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# If I Had a Hammer

## *Truth in Heidegger's Being and Time*<sup>1</sup>

**Lambert Zuidervaart**

"Love as gift . . . suggests a new thematization of meaning and truth as good connections, in contrast to both modernity's power, control, judgment, and postmodernism's disruption and dissemination of any claim of entitlement to meaning and truth."

James H. Olthuis<sup>2</sup>

Central themes in the recent work of James Olthuis echo the concerns of Martin Heidegger's pathbreaking *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*): love (Heidegger: *Sorge*),<sup>3</sup> human existence as gift and call (*Dasein*),<sup>4</sup> and the hermeneutics of connection (*Erschlossenheit*).<sup>5</sup> In retrospect, even Olthuis's earlier writings on

1. A very early draft of this essay was presented in December 1994 to the "Philosophischer Kreis" at the Institut für Philosophie, Freie Universität Berlin, under the title "Truth as Disclosure: In Critique of Heidegger." Some of the essay's ideas were tested in a seminar on "Language, Truth, and Postmodern Culture: Heidegger, Rorty, and Derrida" that I led with James Olthuis and Hendrik Hart in the summer of 2000. I thank the participants at both occasions for their helpful comments. I especially want to thank Henk Hart for his detailed criticisms of a more recent version.

2. James H. Olthuis, "Crossing the Threshold: Sojourning Together in the Wild Spaces of Love," in *Knowing Otherwise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality*, ed. James H. Olthuis (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), pp. 235–57; quote from pp. 247–48.

3. See, for example, James Olthuis's essay "Crossing the Threshold," cited in n. 2 above.

4. James H. Olthuis, "Be(com)ing: Humankind as Gift and Call," *Philosophia Reformata* 58 (1993): 153–72.

5. James H. Olthuis, "Otherwise than Violence: Toward a Hermeneutics of Connection," in *The Arts, Community, and Cultural Democracy*, ed. Lambert Zuidervaart and Henry Luttikhuisen (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's, 2000), pp. 137–64.

fidelity in ethical relationships<sup>6</sup> remind one of lectures given prior to *Sein und Zeit*, in which biblical and Christian sources helped Heidegger reconceptualize "truth" as a process of keeping troth.<sup>7</sup> Thanks in part to the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd and D. H. T. Vollenhoven, who shared Heidegger's concerns but took them in a different direction, Olthuis has brought the reformational tradition into fruitful dialogue with post-Heideggerian thinking. He has contributed a creation-affirming voice to what is often a "hermeneutics of fallenness,"<sup>8</sup> maintaining, amid the complexities of this dialogue, an admirable passion for social justice in solidarity with the marginalized and oppressed. So Jim's retirement is an excellent occasion for a former student and grateful colleague to revisit the idea of truth (*Wahrheit*) in Heidegger's magnum opus. Many shared concerns surface in this idea, along with issues that continue to vex post-Heideggerian thinkers.

The conception of truth proposed by *Being and Time* is both provocative and problematic. On the one hand, Heidegger provides a way to reconnect technical accounts of truth within logic, epistemology, and philosophy of language with the cultural practices and social institutions from which such accounts take distance. He does so by developing an ontological alternative to a pervasive "logical prejudice" in Western philosophy.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Heidegger takes such a dim view of "everydayness" and public communication that attaining truth becomes the inexplicable privilege of "authentic" existence. This privileging of authentic existence ensnares his counterontology in the self-referential incoherence of theorizing what, according to his own theory, cannot be theorized.<sup>10</sup> The promise and the problems of Heidegger's proposal are meshed. To redeem its potential, one must criticize its inherent flaws and ideological functions.

I hope to show that *Being and Time* has much to offer for a critical hermeneutic theory of truth, more than could be acknowledged by Theodor W.

6. James H. Olthuis, *I Pledge You My Troth: A Christian View of Marriage, Family, Friendship* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); *Keeping Our Troth: Staying in Love through the Five Stages of Marriage* (San Francisco: Harper, 1986).

7. See n. 42 below.

8. See James K. A. Smith, *The Fall of Interpretation: Philosophical Foundations for a Creational Hermeneutic* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000), especially part two (pp. 85–129).

9. See Daniel O. Dahlstrom, *Heidegger's Concept of Truth* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001). By "logical prejudice" Dahlstrom means a widespread assumption that assertions, propositions, sentences, and the like are the site of truth on which the truth of anything else depends. It is "the tendency to conceive truth in terms of a specific sort of discourse, namely, in terms of claims, assertions, and judgments, that are formed as indicative, declarative sentences. . . . For those who cling to this 'model of propositional truth,' 'the predicates 'true,' 'false,' are paradigmatically attributes of sentences, statements, claims, judgments, assertions, propositions, and the like'" (Dahlstrom, p. 17, citing an article by Carl Friedrich Gethmann). I should add that the logical prejudice need not be peculiar to correspondence theories of truth, although Heidegger's own conception is intended as an alternative to correspondence theories. It can also be found in coherence, consensus, and pragmatic theories of truth.

10. "Self-referential incoherence" is my cryptic formulation for the "paradox of thematization" so carefully described by Dahlstrom, pp. 202–10, 236–42, 252–55, 264–68, 433–56.

Adorno, whose critique of Heidegger shapes my own interpretation.<sup>11</sup> My aim is to fashion an alternative conception of truth that frees Heidegger's insights from what I consider to be a reactionary construction. As will become apparent, my alternative is to conceive truth as a process of life-giving disclosure to which a differentiated array of cultural practices and products contribute in distinct and indispensable ways. Linguistic claims and logical propositions belong to such an array, but so do, say, the practices and products of art. Let me first summarize Heidegger's argument for conceiving truth as disclosedness (sec. 1). Then I shall consider his claims that assertion or statement (*Aussage*) is a derivative mode of interpretation (sec. 2 below) and that Dasein's disclosedness is the primary locus of truth (sec. 3).<sup>12</sup>

## 1. Heidegger's Hammer

Section 44, titled "Dasein, Disclosedness, and Truth" (SZ 212–30), gives the central presentation of Heidegger's conception of truth in *Being and Time*. This section simultaneously concludes the book's first division, titled "The Preparatory Fundamental Analysis of Dasein," and the sixth chapter in this division, titled "Care as the Being of Dasein." It not only summarizes and deepens Heidegger's analysis of "being-in-the-world" as the "basic state of Dasein" but also marks a transition to interpreting this state as thoroughly temporal in division two (titled "Dasein and Temporality"). In this doubly laden context, Heidegger argues that the primary locus of truth is not propositions or assertions or discursive claims. Rather, the primary locus is the disclosedness of that being (Dasein) which, among other activities, understands and formulates and discusses assertions. While making this argument, Heidegger hammers the correspondence theory of truth, traditionally formulated as the *adaequatio intellectus et rei*, into a conception of "disclosedness" (*Erschlossenheit*) and "discoveredness" (*Entdecktheit*).

Heidegger aims to ask about the meaning of Being. He approaches this question by analyzing and interpreting Dasein (i.e., human being) as that entity for whom Being is a question. While distinguishing Dasein from entities such as tools that are "at hand" or "handy" (*zuhanden*) as well as from entities such as

11. Passages in translation are taken from Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). Page numbers refer to the pagination in *Sein und Zeit* (abbreviated "SZ"), as found in the margins of English translations. The German edition I have used is *Sein und Zeit*, 15th ed. (Tübingen, Germany: Max Niemeyer, 1979). I have also consulted *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962). I give preference to the Macquarrie/Robinson translation in retaining "Being" (capital "B") for "Sein" and in not hyphenating Dasein (which, for the most part, is not hyphenated in *Sein und Zeit* but is always hyphenated in Joan Stambaugh's translation). These modifications are made without comment in the citations and in my own text. Other relevant modifications to citations from the Stambaugh translation are marked by square brackets.

