Heidegger's Critique Of Realism

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In a well-known passage, Heidegger states that the 'scandal of philosophy' is not, as Kant had claimed, that the existence of the external world has never been proven, but rather that philosophy admits the need for such a proof.[1] To demand a proof of the external world is scandalous because it betrays a fundamental mistake lying at the heart of traditional philosophy. The mistake that yields the scandal is the acceptance of a faulty ontology that harbors an inadequate conception of the subject/object relation. Although this ontology, which Heidegger names the "ontology of the present-at-hand", has been adopted by both idealistic and realistic thought, thereby saddling both idealists and realists with the problem of proving the external world, Heidegger sees realism as the primary purveyor of the scandal.[2]

In the final analysis, Heidegger can be classified neither as a realist nor as an idealist. Instead, he attempts to forge a position 'between' realism and idealism. But the path by which his thought rejects these two options begins with a sharp turn away from realism, which can be discerned in *Being and Time*'s famous analysis of circumspective concern (Division I, chapter III). The anti-realism that this analysis yields has led many commentators to view Heidegger as an idealist,[3] and although I believe that such an assessment places excessive weight on Heidegger's idealist dimension, this dimension is ingredient to his thought. As Heidegger himself avows, idealism "has an advantage in principle"[4] over realism. Most importantly, the analysis of circumspective concern and its repudiation of realism reveals a useful strategy for idealist thinkers.

Heidegger's strategy is to take immediate experience, rather than common sense beliefs, as the starting point of ontological investigation. In immediate experience, objects appear as essentially objects *for a subject*, and so are intrinsically related to, rather than independent of, subjectivity. By utilizing immediate experience as the standard for determining the basic characteristics of objects, then, Heidegger is able to repudiate the realist's assertion of the object's subject-independence. And Heidegger's claim that the external world need not be proven is rooted in this powerful critique of realism.

I.

Heidegger defines idealism as the position which maintains that "Being

cannot be explained through entities."[5] In other words, in and of themselves, entities cannot account for their own existence, but instead are dependent upon consciousness. The idealist, then, claims that objects cannot exist unless conscious beings also exist. Realism, by contrast, asserts that objects exist independently of consciousness. And it is this assertion of the independence of objects that saddles the realist with the problem of the external world.

If objects are independent of consciousness, as the realist maintains, then both consciousness and objects are isolated, self-enclosed entities with no essential internal relation to each other. Consciousness is fundamentally indifferent to the objects around it; they carry no inherent significance for consciousness, but are simply bits of inert stuff. A relation is first established when an object happens to come within the conscious being's perceptual field. The primary relationship between consciousness and objects, then, is one in which consciousness confronts an insignificant thing. Within this mode of encounter, consciousness can do no more than simply stare at the object and acknowledge its properties.[6] This relationship by which an isolated consciousness allegedly accesses isolated objects is what Heidegger names "knowing (*Erkennen*)."[7] The realist's belief in the primacy of knowing is expressed most perspicuously in the privileging of the 'theoretical' or 'disinterested' encounter with objects, as opposed to the 'practical' or 'interested' encounter.[8]

Realism's prioritization of the theoretical relation is linked to the problem of the external world since the privileging of the theoretical is grounded in the Cartesian interpretation of consciousness as an isolated entity, a 'subject' set over against a world of external objects. The subject exists within its internal realm which it must transcend in order to initiate its theoretical commerce with objects. And the problem of the external world simply asks how such transcendence is possible.

To summarize, if the realist's assertion of the independence of objects is correct, then consciousness is an isolated subject. And, in that case, the subject's ability to transcend its internal realm is problematic. The existence of a *problem* of the external world, then, is a consequence of realism. But if consciousness is an isolated subject, then theoretical knowing is the primary mode of encounter. Thus, realism implies that there is a problem of the external world, which in turn implies the primacy of theoretical knowing. In view of this series of implications, Heidegger's argumentative strategy becomes clear. If it can be shown that the theoretical mode of encounter is not primary, then it will follow that consciousness is not an isolated subject, and so the problem of the external world will vanish. And

since the problem of the external world follows from the independence of the object, the dissolution of this scandalous problem will also serve as a critique of realism. Heidegger's discussion of circumspective concern, which reverses the priority of the theoretical and practical modes of encounter, carries out these functions.[9]

II.

