ONTOLOGY AND PROPOSITIONAL INTENTIONALITY

2.1. A methodological account of *Present-at-hand*

In Chapter 1, I argued that the dominant approach to Heidegger on intentionality was unable to explain two of his central claims: *Derivative* and *Present-at-hand*. These claims, recall, state the following:

> (Def) *Present-at-hand* = There is some connection between propositional intentionality and the view that entities are either present-at-hand[1], or present-at-hand[2], or present-at-hand[3] or some combination of these.
>
> (Def) *Derivative* = Propositional intentionality is explanatorily derivative on some irreducibly nonpropositional mode of intentionality.

The dominant approach to Heidegger on intentionality dealt with these claims in two steps. First, under the influence of texts such as *SZ*: 157–8, *Present-at-hand* is glossed *Present-at-hand**.

> (Def) *Present-at-hand** = If an entity *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality then *E* is intended as either present-at-hand[1], or present-at-hand[2], or present-at-hand[3] or some combination of these.

Second, *Present-at-hand** is explained in terms of *Derivative*. As I detailed with respect to the Carman–Wrathall model, the most sophisticated version of the dominant approach to Heidegger on intentionality, the idea is that propositional intentionality generates a present-at-hand[3] ontology because it is unable to capture the irreducibly non-propositional relations that define the Heideggerian world. I argued in Chapter 1 that this dominant reading was unsatisfactory. It failed, for example, to explain Heidegger's stance on present-at-hand[1], or present-at-hand[2]. Much more importantly, however, it failed to deliver

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a viable account of *Derivative* and, by extension, failed to make good on its tactic for explaining *Present-at-hand*. The purpose of this chapter is to defend my own reading of *Present-at-hand*; in Chapter 3 I will then provide my own reading of *Derivative*.[1]

In Chapter 1 I rejected, on both philosophical and textual grounds, a number of explanations for *Present-at-hand**. My own position is simple: I do not believe that Heidegger endorses *Present-at-hand**, and thus I do not believe that he owes or offers a defence of it. When he defends *Present-at-hand*, what he has in mind is rather this:

> (Def) *Present-at-hand*# = If an entity E is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality I and I is subject to a certain method of philosophical analysis M then E is intended as either present-at-hand[1], or present-at-hand[2], or present-at-hand[3] or some combination of these.[2]

The key difference from *Present-at-hand** is that in *Present-at-hand*# the antecedent of the conditional is a conjunction: *Present-at-hand*# requires not only that the entity be represented by a proposition but also that the proposition be subject to a certain type of philosophical analysis. This change has several significant implications. First, unlike *Present-at-hand**, *Present-at-hand*# does not entail that simply making an assertion about some entity mandates the attribution of certain properties to it: this is because the connection between the proposition and the present-at-hand is now conditional on the adoption of the relevant philosophical methodology. Second, unlike *Present-at-hand**, the threat of a self-reference paradox is removed: Heidegger is free to make assertions in stating his theory provided simply that he refrains from analysing those assertions using the proscribed method M. Third, *Present-at-hand*# severs the close link between *Present-at-hand* and *Derivative* characteristic of readings such as Carman's and Wrathall's. As shown, they glossed *Present-at-hand* as *Present-at-hand**, and explained *Present-at-hand** in terms of *Derivative*. Once *Present-at-hand* is read as *Present-at-hand*#, in contrast, it becomes logically independent of *Derivative*: to see this note that an acceptance of *Present-at-hand*# is perfectly compatible with the view that all intentionality is propositional. Of course, Heidegger does *also* endorse *Derivative*. But one should not to conflate

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1 As one can immediately see from this division of labour, my account will be very different from the dominant one: whereas that explains *Present-at-hand* in terms of *Derivative*, I will argue that the two are logically independent.

2 As above, I employ "intend" as the verb corresponding to "intentionality".

his distinct arguments for those two quite separate claims; I will thus say little about *Derivative* in this chapter. Fourth, as with *Present-at-hand**, it is important not to confuse *Present-at-hand#* with its converse. For Heidegger, the purpose of *Present-at-hand#* is to explain why the philosophical canon has been dominated by a present-at-hand ontology; it does so by highlighting one of the most fundamental reasons for that dominance, namely the tradition's reliance on the method *M*. But Heidegger is not committed to the implausible claim that whenever anyone understands entities as, say, individuated by spatio-temporal or causal properties this must be traced to *M*.