12. A more complete treatment, which I have provided elsewhere, would also examine the role that "authenticity" plays in Heidegger's emphasis on disclosedness.

scientifically defined physical things that are “objectively present” (*vorhanden*), Heidegger analyzes the three directions taken by Dasein’s “being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-sein*): “being together with the world,” “being-with” others, and “being-one’s-self.” In more traditional language, which Heidegger carefully avoids, he distinguishes three types of relations—subject/object, subject/subject, and subject/self—only to argue that they form a unitary structure founded in Dasein’s “being-in.” Their unity becomes apparent from the terms he uses to summarize Dasein’s orientation in the first two directions: taking care (*Besorgen*) of that which is handy, and concern (*Fürsorge*) toward fellow human beings. Both orientations rest in a more fundamental care (*Sorge*). Moreover, Dasein’s dealings are guided by circumspection (*Umsicht*) toward the handy and by considerateness (*Rücksicht*) and tolerance (*Nachsicht*) toward others. These guides are made possible by the sight (*Sicht*) that characterizes Dasein’s being-in as such. Such sight is what Heidegger calls understanding (*Verstehen*). Together with attunement (*Befindlichkeit*) and talk (*Rede*), understanding is one of three “equiprimordial” modes or structures (*existentialia*) of Dasein’s being-in.<sup>13</sup>

Two fundamental points affect everything Heidegger writes about understanding and talk. First, both understanding and talk are modes of Dasein’s disclosedness. Second, since Dasein’s disclosedness follows the orientation of care, and since temporality (*Zeitlichkeit*) is “the ontological meaning of care” (sec. 65), temporality characterizes both understanding and talk (sec. 68). Let me briefly elaborate each point.

The first point pertains to the essential openness that characterizes Dasein. Unlike other entities, Dasein not only occupies a field of relationships but also holds itself open in these relationships. For Dasein, that which is at hand resides in a significant totality of relevance (*Bewandtnis*), even when Dasein experiences or analyzes what is at hand, in abstraction from its relevance, as something merely objectively present. So too, Dasein’s selfhood is always constituted by coexistence with others for whom what is at hand has significance, even when we regularly experience ourselves as indifferent members of a mass public (as *das Man* or “the they”). In other words, Dasein is essentially open to its world and its fellows. It is because of this openness that the world lies open to human dealings and that, despite inauthenticity and indifference, human

13. Heidegger first identifies understanding and attunement as the constitutive and equiprimordial ways of Dasein’s disclosedness and says they in turn “are equiprimordially determined by [*talk*]” (SZ 133). (To avoid confusion with Habermas’s notion of discourse [*Diskurs*], I shall use other terms than “discourse” to render Heidegger’s *Rede*—usually “talk” or “conversation.”) Later he says that talk is “*existentially equiprimordial with attunement and understanding*” (SZ 161), thereby suggesting that talk is a third equiprimordial mode of disclosedness. Elsewhere, “falling prey” or “entanglement” (*Verfallen*) is added to the list of “the structures in which disclosedness constitutes itself” (SZ 334–35). At this point, not much hangs on whether only two or more of these are equiprimordial modes of disclosedness. Despite the originality and significance of Heidegger’s discussion of attunement, especially with regard to fear (*Furcht*) and anxiety (*Angst*) (see secs. 30 and 40), I restrict my summary to understanding and talk, since these have a more direct bearing on Heidegger’s critique of traditional theories of truth.

beings remain open to themselves and one another. In Heidegger's own words, Dasein (literally "there-being") "bears in its ownmost being the character of not being closed. The expression 'there' means this essential disclosedness. Through disclosedness, this being (Dasein) is 'there' for itself together with the Dasein of the world. . . . By its very nature, Dasein brings its there along with it. . . . *Dasein is its [disclosedness]*" (SZ 132–33).

The second point pertains to the kind of temporality that underlies understanding and talk, respectively, and unites them in the structure of care.<sup>14</sup> Heidegger arrives at the theme of temporality by examining "anticipatory resoluteness" as the authentic and most primordial truth of Dasein (SZ 297), as Dasein's "*authentic* potentiality-for-being-a-whole" (SZ 301). His interpretation of the temporality of understanding aims to uncover the "temporality of disclosedness in general" (sec. 68) and thereby to show how "the inauthenticity of Dasein is ontologically grounded" (SZ 335). Heidegger claims that understanding, which always projects Dasein's potentiality-of-being (*Seinkönnen*), is essentially futural, even when understanding is inauthentic.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to understanding, talk, which articulates the disclosedness constituted by understanding and attunement, does not have an essential temporalization, whether future, past, or present. "Factically," however, the "making-present" that characterizes inauthentic understanding has "a *privileged* constitutive function" in ordinary talk (SZ 349). Crucial in this context is the claim that both Dasein's disclosedness and its "basic existential possibilities" of "authenticity and inauthenticity" are "founded in temporality" in the manner described (SZ 350). By extension, the futural character of understanding, and the anticipatory resoluteness of authentic understanding, provide preconditions for the disclosure of other entities.

Reconstructed, and reduced to bare outline, Heidegger's argument against the traditional correspondence theory of truth, and for his own conception of truth as disclosedness, runs as follows:<sup>16</sup>

1. Dasein understands itself, others, and its world by projecting Dasein's own potentials and possibilities from within its own factual context. Understanding is characterized by projective thrownness or thrown projection.

14. Here and elsewhere I ignore the distinction between *Zeitlichkeit* (temporality) and *Temporalität* (Temporality) in *Sein und Zeit*. Karin de Boer gives a detailed account of this distinction in *Thinking in the Light of Time: Heidegger's Encounter with Hegel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000).

15. Whereas authentic understanding throws itself into the future as a possibility, inauthentic understanding simply awaits the object of its concern. The related contrasts with regard to present and past are the authentic moment of vision (*Augenblick*) versus an inauthentic making present (*Gegenwärtigen*), and authentic repetition or retrieval (*Wiederholung*) versus inauthentic forgetting (*Vergessen*). Heidegger summarizes as follows: "*Awaiting that forgets and makes present* is an ecstatic unity in its own right, in accordance with which inauthentic understanding temporalizes itself. . . . The unity of these ecstasies closes off one's authentic potentiality-of-being, and is thus the existential condition of the possibility of irresoluteness" (SZ 339).

16. See especially SZ, secs. 31–34 and 44.

2. Through such projection, understanding (*Verstehen*) lets entities be encountered in their discoveredness (*Entdecktheit*) by Dasein in its disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*).
3. Such an encounter is developed in interpretation (*Auslegung*) as a working out (*Ausarbeitung*) of projected possibilities.
4. When directed at understanding the world, interpretation works out the purposes for which something exists by elaborating its embeddedness in a purposive whole, on the basis of a prior understanding.<sup>17</sup> Often such circumspect interpretation is prepredicative.
5. Assertion or statement (*Aussage*) is a derivative mode of interpretation (*Auslegung*), which itself is an outworking (*Ausbildung*) of understanding.<sup>18</sup>
6. By "pointing out" or indicating (*Aufzeigen*) an entity in abstraction from its purposive involvements, assertion "determines" (*bestimmt*) something (predication—*Prädikation*) and communicates this indication and predication to others (communication—*Mitteilung*).
7. At the same time, unlike ordinary circumspect interpretation, which approaches a hammer, for example, as something serviceable within a totality of relevance, assertion forces the hermeneutical "as" back to "the uniform level of what is merely objectively present. . . . This levelling down of the primordial 'as' of circumspect interpretation to the as of the determination of objective presence is the specialty of the [assertion]" (SZ 158).
8. The communication of shared attunements and common understandings is made possible by talk (*Rede*), which gets expressed in language (*Sprache*) and which articulates meaning.<sup>19</sup>

17. More specifically, Heidegger argues that "circumspect interpretation" rests on the three projective involvements that understanding has with the world: fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception (*Vorhabe*, *Vorsicht*, and *Vorgriff*), which could also be translated as pre-possession, pre-view, and pre-conception. An interpretation is never a neutral gathering of bare facts. According to Heidegger, there is a circle in all interpretation, even in so simple an act as finding the right hammer for a particular task. "Every interpretation which is to contribute some understanding must already have understood what is to be interpreted" (SZ 152). This is the ontological basis for the familiar hermeneutical circle in the interpretation of texts.

18. Stambaugh translates *die Aussage* as "statement." I follow Macquarrie and Robinson in translating it as "assertion."