Heidegger begins his examination of the relationship between consciousness and its objects by focusing on Dasein's "average everydayness,"[10] That is, he examines the way that objects appear to us in our immediate experience, or the way that they are "proximally given."[11] And he notes that if we simply look to our immediate encounter with entities, we find that they do not appear as the inert objects of a disinterested, theoretical gaze but as things for practical use, or "equipment (*Zeuge*)".

To begin with the most obvious case (i.e. a man-made tool), a hammer is not immediately experienced as a piece of wood with a piece of metal attached to it; rather, it is immediately experienced as that with which one can drive nails—an object of use. To take a less obvious case (i.e. a man-made object that is not, strictly speaking, a tool), a chair is not immediately experienced as several attached pieces of wood; rather, it is immediately experienced as that on which one can sit. Again, the object is immediately experienced as an object of use. Finally, to take what may be the least obvious case (i.e. a natural object), Heidegger's position is that, say, a mountain range is not immediately experienced as a huge conglomeration of rocks, trees, etc. Rather, it is immediately experienced as that which one can climb, or that which one's car cannot climb, or that which enhances the beauty of the sunset. In any case, the object is immediately experienced as an object of use, a practical object. In Heidegger's technical language, entities are proximally given as ready-to-hand rather than as present-at-hand. The ready-to-hand is that with which we are practically involved, and such objects possess a unique structure.

Indeed, ancient Greek philosophy had emphasized the importance of practical dealings by referring to things as *pragmata*. Still, as Heidegger notes, the Greeks regarded *pragmata* as primarily "mere Things," or present-at-hand entities, that were subsequently invested with practical value.[12] This belief that entities are given proximally as merely present-at-hand, and that their usefulness follows from a supplementation of practical significance, had remained largely unchallenged throughout the history of philosophy, thereby allowing realism to stand as a viable philosophical position. If entities are viewed as primarily present-at-hand, then there is no

reason that such objects should be dependent upon consciousness in order to exist as present-at-hand. To see how Heidegger's denial of the primacy of the present-at-hand strikes at the heart of realism, we must begin by examining the structure of the ready-to-hand entity.

Heidegger's discussion of the ready-to-hand begins by pointing out that, strictly speaking, there is "no such thing as an equipment."[13] The ready-to-hand is never discovered in isolation but as situated within a practical context since the very nature of a practical object is "*assignment* or *reference* (*Verweisung*)."[14] To be an object of practical concern is to be useful *for* some purpose; the ready-to-hand entity is assigned, or referred, beyond itself. It only is the useful object that it is in terms of the practical context within which it is set. And the immediate purposive context within which the ready-to-hand entity appears is itself set within a still broader, practically oriented, context of equipmental references. Ultimately, all sets of equipmental references are situated within an *all encompassing* field of equipmental references which Heidegger names the "*Umwelt*"—*the* environing world.[15] Thus, the ready-to-hand entity only is what it is in terms of the environing world, which is the total equipmental context within which the entity is purposively situated.

The upshot of Heidegger's analysis is that the environing world lends the ready-to-hand entity its ready-to-hand character. Without the environing world, there could be no equipmental entities (qua equipmental). In this sense, the environing world is the very readiness-to-hand of the ready-to-hand. In less technical terms, the environing world constitutes the usefulness of the useful. It is the field of equipmental references that determines the ready-to-hand *qua* ready-to-hand. This is why Dasein must already understand, or pre-understand, the environing world in order to encounter ready-to-hand entities as such.[16] Dasein's recognition that something is useful presupposes an understanding of what it is to be useful, an understanding of usefulness. And to be useful is to be situated within the all encompassing equipmental context.