I will now introduce Heidegger's case for *Present-at-hand#*. Heidegger's views are clearest with respect to present-at-hand[3] and it is there I will begin. This is the relevant disjunct of *Present-at-hand#*:

> (Def) *Present-at-hand#/P3* = If an entity *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality *I* and *I* is subject to a certain method of philosophical analysis *M* then *E* is intended as "cut off from" the holistic web of instrumental, social, and other relations which define the Heideggerian concept of "world". (*SZ*: 83–6, 157–8)

I start with a particular slice of text that begins at the paragraph break halfway down *SZ*: 157. First, note that Heidegger is no longer talking about assertion per se: the basic structure of assertion has been given at *SZ*: 154–5. Rather, his concern here is with the way in which assertion is "modified" within the context of a particular theoretical framework, a framework which he refers to simply as "logic" (*SZ*: 157). His claim is that this "logic" assumes, supposedly unquestioningly, that assertions should be studied in a specific way:

> Prior to all analysis, logic has already understood 'logically' that which it takes as its theme, for example 'the hammer is heavy', under the heading of the 'categorical statement'. The unexplained presupposition is that the 'meaning' of this sentence is to be taken as: "This thing – a hammer – has the property of heaviness". (*SZ*: 157)

What is being discussed here is a particular method for analysing assertions, a method which generates what Heidegger calls "theoretical assertions" (*SZ*: 157). Note that "theoretical" does not mean that terms like "heavy" are replaced with terms like "mass": even logical analysis still attributes "heaviness" to the hammer (*SZ*: 157).[3] Rather,

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3 The 'changeover' in *SZ*§33 thus differs significantly from that in *SZ*§69b.

"theoretical" refers to the *meta-linguistic* treatment of the original assertion: in the example Heidegger is using, the assertion becomes "theoretical" when it is analysed in terms of concepts such as "categorical statement".[4] Having alerted us to this meta-linguistic analysis, Heidegger's next concern is to highlight some of its ontological implications. It is now that the key text, the text which guided the dominant interpretation of *Present-at-hand,* appears.

> The entity which is held in our fore-having – for instance, the hammer – is initially ready-to-hand as an item of equipment. If this entity becomes the 'object' of an assertion ['*Gegenstand*' *einer Aussage*], then as soon as we begin with this assertion, there is already a changeover in the fore-having. *The ready-to-hand entity with which* we have to do or perform something, turns into something '*about which*' ['*Worüber*'] the assertion that points it out is made. Our fore-sight is aimed at something present-at-hand in what is ready-to-hand. (*SZ*: 157–8, original emphasis)

The claim is that by granting philosophical weight to the type of theoretical framework just highlighted, one not only alters the way in which assertions are understood but one equally modifies the way in which one views the entities intended by those assertions. So, for example, from the perspective of "'logic'" the hammer is not primarily seen as a piece of equipment, but as the referent or "'object'" of "hammer", and thus as the subject of a "categorical statement" to which the "property" of heaviness can be attributed: thus "only now are we given any access to *properties* or the like" (*SZ*: 158).[5] The strange punctuation here arises from Heidegger's use of single inverted commas as scare quotes when discussing the suspect theoretical terms.[6] His point is that concepts

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4 Similarly Ga20: 362: there Heidegger stresses that his concern is with the "theoretical propositions of logic" [*theoretischen Satz der Logik*]. As a glance at any logic textbook shows, the propositions involved need not be, and rarely are, theoretical in the sense of attributing complex scientific properties to objects: on the contrary, they tend to stick with familiar examples like "all men are mortal". Instead, the "propositions of logic" are theoretical in the sense that they are subject to a particular kind of meta-linguistic analysis, for example by being broken down into quantificational clauses with embedded scopes and so on.

5 Heidegger's use of "logic" is complex, in part because he aims ultimately to redeem the word by recapturing the original idea of *logos* (see, for example, Ga33: 121). I address the issue in detail in the next chapter: for the moment I will use "logic", as Heidegger does in *SZ*§§33–4, to denote a particular philosophical method and one which he rejects.