19. My formulation here ignores Heidegger's careful distinctions among intelligibility (*Verständlichkeit*), meaning (*Sinn*), the totality of significations (*Bedeutungsganze*), and significations (*Bedeutungen*). "Meaning" refers to that which can be articulated (*das Artikulierbare*) in talk, just as "intelligibility" refers to that which can be understood and interpreted. A crucial point for Heidegger's analysis of talk is that whatever is intelligible has already been articulated (*gegliedert*), even prior to being interpreted and asserted: "[Talk] is the articulation [*Artikulation*] of intelligibility. Thus it already lies at the basis of interpretation and statement [*Aussage*]" (SZ 161). The "totality of significations" refers to the entirety of what is articulated in talk. With this term, Heidegger draws attention to the claim that discrete articulations or "significations" belong to a larger totality. Similarly, although words accrue to discrete significations, this occurrence belongs to a larger process: "The totality of significations . . . is put into words" (SZ 161), and the totality of those words is language, in which talk gets expressed. (For more on the concept of "meaning," see SZ 150–53, 156, and 323–25.)

9. The making of assertions is only one of the many ways in which we communicate in talk. Assertoric communication is a special case of a more comprehensive "articulation of being-with-one-another understandingly" (SZ 162).
10. In a mass society, where Dasein is thrown "into the publicness [*Öffentlichkeit*] of the they" (SZ 167), talk ordinarily occurs as idle talk (*Gerede*) that closes off our being-in-the-world and covers over "innerworldly beings" (SZ 169). So too understanding ordinarily occurs as a restless, distracted, and uprooted curiosity (*Neugier*) that makes it impossible to decide "what is disclosed in a genuine understanding, and what is not" (SZ 173). Such idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity manifest the "falling prey" (*Verfallen*) to public existence that characterizes Dasein in its inauthentic mode of being-in-the-world.<sup>20</sup>
11. The modern conception of truth treats assertion (*die Aussage*) or judgment (*das Urteil*) as the locus of truth. It defines truth as the judgment's agreement (*Übereinstimmung*) with its object (*Gegenstand*).
12. Contrary to common views, such agreement does not mean that mental representations (*Vorstellungen*) get compared among themselves or in relation to the so-called "real thing," but rather that the asserted entity "shows itself as [*that*] *very same thing*." The truth of an assertion is a being-true (*Wahrsein*), in the sense of discovering the asserted entity as it is in itself (SZ 218).<sup>21</sup>
13. Such being-true as to-be-discovering (*Entdeckend-sein*) is made possible ontologically by Dasein's basic state of being-in-the-world (SZ 219).<sup>22</sup>

20. Contrary to my formulation, Heidegger would not say that falling prey is restricted to a mass society. Idle talk, for example, "does not first originate through certain conditions which influence Dasein 'from the outside'" (SZ 177). Rather, falling prey "reveals an *essential*, ontological structure of Dasein itself" (SZ 179). Nevertheless, his characterization of falling prey is clearly indebted to and descriptive of a social condition in which the structure and principle of publicity (*Öffentlichkeit*) hold sway. In that sense, despite his disclaimer that the term "does not express any negative value judgment" (SZ 175), it is hard to read his account of "falling prey" or "entanglement" as anything other than a critique of mass society and of democratic tendencies within it.

21. My paraphrase from SZ 218 is closer to the Macquarrie and Robinson translation than to the Stambaugh translation. Heidegger writes that the discoveredness (*Entdecktheit*) of an entity "bewährt sich darin, dass sich das Ausgesagte, das ist das Seiende selbst, *als dasselbe zeigt*." Macquarrie and Robinson translate: "This uncoveredness is confirmed when that which is put forward in the assertion (namely the entity itself) shows itself *as that very same thing*" (p. 261). Stambaugh translates: "This [the referent is unspecified] is confirmed by the fact that what is stated (that is, the being itself) shows itself *as the very same thing*" (p. 201). A few lines later Heidegger writes: "Die Aussage *ist wahr*, bedeutet: sie entdeckt das Seiende an ihm selbst." Macquarrie and Robinson translate: "To say that an assertion '*is true*' signifies that it uncovers the entity as it is in itself." Stambaugh translates: "To say that a statement is *true* means that it discovers the beings in themselves." By rendering the singular "das Seiende" with the plural "beings," Stambaugh weakens the force of the sentence. Macquarrie and Robinson take a liberty by rendering "an ihm selbst" with "as it is in itself," but that phrase is prominent in the previous paragraph, where Heidegger writes "Das gemeinte Seiende selbst zeigt sich *so, wie es an ihm selbst ist*." (SZ 218).

22. In this context Heidegger says that his definition of truth provides "the *necessary* interpretation of what the oldest tradition of ancient philosophy primordially surmised and even understood in a pre-



The truth of assertion reaches back via interpretation “to the disclosedness of understanding” (SZ 223).

14. More specifically, just as discovering (*Entdecken*) and the discoveredness (*Entdecktheit*) of entities are grounded in the world’s disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*), so the assertion’s to-be-discovering (*Entdeckend-sein*) is grounded in Dasein’s disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*), without which the world would not be disclosed.
15. Hence, “only with the disclosedness of Dasein is the *most primordial* phenomenon of truth attained. . . . In that Dasein essentially *is* its disclosedness, and, as disclosed, discloses and discovers, it is essentially ‘true.’ Dasein *is ‘in the truth’*” (SZ 220–21).
16. Dasein’s disclosedness is both authentic (i.e., governed by Dasein’s “ownmost potentiality-of-being,” SZ 221) and inauthentic (i.e., governed by “public interpretedness,” SZ 222). Hence Dasein is equiprimordially not only in the truth but also in untruth. Yet inauthenticity and being in untruth are made possible by disclosedness and discoveredness; truth must be wrested from the inauthenticity of Dasein and the concealment (*Verborgenheit*) of entities.
17. The traditional conception of truth as the agreement of assertion and object covers up the ontological foundations from which such agreement derives (SZ 223–26). Contrary to this traditional conception, “[Assertion] is not the primary ‘locus’ of truth,” but is itself grounded in the primary locus of truth, namely, in Dasein’s disclosedness. Dasein’s disclosedness is “the ontological condition of the possibility that [assertions] can be true or false (discovering or covering over)” (SZ 226).
18. Since disclosedness is essential to Dasein’s being, “*all truth is relative to the being of Dasein*” (SZ 227), not in the sense that truth is left to subjective discretion or constituted by a transcendental subject, but in the sense that without Dasein’s disclosedness there would be neither authenticity nor inauthenticity, neither discovering nor covering over, neither discoveredness nor concealment, and neither true assertions nor false assertions.<sup>23</sup> Truth is relative to Dasein’s *being*, not to Dasein’s will or to its consciousness.
19. Neither the dogmatic claim that there are eternal truths nor general skepticism about truth has an adequate ontological basis. Both positions overlook the reciprocal and foundational relationship between truth and Dasein: just as truth belongs to the core of Dasein’s being, so Dasein exists for the sake of truth. Moreover, such reciprocity extends to Being, toward whose understanding Dasein, in its disclosedness, is

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phenomenological way.” That is to say, his definition recaptures the alethic sense in which apophantic reason and discourse (*logos*) can be true, namely, “to let beings be seen in their unconcealment [*Unverborgenheit*] (discoveredness [*Entdecktheit*]), taking them out of their concealment [*Verborgenheit*]” (SZ 219). (See also the discussion of the concepts of *logos* and *aletheia* in Heidegger’s Introduction, SZ 32–34.)

23. Note the three characterizations of truth in SZ 226: “disclosedness, discovering, and discoveredness.”

predisposed. “‘There is’ [*Es gibt*] Being—not beings—only insofar as truth is. And truth *is* only because and as long as Dasein is. Being and truth ‘are’ equiprimordially” (SZ 230).

Some readers are tempted to accuse Heidegger of “subjectivizing” truth, in the sense of reducing it to a condition or quality of human existence: after all, he does claim that all truth is relative to Dasein’s being. Yet such an accusation ignores his explicit opposition to subjectivism and his marked preference for substantives such as disclosedness and discoveredness over verbs such as disclose and discover. This leads other readers to claim that Heidegger turns truth into a state of Being, one for which Dasein’s being-in-the-world is crucial but perhaps not decisive. Accordingly, the fatal flaw in Heidegger’s conception, one that deepens in his later writings, might lie in his both dehumanizing and structuralizing a dynamic process of disclosure. It seems to me, however, that neither the first nor the second reading does justice to the scope of Heidegger’s project and to fundamental tensions in his own conception of truth. There is a sense in which Heidegger both subjectivizes and dehumanizes truth. To derive an adequate alternative, one must wrestle with both tendencies in their dialectical tension.<sup>24</sup> Let me develop this “fore-conception” by investigating Heidegger’s accounts of assertion (sec. 2 below) and disclosedness (sec. 3).