Not only do useful things require usefulness, but usefulness requires a *user*. In Heidegger's idiom, ready-to-hand entities cannot be without the environing world, and the environing world cannot be without circumspective Dasein. This point is fairly obvious. A useful thing could have no usefulness unless there were someone for whom it could possibly be useful. A hammer could not be that with which one can drive nails unless there were someone who could drive nails with it. Heidegger points this out by claiming that Dasein is the "for-the-sake-of-which (*Worum-willen*)"[17] of all practical involvements. Any series of practical references terminates in Dasein itself

as the ultimate purpose of its purposive activities, as that for whom the useful possesses usefulness. While ready-to-hand entities refer beyond themselves to the environing world, the environing world is anchored in Dasein, i.e., in a being that pre-understands the environing world, thereby allowing ready-to-hand entities to exist as ready-to-hand.[18]

Note that the structure of the ready-to-hand is idealistic. Practical entities do not exist independently of circumspective Dasein. Simply put, things cannot be useful without someone for whom they are useful. Heidegger's analysis articulates an idealism of the ready-to-hand. But certainly no realist would contest this position.

The realist could simply say that *qua* useful the useful object requires someone for whom it is useful, but it is independent *qua* object,[19] And this reply turns on the realist's assertion of the primacy of the present-at-hand. According to the realist, practical value is supplementary since objects are fundamentally, or 'in themselves', the inert, useless objects of the theoretical gaze. Although there could be no useful objects without Dasein, insofar as usefulness is added to objects by Dasein, there could still be objects without Dasein. In order for Heidegger to counter this realist reply, he must maintain that a ready-to-hand entity is not a present-at-hand entity to which Dasein has *added* usefulness, but rather that a present-at-hand entity is a ready-to-hand entity from which Dasein has s*ubtracted* usefulness. If uselessness is simply an impoverished form of usefulness, then Heidegger's idealism of the ready-to-hand extends to the present-at-hand, thereby allowing him to deny the independence of both practical and theoretical objects. Heidegger makes precisely this claim when he characterizes presence-at-hand as a "deficient mode" of readiness-to-hand.[20]

The deficient character of the present-at-hand follows from the primacy of the practical encounter. Just as the realist's assertion that the theoretical encounter is primary implies that practical value is an addition to a present-at-hand substratum, so Heidegger's assertion that the practical encounter is primary implies that the theoretical object is stripped of its fundamental practical significance. Heidegger illustrates this point in his well-known description of the breakdown of the equipmental context.

Entities with which we have a practical involvement become objects of disinterested theoretical inspection when the ready-to-hand entity's equipmental references are somehow disturbed, e.g., when an equipmental entity breaks. In this situation, the ready-to-hand entity becomes experienced as present-at-hand through a reduction of usefulness, and so the entity's presence-at-hand is but a minimal form of a prior readiness-to-hand, or as Heidegger puts it "the Being-just-present-at-hand-and-no-more of

s*omething ready-to-hand.*"[21] Of course, this is not to say that all present-at-hand objects are pieces of equipment that have ceased functioning; Heidegger is not asserting a merely temporal priority of the ready-to-hand. Rather, the example of the broken tool is a clear manifestation of the phenomenological, or experiential, priority of the ready-to-hand and of the correlatively derivative, i.e. deficient, character of the present-at-hand.[22]

Heidegger's turn to average everydayness yields the first step in his critique of realism. First, it shows that objects appear to us primarily as the ready-to-hand entities of practical concern. The primacy of the ready-to-hand implies that the present-at-hand objects of theoretical activity are deficiently ready-to-hand. Therefore, the structure of Dasein's encounter with the present-at-hand is a form of, and thus structurally isomorphic with, the structure of the practical encounter. We must now see how, exactly, this structural isomorphism lays the groundwork for a critique of realism.

III.

Recall the characterization of realism and its consequences sketched above. The realist begins with the independence of objects: the fundamental realist claim. The independence of the object implies that consciousness is an isolated subject, from which it follows that the theoretical mode of encounter is primary. The strategy that we mapped out for Heidegger was to deny the primacy of the theoretical encounter, which would imply that consciousness is not an isolated subject, and so the realist's fundamental claim that objects are independent would be refuted. Thus far, we have examined Heidegger's case against the primacy of the theoretical encounter.