6 As will become clear, I am in absolute agreement with Derrida when he stresses the vital role which such scare quotes play in Heidegger's rhetorical and philosophical practice: see, for example, Derrida 1989: 30.

like property, referent and categorical statement are artefacts of a particular semantic project, a particular methodology for analysing assertions. Furthermore, it is this which explains the connection between assertion and presence-at-hand3. Heidegger continues:

> When an assertion has given a determinate character to something present-at-hand, it claims something about it as a 'what' and this 'what' is drawn from that which is present-at-hand as such. The as-structure of interpretation has undergone a modification. In its function of appropriating what is understood, the 'as' no longer reaches out into a totality of involvements. As regards its possibilities for articulating reference-relations, it has been cut off from that significance which, as such, constitutes environmentality. The 'as' gets pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand. (*SZ*: 158)

Again the primary claim here concerns the assertion itself: it is the assertion which is the vehicle for the "as-structure of interpretation" and it is once this assertion is analysed "'logically'" that such interpretation becomes cut off from the "totality of involvements" (*SZ*: 157–8).[7] The reason for this is that the methodological focus is no longer on questions such as why was this assertion made, what purpose did it serve, what was its context, but rather on its syntactic, semantic and inferential structure. What motivates *Present-at-hand#/ P3* is the belief that analysing an assertion "'logically'" has important implications for the way in which the entities intended by that assertion are understood: the entity "turns into something '*about which*' the assertion that points it out is made" (*SZ*: 158). An example may help. Suppose I intend Tom and Harry by making some remark about them.[8] Heidegger's point is that if "logic" is the primary philosophical method for understanding that intentionality, then the primary way in which philosophy will understand Tom and Harry is no longer in the guise of friends for meeting, neighbours for greeting, threats for avoiding, but instead as the "'object'" of an assertion ['*Gegenstand' einer Aussage*], something "'about which'" ['*Worüber*'] the assertion is made (*SZ*: 157–8). In the context of such a philosophical programme,

7 Assertion is thus an instance of what Heidegger refers to as the "apophantic 'as'" (*SZ*: 158): I discuss the relationship between this and the underlying "existential-hermeneutic 'as'" in detail in Chapter 3.

8 As above, I use "intend" as the verb corresponding to "intentionality": I do so in order to avoid introducing verbs like "represent" (I discuss Heidegger's complex stance on representation in Chapter 3).

Tom and Harry would thus be represented as "cut off" from their significance and so "pushed back into the uniform plane of that which is merely present-at-hand". To see the force of Heidegger's point here, it is useful to return to his attitude to modern logic, something touched on in §1.3. As Heidegger himself recognises, he agrees with authors such as Cassirer or Russell in that they all place great emphasis on relations.[9] But despite the obvious antipathy which Cassirer or Russell have for substance metaphysics, Heidegger holds that their kind of function-based logic will nevertheless still lead to a present-at-hand ontology. Suppose, for example, an assertion like "Tom is taller than Harry" is analysed within Russell's framework. It would no longer be treated as a "categorical statement" with subject–predicate form like the examples of *SZ*§33; instead, it is studied as an instance of an "asymmetric relational statement".[10] Heidegger's point is that, whilst this development may allow an improved grasp of the inferential status of relations *in general,* the price is the neglect of a *particular* set of relations, namely the social and instrumental context within which acts of assertion actually take place. The focus on the "empty formal idea of relation" ironically thus leads to the "suppression of the dimension within which the relevant relation can be what it is" (Ga29/30: 424).[11] And this project in turn, he claims, fosters a concomitantly narrow philosophical approach to the entities discussed in such assertions:

> [The assertion] gets experienced as something present-at-hand and interpreted as such; simultaneously the entities it points out have the meaning of presence-at-hand. (*SZ*: 160)[12]

In line with the arguments of §1.2, the underlying issue which Heidegger is addressing in these passages concerns not just assertion but all modes of propositional intentionality: the very same points could be made regarding the way we analyse belief or judgement, for example. But what is vital is that his argument concerns *a particular philosophical approach* to assertion or belief or judgement rather than assertion or belief or judgement per se; missing this is one of the

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9 Ga20: 272, 279.   10 Russell 2009: 39–40.   11 Similarly *SZ*: 88.