## 2. Assertion and Interpretation

Heidegger lays out the derivative character of assertion in order to deconstruct the ontological foundations of correspondence theories of truth. In the process, he makes a number of claims that, when taken together, diminish the role of assertions in the pursuit of truth and belittle their significance. Although such may not have been the clear intent of his formulations, arguably it has been their dominant effect, and it has led to readings that exaggerate antilogical tendencies in Heidegger’s conception of truth. Let me first sketch two examples of how Heidegger can be read to this effect, and how alternative

24. I take the clue for this dialectical line of critical interpretation from Adorno’s discussion of Heidegger in *Negative Dialectics*, even though I think Adorno misinterprets Heidegger’s attempt to interrelate Dasein, truth, and Being. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury, 1973), pp. 59–131 (I will abbreviate this source as “ND”); *Negative Dialektik*, *Gesammelte Schriften* 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), pp. 67–136 (I will abbreviate this source as “GS6”). Here are some representative passages from Adorno: “The concept of ‘existential’ things [*des Existentiellen*] . . . is governed by the idea that the measure of truth is not its objectivity, of whichever kind, but the pure being-that-way and acting-that-way of the thinker. . . . But truth, the constellation of subject and object in which both penetrate each other, can no more be reduced to subjectivity than to that Being whose dialectical relation to subjectivity Heidegger tends to blur” [*zu verwischen trachten*] (ND 127; GS6: 133). “[Heidegger’s notion of] historicity immobilizes history in the unhistorical realm, heedless of the historical conditions that govern the inner composition and constellation of subject and object” (ND 129; GS6: 135).

readings could counter what may not have been his clear intent. Then I shall analyze the claim that assertion is a derivative mode of interpretation.

Heidegger points out that the making of assertions [*Aussagen machen*] is only one of many practices within talk (alongside commanding, wishing, interceding, etc. [SZ 161–62]), and that self-expression, hearing, and keeping silent are constitutive for talk (SZ 162–65). Here he can be read as saying that the making of assertions is not nearly as important as traditional philosophy and linguistics have claimed, and that other practices and “existential possibilities” are more important to ordinary language than is the making of assertions. On a different and, I think, preferable interpretation, however, the main point about asserting would be that it normally occurs in connection with these other practices and as a way to actualize such existential possibilities. It is precisely because of such embeddedness, and because of the role of assertions in pursuing intersubjective understanding, that the making and discussing of assertions become crucial to public “talk” and deserve the special attention of philosophers and linguists, no matter how misguided previous accounts may have been. The task, then, would not simply be that of “freeing grammar from logic,” as Heidegger puts it (SZ 165), but also liberating logic from its reification of the practice of making assertions.

Similarly, when Heidegger argues that the agreement of assertion and object derives from the disclosedness of Dasein and the discoveredness of entities, he embeds a thinner epistemological correspondence between subjective product and independent object in a thicker ontological harmony between the state of Dasein and the state of other entities. Described as a relation commonly understood as merely “objectively present” (SZ 224), the thinner correspondence comes to appear less important for truth than the thicker harmony. This despite the fact that Heidegger’s account of the thicker harmony seems to remain within the modern correspondence theory’s subject/object paradigm, to which he explicitly objects. On a different and more fruitful reading, however, the crucial “agreement” would not be between the assertion and the object but among those who make assertions about the object, as well as between the process of making assertions and recognized principles for intersubjective conversation. Such an alternative, with its emphasis on the search for intersubjective “agreement” in accordance with recognized principles, can be extracted from Heidegger’s account of “being-in-the-world” as including “being-with” others. Yet his critique of correspondence theories and his locating of truth in Dasein’s disclosedness make little of this intersubjective mode. In fact, his initial orientation to circumspect interpretation of the handy, combined with his disparaging view of the public sphere, makes it difficult to extract this alternative without violence.

What, more specifically, needs to be said about the purported derivativeness of assertion or statement (*die Aussage*)? To examine this topic, let me introduce a distinction and make a related comment. In the first place, the intelligibility of Heidegger’s claims depends on a distinction between the making of assertions as

a cultural *practice* and the availability of assertions as cultural *accomplishments*. Heidegger tends to elide or ignore this distinction. I shall mark it by using “asserting” and “assertion” as technical terms, respectively, for the practice and the accomplishment at issue. In the second place, the derivation of asserting and assertion from (the practices and accomplishments of) interpretation does not entail that the asserted (*das Ausgesagte*) simply acquires a definite character when asserted. Rather, the asserted can already array itself (or offer itself) in definable ways, and this array can impinge upon interpretation, even when interpretation is nonassertoric. Although such arraying and impinging do not by themselves give the asserted a definite character, neither does the asserted’s becoming definable simply depend on its being asserted. The reasons for making this comment will emerge from my more detailed discussion of the purported derivation of *die Aussage* from interpretation (*Auslegung*). Let me turn first to Heidegger’s account of what I have distinguished as asserting and assertion, before I examine his account of the asserted.

### *Asserting and Assertion*

Heidegger distinguishes three significations of the term “assertion” (*die Aussage*): pointing out (*Aufzeigung*), predication (*Prädikation*), and communication (*Mitteilung*). Of these, pointing out, which lets an entity be seen from itself (SZ 154), is the primary signification. Heidegger considers predication to be founded in pointing out, which is broader, and he describes communication as an extension of pointing out and predication. The primacy he assigns to “pointing out” becomes apparent from his unifying definition of assertion as “a pointing out which communicates and defines” [*mitteilend bestimmende Aufzeigung*] (SZ 156). He does not define assertion as predication that points out and communicates or as communication that points out and predicates. So too, he does not describe assertion as a mode of talk but as a mode of interpretation.

Heidegger’s account of interpretation has a prior orientation to the purposive conduct of craftspersons and the users of tools. This orientation shapes the contrast Heidegger draws between the categorical statement “the hammer is heavy,” understood by logicians to mean “this thing, the hammer, has the property of heaviness,” and related formulations common to ordinary talk:

“Initially” there are no such statements in heedful circumspection. But it does have its specific ways of interpretation which . . . may take some such form as “the hammer is too heavy” or, even better, “too heavy, the other hammer!” The primordial act of interpretation lies not in a theoretical sentence, but in circumspectly and heedfully putting away or changing the inappropriate tool “without wasting words.” (SZ 157)

Given this prior orientation to purposive conduct, Heidegger analyzes assertion primarily as a practice rather than an accomplishment, and one that is originally purposive, although tending toward abstraction:

The [assertion's] pointing out is accomplished on the basis of what is already disclosed in understanding, or what is circumspectly discovered. The [assertion] is not an unattached kind of behavior which could of itself primarily disclose beings in general, but always already maintains itself on the basis of being-in-the-world. (SZ 156)

By emphasizing the practice of *asserting* and its ontological roots in *Dasein*, Heidegger creates the impression that *assertions as such*, as accomplishments, are cut off from the totality of human involvements with the world, with theoretical assertions being the farthest removed.

Unfortunately Heidegger's approach presupposes a problematic hierarchy of originality according to which the accomplishment is derivative from the practice, and the more explicit and more definite practice is derivative from ones less explicit and less definite. Only such a hierarchy can explain why predication should be considered "narrower" than pointing out (rather than, for example, more precise and inclusive), or why asserting "x is y" should be thought to arise via modification from circumspect interpretation (rather than simply constituting one type of purposive conduct, perhaps, or shaping or even giving rise to circumspect interpretation). While I acknowledge, with Heidegger, that, once accomplished, an assertion can be discussed and analyzed in its own right and in abstraction from the occasion and circumstances for making the assertion, this fact in itself does not warrant the view that accomplished assertions are cut off from other human involvements with the world.

In addition, the force of "pointing out" depends on its connections with predication and communication. I see no reason to think that a prepredicative and noncommunicative pointing out would have any intrinsic connection with asserting and assertions. Consider, for example, Heidegger, in the privacy of his shop, simply pointing his finger at a hammer while thinking, "The hammer is too heavy." He might be pointing something out, but he would not be asserting anything, nor would any assertion become available as an accomplishment. Far from being founded in pointing out, predication is that which allows any pointing out to become assertoric. Insofar as asserting is an illocutionary act that requires an interpretable utterance in a public language, a private thought not communicated to anyone else, no matter how "pointed," would be neither predicative nor assertoric. What allows the entity to be "seen from itself" is not the pointing out as such, but rather the predication by way of which something can be taken as something distinct from something else.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, predication as a practice cannot get

25. This predicative manner of taking something is to be contrasted with the manner of taking entities as something-as-which in prepredicative interpretation. Cf. SZ 148–49 and 157–58.

off the ground in the absence of predications as accomplishments: not only does the practice simply consist of formulating and discussing predications, but also such formulation and discussion necessarily refer to previously accomplished predications.