Acknowledging the priority of the practical encounter, we were led to conclude that the structure of Dasein's encounter with the present-at-hand possesses the same basic characteristics as the encounter with the ready-to-hand. And in the practical encounter Dasein does not appear as an isolated subject somehow transcending its internal sphere in order to establish a relationship with objects to which it is inherently unrelated. Instead, the practical entity is fundamentally useful for Dasein; it is, by its very nature, related to Dasein. Thus, Dasein need not *establish* a relationship with the ready-to-hand entity but is already involved with it. Dasein and the ready-to-hand, then, are not isolated self-enclosed entities with no essential relation to each other. Dasein need not escape its internal sphere in order to access equipmental entities but is already 'out among' them. And, by virtue of the primacy of practical involvement, the same is true of Dasein's encounter with the present-at-hand, although in the theoretical encounter Dasein's relationship to the object is reduced to a bare minimum.

Now we can begin to see how Heidegger's position refutes the basic realist claim that objects exist independently of conscious beings. In the practical encounter, Dasein is related to equipmental entities insofar as they are useful for circumspective Dasein. Thus, the ready-to-hand entity is dependent upon Dasein rather than set against an isolated subject. And since present-at-hand objects are deficiently ready-to-hand, even these supposedly independent objects of the theoretical gaze are in fact for Dasein. They are just as dependent upon Dasein as are ready-to-hand entities, although in a deficient mode of dependence. Since uselessness, purposelessness, or theoretical disinterest are modes of usefulness, purposiveness, or practical interest, the idealistic structure of Dasein's practical activities applies equally to its theoretical activities.[23]

Here, we must note that Heidegger's point is not that Dasein is essentially a tool user or that objects are essentially tools. Dasein cannot be simply identified with *circumspective* Dasein nor can objects be simply equated with the ready-to-hand. Rather, the examination of everydayness yields the clue—the "initial phenomenological insight"[24]—by which the fundamental relationship between Dasein and beings *per se* can be discerned. The relation between circumspective Dasein and the ready-to-hand is the *ontic* manifestation of the *ontological* structure of Dasein's relation to beings *per se*. Heidegger's argument against realism culminates in this move from the ontic to the ontological level.

In order to move to the ontological level, we must discover the fundamental structure determining the basic components of our immediate practical involvements, those components being ready-to-hand entities (the useful), the environing world (usefulness), and circumspective Dasein (the user). Heidegger makes this move by claiming that the fundamental structure of the environing world, its very "worldhood", is "significance (B*edeutsamkeit*)."[25] The usefulness of the ready-to-hand entity is the ontic manifestation of its ontological significance.

We can understand the assertion that readiness-to-hand is grounded in significance by recalling that the ready-to-hand is distinguished from the present-at-hand insofar as the former is useful for Dasein while the latter is useless. The realist asserts that the uselessness of the present-at-hand object is tantamount to its independence from Dasein. Heidegger's analysis of the primacy of the practical, however, shows that the present-at-hand may be without use, but as a deficient mode of the ready-to-hand it is useless *for Dasein*, and so its uselessness does not constitute independence from Dasein. Therefore, *any* object, whether it be immediately useful for Dasein and thus patently *for* Dasein, or whether it be so deficiently related to Dasein

that it purport to be completely independent, or whether its relation to Dasein be found somewhere between these extremes; *any* object is necessarily *for Dasein*. Even that which is supposedly independent of Dasein is in fact for Dasein, or as Heidegger puts it, "[w]hen Dasein does not exist 'independence' 'is' not either."[26] That is, 'independence' from Dasein is a (deficient) mode of being for Dasein, and is thus dependent upon Dasein. And to be for Dasein is to carry *significance*. Therefore, the primacy of the practical implies that whatever is is significant since whatever is is for Dasein.

To summarize, Heidegger takes practical involvement as the ontic clue to the ontological relation between Dasein and beings, and he finds the structure of such involvements to be idealistic. Beings are primarily useful, and the useful requires usefulness which requires a user. And since usefulness as well as its polar opposite are grounded ontologically in significance insofar as they are for Dasein, all entities are significant, i.e., for Dasein. Significance *is* the ontologically idealistic structure of usefulness.