12 The original text here refers to "the *logos*" rather than "the assertion". Heidegger's use of "logos", and his attitude to the term's history, is exceptionally complicated and I discuss it in detail in Chapter 3. Here I have simplified matters by avoiding the former phrase: taken as a whole, Heidegger's original paragraph makes it plain that my substitution is acceptable.

key errors made by the dominant approach discussed in Chapter 1. The highly compressed nature of the text in *SZ* is partly to blame here. Recall, for example, the references to "dimming down" emphasised by Carman and Wrathall: in §1.4 I argued against their view that this "dimming down" occurred when propositional intentionality tried to capture some richer perceptual content.[13] On my reading, by contrast, "dimming down" occurs when a piece of propositional content, namely an assertion, is *subject to* "logical" analysis. Consider the key text at *SZ*: 154–5. Note first that assertion's "primary signification", "pointing out", comprises not just my indicating an entity, but also includes my saying something about it: for example, "the hammer is too heavy" (*SZ*: 154). In so far as the "primary signification" of assertion says something about something it is itself sufficient to constitute a declarative sentence, and thus to constitute propositional content. The second signification, which Heidegger labels "'predication'" – note the punctuation – *then* introduces "a narrowing of content as compared to the … first signification" (*SZ*: 154–5). It is this second signification which supposedly "dims down" or "restricts" our view. In other words, "dimming down" is something which is done *to*, not *by*, propositional content. What makes the text here so convoluted is that Heidegger is trying simultaneously to explain how this "dimming down" is rooted in a perfectly natural tendency. Suppose I start by making the assertion "the hammer is too heavy". For some reason, perhaps because I cannot lift it, this aspect of the hammer then becomes the object of explicit attention: with a view to the methodological arguments that are to come, Heidegger refers to this act as "'predication'" just as he talks of the "'object'" or the "'meaning'" of an assertion (*SZ*: 154, 157). His use of scare quotes is intended to suggest that there exists a continuity whereby I move from casually using the term "heavy", to focusing on that predicate, to considering the necessary and sufficient conditions for its application, to asking whether every statement ascribes a predicate to something, and ultimately to the methodology Heidegger calls "logic" (*SZ*: 157–8). In other words, Heidegger wants to show how this "dimming down" begins as a perfectly natural, albeit optional, act of focusing on a particular feature of some entity and then gradually develops into the type of meta-linguistic analysis I have been discussing. In short, "dimming down" is not a relation between the propositional and the perceptual,

13 Carman 2003: 219; Wrathall 2011: 19–20.

as Wrathall and Carman read it, but between a particular philosophical method and the propositional.[14]

To sharpen this initial account of *Present-at-hand#*, I need to answer two closely related questions: what exactly is this methodology *M* to which Heidegger supposedly objects, and how does he think that one should analyse assertions? Heidegger himself spells out the answer to the latter question:

> If language is a possibility of the being of Dasein, then it must be made evident in its basic structures in terms of the constitution of Dasein. Henceforth, the a priori structures of Dasein must provide the basis for linguistics. (Ga20: 361)

As he puts it elsewhere, in so far as language is one of Dasein's activities, it should be investigated primarily by uncovering the "concealed essence of man" (Ga29/30: 486). Heidegger's aim is thus to move "from the question what is language to the question what is man" (Ga38: 38).[15] Broadening the point to the propositional as a whole, one can say that Heidegger endorses a principle which I will label "*H*":

> (Def) *H* = The methodological principle that the primary philosophical analysis of propositional intentionality should take the form of an analysis of Dasein.

H can then be further specified for each of the various modes of propositional experience. Something like this, for example, is what Heidegger has in mind for assertion.

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14 Another reason that this is not clear is that Heidegger summarises the nature of assertion as a "communicating, determining pointing out" [*mitteilend bestimmende Aufzeigung*] (*SZ*: 156). But I suggest that "determining" here either simply means "saying something about something" without any necessary tie to dimming down, or, if such a tie is assumed, then "determining" must be at most a necessary possibility, a possibility triggered by the slide from explicit attention to logic which I have just highlighted. There are, of course, other passages where Heidegger talks about "levelling off" or "dimming down". Constraints of space prohibit a full treatment of these, but it is worth noting that many, taken in context, are unsympathetic to both the dominant approach to Heidegger on intentionality in general and to particular forms of it such as the Carman–Wrathall model. For example, Wrathall cites Ga20: 76–7 (Wrathall 2011: 20). But the issue there is not about some supposed richness of perception which eludes linguistic articulation, but rather the possibility of categorical intuition; and a few pages earlier Heidegger has stated, apparently unabashedly, that "our comportments are … shot through with assertions" (Ga20: 75).

