2013b).

[30] This is exactly what "New Realism" opposes. Cf. Ferraris (2012), Gabriel (2013c), Benoist (2011), Boghossian (2007).

[31] Schelling (1856-1861), vol. 13, 226, 273; Schelling (1992), 91.

[32] Against this position see Gabriel (2014).

[33] Cf. Rometsch (2012, 125-128). Rometsch cites the following passages to prove his point: "Yet the essential occurrence of the original truth can be experienced only if this cleared 'amidst', which grounds itself and determines time-space, is reached in a leap as that from which and for which it is the clearing, namely, for self-concealing." Heidegger (2012b), 262 (GA 65, 330). "The concealment of beings as a whole does not first show up subsequently as a consequence of the fact that knowledge of beings is always fragmentary. The concealment of beings as a whole, un-truth proper, is older than every openedness of this or that being. It is older even than letting-be itself, which in disclosing already holds concealed and comports itself toward concealing." Heidegger (1998), 148 (GA 9, 193). "Truth occurs precisely as itself in that the concealing denial, as refusal, provides the steady provenance of all lighting, and yet, as dissembling, metes out to all lighting the indefeasible severity of error." Heidegger (1977c), 177 (GA 5, 41f).

[34] For the lightning metaphor cf. Heidegger (1977b), 69-70 (GA 79, 74). I would like to thank David Espinet for insisting on the view that in some of his very late works Heidegger did consider the possibility of what I call "New Realism". This is true at least in the sense that he tries to conceive the resting openness as a grounding motive that does not have to be brought into transparency by something else. In particular, Espinet drew my attention to the following passages: "The clearing is the open region for everything that becomes present and *absent*." It is remarkable that Heidegger is coming close to Goethe's concept of the "archetypal phenomenon" (*Urphänomen*), which Espinet pointed out to me. Heidegger cites Goethe: "Look for nothing behind phenomena: they themselves are what is to be learned." Heidegger then adds: "It is only such openness that grants to giving and receiving and to any evidence at all what is free, in which they can remain and must move." "What is absent, too, cannot be as such unless it presences in the *free space of the opening*." All citations from Heidegger (1977a), 384-385 (GA 14, 67-90, here 81-82). These passages document convincingly that Heidegger experimented with the possibility of a realist phenomenology, which he, as far as we know from the published texts, did not develop far enough. Yet, it is possible to continue Heidegger's work in this direction.

[35] Umrao Sethi is currently working on a theory of "objective looks", which I discussed with her during substantial conversations in Berkeley.

[36] It is clear from the following passage that Heidegger came to recognize this problem later on: "To raise the question of ἀλήθεια, of unconcealment as such, is not the same as raising the question of truth. For this reason, it was inadequate and misleading to call ἀλήθεια in the sense of opening, truth."

Heidegger (1977a), 389 (GA 14, 86). See also the following passage from *Contributions*: "Truth as the clearing for concealment is thus an essentially different projection than is ἀλήθεια, although the former projection pertains to the recollection of the latter, and vice versa." Heidegger (2012b), 277 (GA 65, 350).

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