Just as circumspective Dasein must pre-understand usefulness in order for something to be useful, so Dasein must preunderstand significance in order for something to be significant. And just as usefulness is necessarily for circumspective Dasein, so significance is necessarily for Dasein. Finally, since all that is is significant, the very existence of beings requires that Dasein exist as that for whom they are significant. Contrary to the claims of realism, entities are dependent upon a conscious being.

Notice how the problem of the external world has been dissolved in the above analysis. We have seen that in the practical encounter circumspective Dasein does not appear as an isolated subject that must establish a relationship with the ready-to-hand. By its very nature circumspective Dasein is already related to equipmental entities; it need not be proven that circumspective Dasein can access the ready-to-hand. And since circumspective Dasein's relation to the ready-to-hand is the ontic manifestation of Dasein's ontological relation to beings per se, it follows that Dasein is by its very nature involved with, or 'out among' beings. Thus, Dasein's ability to access beings is not a problem to be solved. Instead, such access cannot fail to occur; it has 'always already' occurred.[27] The problem of the external world is based on a misinterpretation of Dasein as an isolated subject; hence its scandalous nature. Heidegger's turn to immediate experience exposes it as a pseudo-problem.

IV.

Now that we have explored Heidegger's critique of realism, I am confident that the realists among us are not at all convinced by his argument.

Instead, the realist can point to an apparent sophism in our exposition. The realist could easily grant that the ready-to-hand is experientially primary, or that from a subjective point of view entities appear to be primarily objects of use. But Heidegger attempts to conclude from this that the ready-to-hand is ontologically prior to the present-at-hand, and that, therefore, objects are ontologically dependent upon Dasein. He seems to move from how objects seem to us to how they are objectively, or in themselves. This objection leads to an impasse.

On the one hand, Heidegger may claim that the realist's objection begs the question. That question is whether or not objects exist independently, or 'objectively'. To say that it is illegitimate to argue from how things appear 'subjectively' to how they are 'objectively' assumes that the issue has been settled. However, the realist can reply that Heidegger begs the same question. His move from the experiential facts to the ontological facts, without such expedients as Locke's causal theory of perception or some form of Leibnizean dogmatism, depends upon the objective being a form of the subjective, which, again, is precisely the point at issue. I believe that the impasse between Heidegger and the realists can be properly assessed not by further argumentation, but by noting how the competing parties arrive at their opposed question-begging premises.

The realist's assertion that objects do exist independently of consciousness is grounded in common sense, and common sense ontology supports the Cartesian division between the subjective and the objective, between the internal and the external, that is ingredient to realism.[28] As Michael Devitt says, "the traditional doctrine of realism about the external world [is] a doctrine that has always seemed so plausible to reflective common sense."[29] Not only is it plausible to common sense, but "it is in fact the core of common sense."[30] The belief in the independence of objects is not simply part of common sense, but is its most basic claim.

The power that common sense exercises over the realist is clearly expressed in G.E. Moore's "A Defence of Common Sense," in which Moore simply asserts the realist's "Common Sense view of the World".[31] In fact, he claims that "*all* philosophers, without exception, have agreed with me in holding this."[32] Since common sense asserts that objects enjoy independent existence, everybody believes this to be the case; such is the power of common sense. With this in mind, any philosophical theory that conflicts with common sense must be gainsaid for precisely this reason. Moore illustrates this point in "Some Judgements of Perception":

> This, after all, you know, really is a finger: there is no doubt about it: I know it, and you all know it. And I think we may safely challenge any

> philosopher to bring forward any argument in favour either of the proposition that we do not know it, or of the proposition that it is not true, which does not at some point, rest upon some premiss which is, beyond comparison, less certain than is the proposition which it is designed to attack. The questions whether we do ever know such things as these, and whether there are any material things, seem to me, therefore, to be questions which there is no need to take seriously: they are questions which it is quite easy to answer, with certainty, in the affirmative.[33]

Thus, the truth of common sense and its Cartesian subject/object division are not proper themes of philosophical debate. Instead, they serve as indispensable premises of all reasonable inquiry.

In view of the power of common sense, any opposition to realism must overcome a formidable obstacle. To do so, the idealist must discover a ground that is opposed to common sense while possessing the cogency of common sense. The search for such an alternative ground is facilitated by asking: Why does common sense possess this seemingly irresistible cogency? The power of common sense, I believe, lies in its *immediacy*.