15 Similarly *SZ*: 166.

(Def) *H/Assertion* = The methodological principle that the primary philosophical analysis of assertion should take the form of an analysis of the role which assertion plays within Dasein's social context, be it for communication, coordination or discovery.

Heidegger's own positive account of that context will be addressed in Chapters 3, 5 and 6. For the moment, I want to focus on the issue of *M*, the method which I have claimed Heidegger opposes. It is not possible, I suspect, to give any more precise characterisation of *M* than this:

(Def) *M* = Any programme for investigating propositional intentionality which is not fully committed to *H* and to its variants such as *H/Assertion*.[16]

It is in this sense that Heidegger insists that we "must dispense with the 'philosophy of language'" (*SZ*: 166): his objection is obviously not to philosophising about language, but rather to the idea that the philosophical treatment of language can be pursued independently of, or prior to, a broader understanding of Dasein.

In so far as *M* includes any methodology which rejects *H*, the definition of *M* is obviously an extremely loose one. This looseness is deep-rooted in Heidegger's work: it has three sources. The first is the extraordinary historical ambition of his project. If one is really to believe, as he frequently suggests, that the mistakes he is correcting are present from Greece to Marburg then those mistakes will need to be characterised very broadly: the looseness of *M* suits this perfectly. The second source is the complexity of Heidegger's own position. Consider, for example, Price and Macarthur's recent defence of what they call an "anthropological pragmatism".[17] Instead of pursuing

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16 McManus, in an elegant discussion of the relationship between presence-at-hand and assertion, concludes that whilst assertion itself need not generate a present-at-hand ontology, it will incline us towards one in so far as:

We may misconstrue the subjects of assertion as homogeneous in their being – coming to see them all as 'of the same kind' – if our thought is guide by the 'universally even and regular' impressions that assertions create. (McManus 2012: 199; the cited material is from Ga27)

I am obviously in agreement with McManus that Heidegger's point does not apply to assertion per se but to a particular view we may take of assertion. But I think the link which McManus postulates between assertion and presence-at-hand here is too weak: surely the mere fact that I can use similar sentence forms to talk about God, love and this table is not alone sufficient to incline anyone but the most careless thinker to the view that those objects are somehow the same.

17 Price and Macarthur 2009: 103.

traditional philosophy of language, their recommendation is that we focus instead on the various social roles which assertion plays as "a multi-purpose tool".[18] I cannot treat the various issues surrounding Heidegger and the many non-equivalent forms of pragmatism here.[19] But what is striking is that Price and Macarthur are able to give a very clear summary of the methodology they reject: they oppose any theory that appeals to a non-deflationary use of notions such as truth or reference.[20] Heidegger's goal, in contrast, is first to replace traditional philosophy of language with a focus on the social role of assertion, and *then* to use that account as the ground for reconstructing a theory of truth, and an attendant theory of meaning or "discourse", which is anything but deflationary (*SZ*: 165–6): I will analyse those developments in detail in Chapters 3 and 4. The result is that the originality of Heidegger's position prevents him from offering a neat characterisation of the difference between his own views and *M* in terms of something like the familiar debate over meaning as use or meaning as truth conditions. The third source of the looseness is that, ultimately, the only way to further specify *H*, and thus *M*, within Heidegger's system is by conducting the type of detailed existential analytic offered in *SZ*. There is thus an inherent limit on how sharply *M* can be formulated in the absence of a full rehearsal of *SZ*'s core claims.