My criticisms have implications for two corollaries to Heidegger's position that assertion is a derivative mode of interpretation. The first corollary is that assertion has the same thrown projection that characterizes understanding as a mode of *Dasein*: "Like interpretation in general, the [assertion] necessarily has its existential foundations in fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception" (SZ 157). Looked at from one direction, this characterization of assertion is unobjectionable, but trivial: to the extent that it is an interpretative practice, the making of assertions draws on a hermeneutical fore-structure. Looked at from another direction, however, Heidegger's characterization detaches assertions as such from their conversational texture and demotes their predicative status. He does not emphasize sufficiently that the hermeneutical fore-structure on which asserting draws is itself shaped in part by the predications already available in conversation and language. Nor is such predicative preshaping of the hermeneutical fore-structure a mark of falling prey. Yet Heidegger is right to resist the tendency for accomplished assertions, when singled out for discussion in contexts of argument or theory, to float free from their hermeneutical matrix. He is also correct to counter any privileging of accomplished assertions in the formation of that matrix.

The second corollary is that, according to Heidegger, assertion characteristically turns the "existential-hermeneutical 'as'" of circumspect interpretation into an "apophantical 'as.'" Heidegger describes this transition as the "leveling down of the 'primordial 'as'" (SZ 158). The term "leveling down" (*Nivellierung*) captures the gist of Heidegger's account. He does not call the transition from the hermeneutical to the apophantic a "heightening" or an "enriching" or a "making more precise." He says that under the impact of assertions the "as" of circumspect interpretation gets "cut off" (*abgeschnitten*) and "forced back" (*zurückgedrängt*), that it "dwindles" (*sinkt herab*) (SZ 158). Such strong language presupposes that the fullness of prepredicative interpretation is somehow paradigmatic for all interpretative practices, and that the apophantic "as" peculiar to assertion is primarily a modification of the hermeneutical "as." If instead, as I have suggested, one anchors the making of assertions in conversation and ordinary language, and if one ties the possibility of asserting to the availability of predications, then the transition from interpretation to assertion need not involve a leveling or dwindling. The transition would be not so much a *modification* as a *movement* from one level to another, not a leveling but a leap. Accordingly, the "leveling" would lie not in the transition from *hermeneuein* to *apophansis* but in Heidegger's account of the transition. In fact, this is where I think the leveling lies.

### *The Asserted*

Heidegger's leveling undermines his account of what gets asserted (*das Ausgesagte*). Although his account promises to break with epistemic subjectivism and the representational theory of knowledge that has dominated modern philosophy, it also introduces ambiguities that take a toll on his conception of truth.

Heidegger rightly insists in various places that what is asserted is not a "representation" (*Vorstellung*), neither a mental object nor a state of consciousness (SZ 62, 154, 217–18). At the same time, the asserted is not the "content" or "meaning" of an accomplished assertion (SZ 155–56). Much less is the asserted a free-floating proposition that "exists" independently of assertoric practices and accomplishments (SZ 159–60). Rather, what is asserted, he argues, is the entity itself in a certain mode of its givenness. For example, when one says, "The hammer is too heavy," what is asserted—and in this is allowed to "be seen from itself" or "discovered for sight"—is the hammer itself, a "being in the mode of its being at hand" (SZ 154). The hammer is put forward (*ausgesagt*) and is explicitly determined as being "too heavy" for some purpose. And in uttering this assertion, one is sharing with others the hammer as so "seen" with such a definite character:

As something communicated, what is spoken [*das Ausgesagte*] can be "shared" by the others with the speaker [*mit dem Aussagenden*] even when they themselves do not have the beings pointed out and defined in a palpable and visible range. What is spoken [*das Ausgesagte*] can be "passed along" in further retelling. . . . But at the same time what is pointed out can become veiled again in this further retelling, although the knowledge and cognition growing in such hearsay always means beings themselves and does not "affirm" a "valid meaning" passed around. (SZ 155)

In elaborating this analysis, Heidegger is of two minds. On the one hand, he wants to say that the asserter does not constitute or create the asserted in its specific character as asserted, but rather lets the entity stand out as it is in itself in a certain mode of its givenness. The hammer simply *is* too heavy or too light or too big for some purpose, and the asserter simply points the hammer out (or lets it be seen) in this regard. On the other hand, because he insists on the derivativeness of assertion, Heidegger also wants to claim that, as predication and communication, assertion does something to the asserted: predication "narrows" (*Verengung*) the asserted, "determines it" (*bestimmt*), and makes it "explicitly manifest" (*ausdrücklich offenbar zu machen*); and communication shares the asserted with others (*teilt . . . mit dem Anderen*) (SZ 154–55). In principle, assertion turns something at hand, such as the hammer, into something objectively present (or lets it turn into such) and veils its handiness (or lets this become veiled):

Something *at hand with which* we have to do or perform something, turns into something "about which" the [assertion] that points it out is made. . . . Within this discovering of objective presence which covers over handiness, what is encountered as objectively present is determined in its being objectively present in such and such a way. Now the access is first available for something like *qualities*. (SZ 158)<sup>26</sup>

Heidegger seems to claim both that the asserted entity simply presents itself and that asserting affects the asserted.<sup>27</sup>

Heidegger's account of the asserted argues correctly that the accomplished assertion is about an entity (or a range of entities) in a certain mode of its givenness. This "aboutness" is not a third thing in addition to the assertion and the entity; indeed, it is not a thing at all. Rather, "aboutness" simply indicates the mutual mediation of the assertoric practice and that toward which one can engage in this practice.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Heidegger rightly suggests that the entity asserted allows itself to be asserted and even, in a sense, calls forth the assertion.

To indicate the entity's "givenness" for assertoric practice, let me introduce "predicative availability" as a technical term.<sup>29</sup> The term suggests that, among the many ways in which entities are available (Heidegger: *at hand*) for human

26. The translation of the first sentence in this quotation is somewhat misleading. The point of this particular sentence is not that some entity changes from being *at hand* into something else, but rather that a changeover (*Umschlag*) occurs in Dasein's fore-having, from a circumspect "with which" to an assertoric "about which": "Das *zuhandene* Womit des Zutunhabens, der Verrichtung, wird zum 'Worüber' der aufzeigenden Aussage" (SZ 158). It is relative to this changeover in Dasein's fore-having that the entity also undergoes a change: its handiness becomes veiled, its objective presence gets discovered, and it gets defined (*bestimmt*) as a "what" rather than being interpreted as a "with which."

27. A similar ambiguity returns in Heidegger's subsequent account of the truth of assertion. On the one hand, confirming the truth of an assertion depends on whether the asserted entity "shows itself as [that] very same thing. Confirmation [of an assertion] means the *being's showing itself in its self-sameness*. Confirmation is accomplished on the basis of the being's showing itself" (SZ 218). On the other hand, the truth of an assertion simply is the assertion's capacity to *discover* the entity in its (specific) identity: "To say that [an assertion] is *true* means that it discovers the beings in themselves [*sie entdeckt das Seiende an ihm selbst*]. It asserts, it shows, it lets beings 'be seen' (*apophansis*) in their discoveredness. The *being true (truth)* of the [assertion] must be understood as *discovering [entdeckend-sein]*" (SZ 218). I take up this ambiguity concerning assertoric truth below.

28. In fact, Heidegger says that all talk, whether assertoric or not, is about something. "[Talk] is [talk] about. . . . That which [talk] is *about* does not necessarily have the character of the theme of a definite statement; in fact, mostly it does not have it. Even command is given about something; a wish is about something. And so is intercession. . . . In all [talk] there is *what is spoken* as such, what is said as such when one actually wishes, asks, talks things over about . . ." (SZ 161–62).