Common sense ontology describes what we all 'naturally' believe apart from the counter-intuitive excesses of philosophical theories.[34] As the immediate, untainted bedrock of our beliefs about ourselves and the world, common sense serves as the starting point of ontological investigation. And as the starting point of ontology, common sense determines the basic characteristics of objects; it determines what an 'object' *is*. And according to common sense, objects are independent of consciousness. Whatever may be claimed about objects and their relation to consciousness, the independence of objects is to remain an inviolable ontological tenet since independence is essential to the very notion of an object.

As the starting point of ontological investigation, then, common sense also establishes the standard by which ontological claims are to be measured. By determining beforehand what it is to be an object, it holds the power to disallow any doctrine that conflicts with its fundamental realism since realism is built into the common sense notion of an object.

V.

Clearly, the only way to counter realism is to invoke a ground that enjoys the immediacy, and hence the cogency, of common sense but yields an idealist notion of objects, a notion of objects as dependent upon consciousness. This is precisely Heidegger's strategy.

The phenomenological method used by Heidegger looks "to the things themselves." That is, phenomenology bids us to free ourselves from the presuppositions of any theories or interpretations that we might be inclined

to impose on our experience of things. It reminds us that philosophy must begin with objects as they are *immediately* given. As Heidegger puts it,

> The achieving of phenomenological access to entities we encounter, consists...in thrusting aside our interpretive tendencies...which conceal...those entities themselves *as* encountered."[35]

The realist, of course, will say that this is exactly what the turn to common sense does; it consults the objects themselves, independently of any subjective interpretations.

Yet the phenomenologist holds that the realist's appeal to common sense does not look to the things themselves. The appeal to common sense is problematic because it obscures the nature of objects as they are immediately experienced. While common sense describes our immediate *beliefs* about objects,[36] these beliefs are inconsistent with our immediate *experience* of objects. Although our immediate common sense beliefs view objects as independent of consciousness, our immediate experience is of significant objects, objects *for* consciousness. Immediate experience, then, possesses the immediacy of common sense while yielding an idealist notion of what it is to be an object. And for the phenomenologist it is immediate experience, not our fundamental beliefs, that yields the 'thing itself'. Thus, from the phenomenological point of view, to be an object is to be dependent on consciousness. Through the turn to immediate experience, objectivity is radically re-defined.

Husserl combats common sense ontology, or the "natural attitude," through the phenomenological epoche, which he describes as "a certain refraining from judgement, better, *refraining from belief...*"[37] The belief from which the phenomenologist refrains is the common sense positing of "the spatiotemporal factual being of anything 'real',"[38] i.e. the object's independence from consciousness. Like Husserl, Heidegger appeals to immediate experience rather than common sense beliefs. And like Husserl, Heidegger sees the realist ontology of common sense as an imposition that obscures the fundamental nature of the relationship between objects and consciousness, which is properly revealed by immediate experience.[39]

Beginning with immediate experience, Heidegger finds that objects are given as ready-to-hand objects of use, as significant for Dasein, and from this immediate finding he argues that objects are ontologically dependent upon Dasein—a step that the realist refuses to allow since common sense ontology defines objects as independent, and therefore draws a strong distinction between the way that objects appear and the way that they really are. But this distinction only obtains if we take common sense beliefs as the starting point and ultimate standard of ontological investigation. Yet,

common sense beliefs are no more immediate than is immediate experience, and so the realist ontology adumbrated by common sense is, philosophically, no more cogent than is the idealist ontology of Heideggerian phenomenology.

Heidegger's move from the way objects are experienced to the way that objects are is just as legitimate as the realist's refusal to do so. Just as the immediacy of common sense justifies the realist's use of common sense ontology as the starting point and ultimate standard of ontological investigation, so the immediacy of immediate experience justifies Heidegger's use of Dasein's involvement with significant entities as his starting point and ultimate standard.