18 Price and Macarthur 2009: 115; Price 2011: 98.
19 There are clearly some senses in which Heidegger's approach is pragmatist. For example, I have just argued that he wants to refocus philosophy of language around the *use* we make of assertions – indeed, he is even willing to refer to assertion as a tool, as itself ready-to-hand (*SZ*: 224). However, it is hard to reach any conclusive verdict on whether he is a pragmatist because that term itself is so contested. For example, consider the features which Brandom singles out as distinctive of Heidegger's pragmatism, namely (i) that "norms taking the explicit form of rules" are dependent on "norms taking the implicit form of proprieties of practice" and (ii) "that a certain kind of norm is in some sense more basic than facts" (Brandom 2002: 324–5). But both of these are, at least without further development, acceptable to philosophers one would scarcely dub pragmatists. Kant, for example, accepts (i) in so far as he takes schematic or implicit rules to have explanatory priority (see, for example, Longuenesse 1998: 46–51), and accepts (ii) in so far as he holds that the basic facts which define the phenomenal world, facts about causation or substantiality, are generated by our inferential commitments (for example, *KrV*: B128). Furthermore, even self-avowed "pragmatists" such as Brandom and Price disagree on a number of issues, issues which are of particular importance in a Heideggerian context – for example, the possibility of substantive accounts of truth (see, for example, Price 2011). For these reasons, I will not frame my account of Heidegger in terms of either an avowal of "pragmatism" or of its rejection.
20 Price and Macarthur 2009: 106–7.

Bringing these strands together, I can now return to the disjunct of *Present-at-hand*# singled out at the start of this section, the disjunct referring to present-at-hand[3]. Heidegger's claim is that in so far as I analyse propositional intentionality, for example assertion, in a way that isolates it from the social and other relations which characterise the Heideggerian world, I will thereby understand the entities which those assertions are about as similarly isolated: the primary philosophical analysis of a hammer, say, will be one which treats it as the referent of "hammer", as something "'*about which*'" ['*Worüber*'] an assertion is made, rather than as a tool for various tasks. At the primary level of philosophical understanding, such objects would thus be understood as "cut off" from the environmental relations which make up the world: they would be present-at-hand[3] (*SZ*: 160). One obvious question is how much work the word "primary" is doing here. Suppose, for example, a Fregean holds that objects are to be primarily identified on the basis of the syntactic and inferential behaviour of the corresponding terms: why could she not later supplement this with some discussion of the type of social and instrumental relations highlighted by Heidegger? As will become apparent, the nature of the "primary" plays an important and controversial role throughout Heidegger's thought: I will return to it, with more pieces of the puzzle in place, at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 4. But I want first to complete the account of *Present-at-hand*# by considering the other forms of presence-at-hand.

I take next presence-at-hand[1]. Here is the relevant disjunct of *Present-at-hand*#:

(Def) *Present-at-hand*#/*P1* = If an entity *E* is intended by a propositional mode of intentionality *I* and *I* is subject to a certain method of philosophical analysis *M* then *E* is intended as a substance in either an Aristotelian, Cartesian, Leibnizian or Kantian sense.

It will help to consider Heidegger's defence of *Present-at-hand*#/*P1* in two stages, depending on the exact version of *M* involved. First, consider those theories in which, in line with *M*, the proposition is primarily understood via a combinatorial analysis of propositional form based around the subject–predicate structure: Kant's Metaphysical Deduction is a classic case.[21] Given this specification of the antecedent, Heidegger's task becomes a comparatively easy one. This is because he is able to free ride on the fact that many of his opponents, Leibniz for

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21   *KrV*: A70–80/B95–106.

example, explicitly endorse *Present-at-hand#/P1*, and he often suggests that others, such as Aristotle, should be seen as making the same move more inchoately (Ga41: 62–4; Ga25: 295). The reason these authors endorse *Present-at-hand#/P1* is, of course, because they regard the consequent as a positive result, whereas Heidegger treats it as the basis for a *modus tollens* against the methodological framework mentioned in the antecedent. Since many of his main opponents accept *Present-at-hand#/P1* more or less openly, Heidegger often formulates it loosely, allowing different theorists to cash it in their own terms: Ga41, for example, simply presents the schemas "substantia – accidens", "bearer – properties", and "subject – predicate" as isomorphic (Ga41: 33). When criticising a particular author, Heidegger then provides a detailed account of the inference within their work. For example, commentating on Leibniz's *Discourse on Metaphysics*:

> Leibniz sees that this interpretation of substance takes its bearings from predication and therefore a radical determination of the nature of predication, of judgement, must provide a primordial conception of substance … Leibniz says that in every true statement the subject must contain the predicate in itself, whether explicitly or implicitly … Here the ontic subject, the substance, is understood from the viewpoint of the logical subject, the subject of a statement. (Ga26: 41–2)[22]