29. Readers familiar with the ontology developed by the Dutch philosophers Herman Dooyeweerd and D. H. T. Vollenhoven will recognize the term "predicative availability" as a modification of their notion of a "logical" (or "analytic") "object function." I avoid their particular terminology for two reasons: it presupposes a subject/object paradigm, which both Heidegger and I want to challenge, and the terms "logical" and "analytic" are less precise than "predicative." I recognize, however, that the account of subject/object relations given by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven breaks with the epistemological emphasis of the modern subject/object paradigm. For a concise and updated version of this account, see Hendrik Hart, *Understanding Our World: An Integral Ontology* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1984), pp. 221–42. See also Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, rpt. ed., vol. 2, trans. David H. Freeman and H. De Jongste (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1969), pp. 386–91.



practices, they also offer themselves to us in a way that lets us make assertions about them. We do not impose such availability upon them, nor does our assertoric practice alone create their identity, even though asserting can help shape their identity, for better or worse. At the same time, the predicative availability of entities is only one of the many ways in which they can engage us. It is also one way in which many entities, lacking predicative capacities and practices of their own, cannot engage one another.

Heidegger's account of predicative availability goes astray when he tries to ground the asserted in the discovered. This attempt leads him to claim *both* that the asserted entity is predicatively and nonpredicatively available *and* that, when asserted, the entity's nonpredicative availability becomes veiled or, as it were, undiscovered. Two problems come to the fore. In the first place, predicative availability comes to be seen as a distorting or an opposing of nonpredicative availability, rather than simply another mode of availability that can support nonpredicative modes and can receive support from them. Rather than covering up the hammer's nonpredicative availability for hammering, for example, the hammer's availability for being predicated as "too heavy" makes its nonpredicative availability more broadly and precisely accessible. In the second place, Heidegger assigns assertoric practice a constitutive or constructive force that belies its limited "space" in the range of human practices. As we have seen, Heidegger sometimes suggests that asserting determines (*bestimmt*) the asserted, and that the true assertion discovers the entity. In contrast, it would be better to say that asserting discovers not the entity as such but the entity in its predicative availability. My alternative formulation has a direct bearing on Heidegger's conception of truth as disclosedness, the topic of the next section.

### 3. Correspondence and Disclosure

When he analyzes the derivative character of assertion in section 33, Heidegger has in view the position, advanced in section 44, that Dasein's disclosedness, not assertion, is the primary locus of truth. To establish this position, the three subsections of section 44 (a) explore the ontological foundations of traditional correspondence theories of truth as the agreement of assertion and object (SZ 214–19), (b) demonstrate the derivative character of such theories (SZ 219–26), and (c) analyze the kind of Being that truth as disclosedness possesses (SZ 226–30). Without rehearsing every step in Heidegger's extended argument, I shall follow his outline to discuss (1) the connection between truth and the correctness of accomplished assertions, and (2) the connection between assertoric agreement and Dasein's disclosedness. Several clues for my critical reading of section 44 come from the work of Ernst Tugendhat.<sup>30</sup>

30. Ernst Tugendhat, "Heideggers Idee von Wahrheit," in *Heidegger: Perspektiven zur Deutung seines Werkes*, ed. Otto Pöggeler (Cologne and Berlin: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1970), pp. 286–97; translated by

### Correctness and Truth

In harmony with my own criticisms of Heidegger's account of the asserted, Tugendhat argues that the first subsection of section 44 slides through three different formulations of the truth of an assertion, implicitly distancing itself from Husserl's theory of truth, to arrive, without sufficient argumentation, at Heidegger's own characteristic idea of truth.<sup>31</sup> In moving from Husserl's static conception of the assertoric act as a mode of intentionality to a more dynamic conception of assertion as a mode of disclosedness, Heidegger capitalizes on an unexamined ambiguity in the concept of "uncovering" or "discovering" (*Entdecken*):

In the first instance, [discovering] stands for pointing out (*apophainesthai*) in general. In this sense every assertion—the false as well as the true—can be said to [discover]. Nevertheless, Heidegger [also] employs the word in a narrow and pregnant sense according to which a false assertion would be a covering up rather than an [discovering]. In this case . . . the truth lies in [being-discovered] [*Entdeckendsein*]; however, what does [discovering] now mean if it no longer signifies pointing out [*Aufzeigen*] in general? How is *aletheia* to be differentiated from *apophansis*?<sup>32</sup>

Tugendhat replies that Heidegger gives no answer, for he "fails to expressly differentiate . . . between the broad and the narrow meaning of [discovering]." <sup>33</sup>

Against Heidegger, Tugendhat insists that the truth or falsity of an assertion cannot lie merely in its discovering or covering up an entity, but must lie more specifically in how such discovering or covering up takes place. Just as the true

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Richard Wolin as "Heidegger's Idea of Truth," in *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 245–63. My modifications to this translation (indicated by square brackets) are intended to maintain some consistency with the Stambaugh translation of *Being and Time*. A longer version of Tugendhat's critique occurs in a seminal study that has not been translated into English: Ernst Tugendhat, *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger*, 2d ed. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1970).

31. Tugendhat, "Heidegger's Idea," pp. 250–52; "Heideggers Idee," pp. 288–89. The three formulations, all of them on SZ 218, are: (1) The assertion is true if it discovers the entity "just as it is in itself." (The word "just" appears in the Macquarrie and Robinson translation, p. 261, but not in the Stambaugh translation, p. 201. Heidegger's formulation in German reads "Das gemeinte Seiende selbst zeigt sich so, wie es an ihm selbst ist.") (2) The assertion is true if it discovers the entity "in itself." (3) The assertion is true if it discovers the entity. Whereas Tugendhat accuses Heidegger of sliding through these three formulations, Dahlstrom argues that formulations (2) and (3) can be understood as synonyms or metonyms for (1), and he gives textual evidence for this interpretation (pp. 405–7). I think that Tugendhat could easily concede this reading without giving up his main criticism, however. In this connection, see n. 21 above.

32. "Heidegger's Idea," p. 254; "Heideggers Idee," pp. 290–91. Although Tugendhat applauds Heidegger's "dynamic" conception of assertion as a mode of disclosedness, I wonder how dynamic this conception can be, given Heidegger's emphasis on disclosedness as a state of Being rather than on disclosure as a process of mediation.

33. "Heidegger's Idea," p. 254; "Heideggers Idee," p. 291.

assertion discovers the entity *as the entity is in itself*, so the false assertion “[covers up] [*verdeckt*] the entity as it is in itself, and it does this in that it [discovers] it in another way than the way it is in itself.”<sup>34</sup> Although Heidegger is right to ground the truth of assertions as correctness (*Richtigkeit*) in the truth of entities as discoveredness or (in the term he later prefers) unconcealedness or unconcealment (*Unverborgenheit*), he simply bypasses Husserl’s insight that the truth of entities is not their givenness as such but rather their self-givenness, a “superior mode of givenness.”<sup>35</sup> As a pointing out that aims at truth, assertion tries to measure the entity’s givenness against that entity’s self-givenness. Hence, Tugendhat argues, assertion must be directed not simply by the entity as it shows itself but by the entity as it manifests itself *in itself*:

Self-sameness is the critical measure of unconcealedness [*des Entbergens*]. Only if this second meaning of being-directed is recognized in its autonomy can it profitably be clarified with the help of the first; so that one can say that the false assertion covers up the entity and that only the true assertion genuinely unconceals [*entbirgt*] the entity—that is, as it is in itself.<sup>36</sup>

According to Tugendhat, it is only because Heidegger first ignores the distinction between givenness and self-givenness, and then equates truth with discovering as *apophansis*, that he can subsequently regard untruth as an aspect of truth, rather than as something opposed to truth.

To provide terminological markers for Tugendhat’s criticisms, I shall distinguish between the “correctness” of an accomplished assertion and the “predicative self-disclosure” of the asserted entity in its predicative availability. By “predicative self-disclosure” I mean a process whereby an entity, in its predicative availability, offers or manifests itself in relevant accord with nonpredicative aspects of its availability.<sup>37</sup> I agree with Heidegger (using my own terminology) that both assertoric correctness and predicative self-disclosure are grounded in a more comprehensive mediation of disclosive practices and systatic availability.<sup>38</sup> But I also agree with Tugendhat that, to connect this mediation with

34. “Heidegger’s Idea,” p. 255; “Heideggers Idee,” p. 291.

35. “Heidegger’s Idea,” p. 256; “Heideggers Idee,” p. 292.