So, from a Heideggerian point of view, immediate experience determines the basic characteristics of objects; it determines what an object is. And, according to immediate experience, objects are for Dasein and thus dependent upon Dasein. Therefore, just as the realist's definition of objects as independent is legitimated by our immediate, untainted beliefs about objects, so Heidegger's idealist definition of objects as dependent upon Dasein is legitimated by our immediate, untainted experience of objects. The impasse discovered through the opposition between realism and Heideggerian idealism can only be broken by focusing on and adjudicating between two opposed points of departure: common sense beliefs and immediate experience. And I believe that there is good reason to choose the latter.

The realist's reliance on common sense and Heidegger's reliance on immediate experience are powerful philosophical starting points because of their apparent immediacy. Both claim to yield the fundamental notion of what it is to be an object, from which further ontological investigation can properly proceed. But if one of these starting points carries a greater immediacy than the other, then it will yield a more fundamental notion of objectivity. In that case, the less fundamental notion must be denied its foundational role in ontology, and thus demoted to the status of a secondary imposition on objects that obscures their true character. Here, the Heideggerian position has a distinct advantage.

Heidegger can account for the discrepancy between the common sense notion of objects and that of immediate experience by characterizing common sense beliefs as a mistaken interpretation of the objects revealed by immediate experience. Common sense beliefs are imposed on experience and so do not carry the immediacy of the experience on which these beliefs are imposed. Realists could attempt to defend their position with a similar move. But the result of this response would be highly suspect. That is, for

realists to maintain that common sense is more fundamental than immediate experience, they would have to maintain that experience is a misleading imposition on common sense beliefs. Now, realists may be able to make some sort of sense out of this claim, but even so notice its consequences for philosophy itself.

Given the conflicting notions of objectivity provided by common sense and immediate experience, Heidegger ignores common sense and allows the world to speak for itself. The realist, on the other hand, ignores experience in order to uphold a set of beliefs. If we are to adopt the realist's reliance on common sense, then, we must dogmatically cling to certain beliefs regardless of what our experience of the world shows us. But this reduces philosophy to a description of groundless beliefs about the world rather than a description of the world. Some may choose to maintain the former position, but to do so is to turn philosophy into nothing more than a clever game.

Notes

[1] *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, hereafter BT), 249.

[2] Heidegger cites the problem of the external world as an essential characteristic of realism (BT, 251) but not of idealism.

[3] Examples of such idealistic readings of Heidegger include Theodore R. Schatzki's "Early Heidegger on Being, the Clearing, and Realism" (*Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, eds. Hubert Dreyfus and Harrison Hall (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992, 81-98), Dorothea Frede's "Heidegger and the Scandal of Philosophy" (*Human Nature and Natural Knowledge*, eds. A. Donagan, et al., Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986, 129-151), and Hubert Dreyfus' *Being in the World* (Cambridge: MIT, 1991).

[4] BT 251. See also *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Bloomington: Indiana, 1982, hereafter BP), 167.

[5] BT, 251.

[6] Heidegger refers to this mode of behavior as "just tarrying alongside (*Nurnochverweilenbei)*" objects (BT, 88).

[7] The notion of knowing is introduced and discussed at BT,8590. For knowing as the way that *independent* objects are grasped, see BT, 246.

[8] For the connection between knowing and theoretical activity, see BT, 86. The same connection is made indirectly at BT, 99.

[9] Heidegger suggests this line of attack when he says that the problem of Reality "has a definite connection in its foundations with Dasein, the world, and readinesstohand" (BT, 245), which are the principal concepts in the analysis of circumspective concern.

[10] BT, 38.

[11] BT, 96.

[12] BT, 96-97.

[13] BT, 97.

[14] BT, 97.

[15] "Environing world" is Hofstadter's translation of the term, introduced at BP, 164.

[16] See BT, 98, 118; BP, 164.

[17] BT, 116-117.

[18] See BT, 417; BP, 297.

[19] Michael Devitt admits that, *qua* useful, useful objects require a user, when he says that it is questionable whether "artifacts like hammers" should be included in the category of 'real' objects since "something is a hammer in virtue of being used in a certain way or being designed to be so used" (*Realism and Truth*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1984, 24n.). Nevertheless, he believes that such objects are real. Although he does not say why artifacts count as real, I believe that in view of Devitt's restrictions on the real (cf. *Realism and Truth*,12-21) my suggested reply would be satisfactory.