36. “Heidegger’s Idea,” p. 257; “Heideggers Idee,” p. 293. The translation of Tugendhat’s essay does not bring out the close terminological connection between the assertion’s correctness (*Richtigkeit*) and the assertion’s being directed (*gerichtet*) by the entity’s self-givenness.

37. This is a general but not an exhaustive stipulation. Not included, for example, would be first-order statements about which one makes second-order statements (assuming for the sake of illustration that first-order statements can properly be called entities). In such cases, the relevant accord might be with other predicative aspects of the “entity’s” availability.

38. The adjective “systatic” derives from Herman Dooyeweerd’s discussion of the “intermodal systasis of meaning” that grounds any “theoretical synthesis.” In Dooyeweerd’s account, “systasis” refers to the wholeness or integrality with which the “modal aspects” of reality present themselves in ordinary or “pretheoretical” experience. See *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2, pp. 427ff. My term systatic availability refers to the multidimensional “handiness,” both predicative and nonpredicative, of the entities with which human beings have dealings.

the concept of truth, one must have a way to distinguish between true and untrue "discoverings," "unconcealments," and the like.

At the same time, I want to avoid Tugendhat's tendency to anchor the distinction between true and untrue in the "self-givenness" of the asserted entity. Although an accomplished assertion about an entity does aim to discover the entity as that entity manifests itself "in itself," not all accomplished assertions are about entities, nor is such discovering sufficient for the assertion to be correct, nor does an entity's manifesting itself occur in isolation from other entities. Accomplished assertions can be about processes or actions rather than about entities (e.g., "To err is human"); the correctness of accomplished assertions depends in part on how they are formulated and used, and not merely on how they "accord" with what is asserted; and the entity's manifesting itself occurs in relationship to other entities, including those entities (i.e., human beings) to whom the entity is manifesting itself. The Husserlian notions of self-givenness and "evidence" have a static quality that belies the dynamics uncovered, albeit only partially, by Heidegger's notion of discoveredness. To avoid the static connotations of "self-givenness," I have adopted the term "predicative self-disclosure."

All that having been said, an account is still required for the predicative self-disclosure of asserted entities and the correctness of accomplished assertions. Earlier I introduced the term "predicative availability" to refer to the fact that entities (and not only entities) offer themselves to us in ways that let us make assertions about them. I also said that asserting something discovers the entity in its predicative availability. Now it can be added that, when correct, an accomplished assertion discovers the entity in its predicative availability in a manner that accords with other relevant ways in which the asserted entity is available. Imagine, for example, that a carpenter says, "Too heavy, give me the other one," in a certain context. If correct, her (implicit) assertion "The hammer is too heavy" discovers the hammer as something of which relative heaviness can be predicated. It discovers this in a way that accords with the (un)suitability of the hammer for the task at hand.

Accordingly, asserting can go wrong in two ways: (1) by failing to discover the entity in its predicative availability and (2) by discovering this in a manner that fails to accord with other relevant ways in which the entity is available. The first way usually results in assertions that are "false" in the sense of being misleading or misplaced (e.g., claiming "The hammer is too heavy" when the tool in question offers itself for predication not as a hammer but as a pipe wrench). The second way usually results in assertions that are "false" in the sense of being inaccurate (e.g., claiming "The hammer is too heavy" when the hammer in question is very well suited for the task and for the carpenter in question).

Those are not the only ways in which asserting can go wrong. For example, the asserter can misspeak or can respond inappropriately to a question or can deliberately lie. In addition, the "fore-structure" of a speech community can

be such that false assertions are routinely made about an entire range of entities. Hence, looked at from the side of assertoric practice, the measure of truth cannot be a single criterion such as the traditional "correspondence with the object" or the Heideggerian "discovering the entity [(just as it is) in itself]." Rather the measure must be a complex of considerations that may not be specifiable as necessary and sufficient conditions.

Satisfying this complex depends in part on the entity's predicative self-disclosure. In the usage proposed above, "predicative self-disclosure" refers specifically to the asserted entity in its predicative availability. This usage acknowledges that entities disclose themselves when they are neither asserted nor predicatively available. In fact, if entities did not disclose themselves in nonpredicative ways for nonassertoric practices, most of them would be incapable of predicative self-disclosure. This is an indispensable insight to be retained from Heidegger's account of handiness. But my usage of "predicative self-disclosure" also notes that entities disclose themselves when they are asserted and are predicatively available.

The predicative self-disclosure of an asserted entity lies in its offering itself for predicative practice reliably and in accordance with other ways in which the entity is available. The self-disclosing entity offers itself not simply "just as that entity is in itself," as Tugendhat claims, but rather just as that entity is available to us in some other respect. When the hammer discloses itself as something about which one can accurately claim "The hammer is too heavy," it offers itself just as that hammer is available for a particular task of carpentry, say, for setting nails. As is the case with asserting, an entity's predicative self-disclosure can misfire in a couple of ways: either (1) the entity can withdraw from the assertoric field, in which case it becomes or remains predicatively unintelligible (although most likely available in other ways), or (2) the entity can offer itself for predicative practice but not just as it is available in some relevant way, in which case the entity becomes predicatively confusing. In the first case, we might find ourselves "unable to say anything," in the sense of being unable to make an assertion about the entity. In the second instance, we might find ourselves "not knowing quite what to say," in the sense of finding our assertions about the entity repeatedly "off the mark." Although neither of these misfirings may be prevalent in our dealings with hammers and the like, they occur frequently in our dealings with one another.

My account of assertoric correctness and predicative self-disclosure has the advantage of differentiating *aletheia* from *apophansis* without either resorting to a static notion of self-givenness, à la Tugendhat, or turning incorrectness and predicative hiddenness into aspects of truth, à la Heidegger. At the same time, this account serves to strengthen the Heideggerian intuition that assertoric correctness, although an aspect of truth, is neither the sole or primary locus of truth nor the key to a comprehensive conception of truth. Now let's see what clues to a more comprehensive conception of truth occur when Heidegger grounds the "agreement of assertion and object" in Dasein's disclosedness.

### *Agreement and Disclosedness*

To show how the purported agreement of assertion and object derives from Dasein's disclosedness, and thereby to transform the traditional conception of truth, Heidegger traces a path from ordinary language to what could be called theoretical metalanguage. His account goes roughly as follows (SZ 223–26):<sup>39</sup>

1. In talk Dasein expresses itself as a being toward entities that discovers entities.
2. In the practice of asserting, Dasein expresses itself about discovered entities and communicates how these are discovered.
3. The “aboutness” of the accomplished assertion [*in ihrem Worüber*] preserves the discoveredness of the entity asserted.
4. As something expressed by Dasein, the accomplished assertion becomes something at hand and further discussable, and the entity's discoveredness also becomes handy. At the same time, the accomplished assertion, which preserves discoveredness, has a relation to the asserted entity.
5. Subsequent discussion of the accomplished assertion exempts Dasein from discovering entities in an original way, even though in such discussion Dasein does enter a “being toward” those entities whose discoveredness the assertion preserves.
6. Because of such discussion at one remove, which is common in public talk, the assertion's handiness gets covered up, and the discoveredness of the asserted entity becomes an objectively present conformity between the accomplished assertion and the asserted entity.
7. Hence the original connections among Dasein, entities, and assertion get reduced to an objectively present conformity or agreement between an objectively present assertion and an objectively present object.
8. As a result, says Heidegger, “Truth as disclosedness and as a being toward discovered beings—a being that itself discovers—has become truth as the agreement between innerworldly things objectively present” (SZ 225). Moreover, this objectively present agreement *seems* primary and not derivative because Dasein ordinarily understands itself and Being in terms of what is encountered as objectively present. Traditional ontology simply strengthens such an understanding.