Samuel Alexander uses a similar argument to establish the independence of objects in his article "The Basis of Realism" (found in *Realism and the Background of Phenomenology*, ed. Roderick Chisolm, Free Press, New York, 1960, 186-222). As Alexander puts it, "[t]he shilling which is in my possession depends on me for its being possessed but not for being a piece of silver, a white metal with a certain atomic equivalent" (209).

[20] BT, 103. See also BT, 83, 88.

[21] BT, 103 (my emphasis). Heidegger's characterization of the present-at-hand as "unready-to-hand" (BT, 103) also emphasizes the primacy of the ready-to-hand.

[22] Here, the realist may admit that the ready-to-hand is *experientially* primary, but that Heidegger attempts to illegitimately draw an *ontological* conclusion from this fact. In this way, Heidegger may be accused of confusing the way that things *subjectively* appear with the way that they *objectively* are. From a Heideggerian point of view, this objection begs the question because it assumes a realist answer to the very point at issue, i.e. whether or not objects exist 'objectively' or independently of consciousness. With this caveat in mind, I will reserve Heidegger's full answer to this objection until section IV of this paper.

[23] See BP, 295.

[24] *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 200.

[25] For significance as the structure of the environing world, see BT, 120. For the identification of significance with worldhood, see BT, 160. For Heidegger's characterization of worldhood as the ontological dimension of the (ontic) environing world, see BT, 93.

[26] BT, 255.

[27] As Heidegger says, Dasein's ability to access entities need not be proven because Dasein "already is what subsequent proofs deem necessary to demonstrate for it" (BT, 249).

[28] For a good discussion of the connection between common sense and the Cartesian subject/object distinction, see Charles B. Guignon's *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Hackett, Indianapolis, 1983), 29-32. See also section I of Charles Taylor's "Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger" (found in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon, Cambridge, New York, 1993, 317-336).

Here, it should be noted that there are several distinct forms of realism, and it could be claimed that 'scientific realism', which asserts the independent existence of such unobservable entities as subatomic particles, is not explicitly grounded in common sense. The Heideggerian argument that we have been considering, however, is directed against the belief that *anything* exists independently of consciousness, and this weak form of realism which serves as a necessary condition for scientific realism is certainly grounded in common sense intuitions.

[29] R*ealism and Truth*, 11.

[30] *Realism and Truth*, 47.

[31] *G.E. Moore: Selected Writings* (ed. Thomas Baldwin, New York: Routledge, 1993), 118). That the independence of objects is ingredient to the Common Sense view is affirmed by Moore in the essay "What is Philosophy?" (found in his *Some Main Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Humanities, 1953), 128).

[32] *Selected Writings*, 118.

[33]*Philosophical Studies* (New York: Routledge, 1922), 228.

[34] As Devitt tells us, common sense ontology "is almost universally held *outside philosophical circles*" (*Realism and Truth*, 47, my emphasis). In a similar spirit, Moore ascribes common sense beliefs to "all our ordinary talk,...all newspapers and...all ordinary books (by which I mean books *other* than philosophical books)..." (*Some Main Problems of Philosophy*, 13).

[35] BT, 96.

[36] That common sense articulates a system of *beliefs* is clearly supported by Devitt's description of common sense realism:

From an early age we come to *believe* that such objects as stones, cats and trees exist. Further we *believe* that these objects exist even when we are not perceiving them, and that they do not depend for their existence on our opinions nor on anything mental. These *beliefs* about ordinary objects are central to our whole way of viewing the world, to our conceptual scheme. The doctrine I have defined to capture these *beliefs* is aptly named 'Common Sense Realism', because it is in fact the core of common sense. (*Realism and Truth*, 47, my emphases).

[37] *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1982, hereafter *Ideas I*), 59n.(my emphasis).

[38] *Ideas I*, 61n.

[39] In Heideggerian terms, common sense ontology is that of *das Man*, which is the view that all that is is fundamentally present-a-thand: "What is distinctive in common sense is that it has in view only the experiencing of 'factual' entities..." (BT, 363). For the connection between *das Man* and common sense, see BT, 305, 334, 343, 345, 357, 360.