Earlier I questioned two corollaries to Heidegger's claim that assertion is a derivative mode of interpretation: that assertion has the same thrown projection as understanding has, and that assertion “levels” the existential-hermeneutical “as” into an apophantical “as.” Heidegger's derivation of agreement from disclosedness brings to light a third and equally questionable corollary, namely,

39. My summary introduces the terms “practice of asserting” and “accomplished assertion” at points where these seem consistent with Heidegger's account.

that the sharing and discussing of accomplished assertions spares Dasein a direct encounter with entities themselves in "original" experience" and thereby helps turn accomplished assertions into objectively present things (SZ 224). Deep in the "fore-structure" of Heidegger's phenomenology lies the image of authentic existence as having direct dealings with equipment and with that which equipment makes available—the image of *Homo faber* as the attentive craftsperson who can get on with his or her work "without wasting words." The image suggests that the more indirect and mediated our dealings become, the more we drift from authentic understanding, interpretation, and talk. Once one abandons this image, already ideologically loaded in the 1920s, one becomes dubious about the entire notion that public talk spares us a direct encounter. There are two reasons for this: first, no experience of entities is direct and original, and, second, public talk mediates even the most "original" experience. Heidegger's account of assertion remains caught in the dream of eidetic intuition, despite his shifting Husserlian phenomenology from the realm of theoretically perceived noemata to the realm of circumspectly interpreted entities.<sup>40</sup>

The dream of a direct encounter clouds Heidegger's account of the connection between agreement and disclosedness. His account begins with the assumption that Dasein's original self-expression and orientation and discovering are such that the entities discovered are truly discovered and that their discoveredness itself is true. Hence Dasein's disclosedness can itself be described as truth. Yet, as Tugendhat points out, to describe disclosedness as truth is to preclude asking how Dasein's disclosedness can be truly disclosive and how it can be false. Even if the agreement of assertion and object is derivative from a more primordial truth, that from which this agreement derives must be such that it can itself be distinguished from untruth. As it stands, Heidegger's account of the connection between agreement and disclosedness could just as readily be given for the lack of agreement between assertion and object.

One way out of the impasse would be to identify principles according to which human self-expression, orientation, and discovering can be more or less true. If "correctness" indicates such a principle for the practice of asserting, perhaps there are parallel principles for other ranges of human practice, such as resourcefulness in the production and use of goods and services or solidarity in the development of human communities or justice in the governance of social institutions. It would be nonsense, of course, to equate adherence to

40. Cf. Theodor W. Adorno, *Against Epistemology: A Metacritique*, *Studies in Husserl and the Phenomenological Antinomies*, trans. Willis Domingo (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), pp. 186–234; *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie: Studien Über Husserl und die phänomenologischen Antinomien*, *Gesammelte Schriften* 5 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), pp. 190–235. In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987), Jürgen Habermas argues that, in both earlier and later articulations, Heidegger "remains caught in the problems that the philosophy of the subject in the form of Husserlian phenomenology had presented to him" (p. 136).

such principles with the achievement of assertoric "truth." Yet there may be a more comprehensive sense of truth according to which "being in the truth" amounts to fidelity to that which people hold in common and which holds them in common. That which holds them in common could be principles of the sort already mentioned. That which they hold in common may or may not be in line with such principles. Yet their holding something in common requires appeals or gestures toward such principles, even when the appeal is self-serving or the gesture is ideologically distorted. Moreover, for the principles to hold people in common, people must themselves hold something in common. Correlatively, infidelity to the commonly holding/held amounts to "being in untruth." From this description it appears that Dasein's "disclosedness" is itself a site of public struggle over principles for human existence. Whether the commonly holding/held sustains and promotes life is always implicitly at issue.<sup>41</sup>

My emphasis on fidelity to the commonly holding/held recalls an etymological link between "truth" and "troth" that Heidegger had discovered before he wrote *Sein und Zeit*. Although one does not want to make etymology do the work of philosophical argument, it is at least noteworthy that "true" derives from the Old English word "treowe," which means "faithful." "Truth" derives from the Old English word "treowth"—"fidelity"—which is also a source of the word "troth." Moreover, "true" is commonly used to mean steadfast, loyal, honest, or just, and one archaic meaning of "truth" is fidelity.<sup>42</sup> If one took the more comprehensive sense of truth to involve fidelity to the commonly holding and commonly held, then the pursuit of assertoric correctness could be seen as one important but limited way in which truth occurs. Similarly, the failure or refusal to pursue assertoric correctness could be regarded as contrary to truth, not only in the sense of leading to assertoric "falsehood" but also in the sense

41. I elaborate this notion of fidelity, and connect it with the idea of life-giving disclosure, in chapter 4 of *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse, and Imaginative Disclosure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004). There I develop an idea of truth as "a process of life-giving disclosure marked by fidelity to the commonly holding and commonly held."

42. In *The Genesis of Heidegger's "Being and Time"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), Theodore Kisiel introduces "troth" to translate Heidegger's use of *verwahren* (in the early 1920s) for a non-theoretical and practical or even religious sense of truth. The most prominent usages occur in Heidegger's courses on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and in his October 1922 typescript titled "Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles (Anzeige der hermeneutischen Situation)." Kisiel suggests that Heidegger's concept of truth as "taking into troth and holding in troth" derives from his appropriation of Christian sources such as Paul, Augustine, and Luther, which "infiltrate Heidegger's understanding of the Aristotelian senses of practical truth" (p. 226). Heidegger, commenting on Aristotle, claims that holding being(s) in troth (*Seinsverwahrung*) is the fundamental experience of truth. Moreover, *nous*, *sophia*, *episteme*, *techné*, and *phronesis* are all modes of "true-ing." In a gloss to Heidegger's handwritten note to the October 1922 typescript, Kisiel connects troth to care as well: "To care is to take into troth and hold in troth, the kind of having . . . involved in the habits of truth" (pp. 537–38 n. 17). See further Kisiel, pp. 227–75, 302–6, 491–92. Michael Bauer, by contrast, translates "verwahren" as "truthful safe-keeping." See Martin Heidegger, "Phenomenological Interpretations with Respect to Aristotle: Indication of the Hermeneutical Situation," *Man and World* 25 (1992): 355–93.



of undermining other ways in which fidelity to the commonly holding/held is to be practiced.

Such an approach would have several advantages over the account given by Heidegger. In the first place, a more comprehensive conception of truth would not preclude distinguishing truth from untruth but would rather make available a number of respects in which such a distinction can be drawn. Second, there would be no need to see the discussion of accomplished assertions as more remote from primordial truth, since such discussion would simply be one of the many ways in which the pursuit of truth occurs. Third, truth would not be turned into a state of Dasein's being, but would rather be seen as a dynamic, multifaceted, and fragile calling in which everyone always has a stake and to which no one can avoid making a reply. Fourth, the agreement between assertion and object, which itself is only one component of assertoric "truth," would no longer direct our understanding of what truth is like, not even in the inverted Heideggerian sense that comes from trying to show how such agreement derives from disclosedness. The relation of epistemic subject to epistemic object that strongly colors Heidegger's account of disclosedness would no longer be the point of departure for understanding what truth is like.

At the same time, the proposed conception respects Heidegger's insistence on the temporal character of truth. The principles already mentioned are not timeless absolutes but rather historical horizons or orientations. They are historically learned, achieved, contested, reformulated, and ignored, and their pursuit occurs amid social struggle. Moreover, the description of these principles as "commonly held" does not mean that they are always and everywhere recognized, or that they provide the heavy artillery of common sense. Rather, it means that when people in modern societies find themselves pushed to the extremes of their self-understanding and their shared talk, they cannot avoid a struggle over these very principles.

To summarize: I have argued in sections 2 and 3 that Heidegger underestimates the role of predication in assertion, and that he incorrectly portrays predicative availability as a distorting of nonpredicative availability. Heidegger is right to try to ground the correctness of assertions in a more comprehensive mediation of disclosive practices and systatic availability. For this attempt to succeed, however, assertoric correctness must be seen as one of many principles in accordance with which the disclosure of culture, society, and human life can be more or less true.

In Olthuisian terms, assertoric correctness must be regarded as one of the good connections with which human beings in modern societies are gifted and to which they are called. Or, to adapt Pauline language from a text Olthuis frequently cites, pursuing assertoric correctness is an important way, but only one way, "to work out [our] salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). It is part of, but by no means all of, "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Olthuis's "hermeneutics of connection" highlights both the contexts of this pursuit and the need to align it with fidelity to other principles. When prophecy

is required, our asserting may need to hammer; where celebration, to sing; where consolation, to caress—and sometimes, as in Isaiah, all three.<sup>43</sup> An alignment with responses to other callings is equally crucial. All the correct asserting in the world will not by itself repair the damage done by social injustice or ecological violence. Nor, of course, will incorrect asserting or sheer nonasserting let justice and peace embrace. Jim's wisdom to see such connections despite modern domination, and his courage to make them amid postmodern disruption, are blessings of generosity for which I am profoundly grateful.

43. See especially Isaiah 40:1–11, the prologue to Deutero-Isaiah, which Olthuis's "Biblical Foundations" course once encouraged me to study.