This brings me to the second part of Heidegger's defence of *Present-at-hand#/P1*: what happens once one reaches modern logic? After all, the very same connection which *Present-at-hand#/P1* highlights between traditional subject–predicate logic and a substance ontology was also noted by Russell – who saw it simply as further evidence of the shortcomings of traditional logic. As Russell puts it:

> The ground for assuming substances – and this is a very important point – is purely and solely logical. What science deals with are *states*

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22 Since my aim is to explain *Present-at-hand* I am naturally focusing on the implications, as Heidegger sees them, of "logic" for metaphysics. But it is worth stressing that the traffic is by no means all one way: as Ga26 stresses, Heidegger is equally concerned with the sense in which logic is determined by metaphysics. At the broadest level, it is supposedly the metaphysics of Dasein, in particular its tendency to flee from itself, which explains the attraction of methods such as *M*: I deal with such issues when discussing inauthenticity in Chapter 6. More specifically, the role of metaphysics in influencing logic becomes particularly important for Heidegger when discussing Leibniz; this is largely because Leibniz's variant of *M*, in particular the containment theory of truth, is hard to motivate without appeal to some prior metaphysical commitments (Ga26: 122).

of substances, and it is assumed to be states of *substances*, because they are held to be of the logical nature of predicates, and thus to demand subjects of which they may be predicated.[23]

The question then is this: can Heidegger still defend *Present-at-hand#/ PI* when the relevant method of propositional analysis is, for example, Russell's? Heidegger identifies one possible line of argument when he raises the problem of how a list of words "are put together in *one* verbal whole" (*SZ*: 159; Ga21: 142). The difficulty, as Russell observed, is that the words "Cassio" and "Desdemona" put side by side obviously do not constitute a sentence, but only a mere list.[24] But once this is conceded, it is unclear why introducing further terms, say "loves", will not simply deliver a longer list: why, as Russell put it, does "loves" function as "the cement and not just another brick"?[25] Russell regarded this problem as one of central philosophical importance, in part because Bradley had adduced it as a *reductio* of "analytic philosophy" understood as the progressive decomposition of propositions into their components parts.[26] Heidegger himself placed great emphasis on the very same problem: in Ga24, for example, he works painstakingly through the solutions to this difficulty advocated by Aristotle, Hobbes, Mill, Lotze and others (Ga24: 255–91). The relevance of this to *Present-at-hand#/PI* is that, in treating the atomisation of the proposition as a legitimate starting point, Russell's approach will necessarily generate an atomistic ontology if one simply adds some premise allowing the transfer of semantic conclusions on to the ontological domain. And this is precisely what does happen in Russell from his early Moorean-style equation of the semantic and the ontological onwards: the ultimate result is logical atomism, the view that "you can get down in theory, if not in practice, to ultimate simples".[27] The ontology of "particulars" which emerges is present-at-hand[1] because, as Russell himself notes, they meet the Cartesian criterion for substance: not depending for their existence on any other entity.[28] So it seems as if *Present-at-hand#/PI* may have some force even once one abandons

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23 Russell 1937: 49.   24 Russell 1912: 74.

25 Russell 1912: 74. Following *SZ*§33, I formulate the problem at the linguistic level here, but, as Russell and Heidegger are aware, the question can equally be posed at the propositional level: I return to the question of truth-bearers in relation to Okrent's recent work below.

26 Indeed, as a young man Russell described its solution as "the most valuable contribution which a modern philosopher could possibly make to philosophy" (Russell 1990: 145 – I owe the reference to Stevens 2005: 15). For a summary of Bradley's concerns see Bradley 1911.

27 Russell 1986: 234.   28 Russell 1986: 179.

subject–predicate logic. However, the sheer scope of *Present-at-hand#/P1*, a scope generated by the looseness of *M*, means that it cannot be fully convincing. Consider, for example, the case of Frege. Frege, at least on the standard reading, solves the problem of propositional unity by an appeal to the essentially unsaturated nature of functions.[29] This strategy is an instance of *M* and thus satisfies the antecedent of *Present-at-hand#/P1*. But whilst Frege's move undoubtedly faces problems (it is the source of the infamous horse paradox) it does nothing to generate the type of semantic and thus ontological atomism which makes the conditional *Present-at-hand#/P1* sustainable in Russell's case.[30] The underlying problem, I suggest, is Heidegger's focus on pre-Fregean logic: bluntly, *M* can take on subtler forms than Heidegger's concentration on Aristotle, rationalism and the occasional empiricist such as Hobbes leads him to believe. On a more positive note, one can see how these results tie back to the principle I labelled *H* above. Heidegger's own preferred solution to the problem of propositional unity is to reject it as a pseudo-problem which arises only if one adopts what he calls an "external" view of phenomena like assertion (Ga24: 262). Recall Russell's remark that, when faced with the problem, it was as if the cement had become merely another brick. This is Heidegger's view:

> Not only do we lack the 'cement', even the 'schema' in accordance with which this joining together is to be accomplished has … never yet been unveiled. What is decisive for ontology is to prevent the splitting of the phenomena. (*SZ*: 132)

Heidegger's positive claim is that in so far as assertion is primarily understood, in line with *H*, as "one of Dasein's intentional comportments" the problem of unity will simply not arise (Ga24: 295). This is presumably because such an understanding pushes one towards treating the assertion as a whole as the primary unit: it is, for example, the minimal unit for which one agent can be held accountable by another (I return to the central role of notions of responsibility in Heidegger's thought in Chapters 5 and 6).[31]

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29 Frege 1952: 54.   30 Frege 1952: 54.

31 Heidegger's remarks on the problem of unity have recently been highlighted by Okrent, who argues that they show that sentences, not propositions, should be the primary truth-bearers (Okrent 2011). But surely the nature of the truth-bearer is irrelevant: as Heidegger himself notes the problem arises equally for avowed sententialists such as Hobbes (Ga24: 262). I think that Okrent is much nearer the mark when he observes that for Heidegger, "what makes an assertion an assertion … is that it is a certain kind of intentional comportment of a certain kind of agent" (Okrent 2011: 104): in my terms this is a statement of *H*.

I have now examined *Present-at-hand*# with respect to both present-at-hand[1] and present-at-hand[3]. What about present-at-hand[2], i.e. what about the purported link between propositional intentionality and entities individuated by reference to their spatio-temporal and causal properties? Here I think one must admit defeat. I can see no argument which might both support the connection and still bear some relation to Heidegger's text. The lesson of this, I suggest, is simply that Heidegger is careless with his use of terminology. He uses "present-at-hand" primarily as a contrast term to "ready-to-hand", and this leads him to apply it to very different things in very different contexts. But his system neither affords nor requires a connection between propositionality and present-at-hand[2].

2.2. Heidegger on propositions, personal experience and the threat of paradox

At this point, it is worth taking stock of the argument so far. I have claimed that Heidegger's avowal of *Present-at-hand* should be understood as an avowal of *Present-at-hand*#. On this reading, *contra* the dominant interpretation, his point is not about propositional intentionality itself, but rather about a particular and dispensable philosophical approach to it. As Heidegger himself puts it, his concern is with "theoretical assertions" and he is as clear as the convoluted structure of *SZ*§33 allows him to be that such "theoretical assertions" are not present in ordinary language use (*SZ*: 157). He stresses this same point elsewhere:

> As orientated in this way, i.e. as taking the theoretical proposition for its exemplary foundation, propositional logic [*Satzlogik*] at the same time guided all reflections directed at the explication of *logos* in the broader sense, as language [*Sprache*], and insofar as it did so the whole of the science of language, as well as, more generally, the entire philosophy of language, took their orientation from this propositional logic. All our grammatical categories and even all of contemporary scientific grammar – linguistic research into the Indo-Germanic languages etc. – are essentially determined by this theoretical logic. Yet there does indeed exist the task of conceiving logic, once and for all, much more radically than the Greeks succeeded in doing and of working out thereby, in the same way, a more radical understanding of language itself and consequently also of the science of language. (Ga19: 253)

Matters are admittedly complicated by Heidegger's stance on "*logos*"; I address this in detail in Chapter 3. But one can clearly see here how Heidegger identifies "propositional logic" with a particular *theory about language*; his problem, exactly as I have claimed, is not with assertion itself but with what he sees as a historically pervasive meta-linguistic approach to assertions, an approach based on *M*. Thus he complains elsewhere that this dominant "philosophy of language" amounts:

> [T]o a monstrous violation of what language accomplishes: consider a poem or a living conversation between human beings. (G36/37: 104; similarly Ga54: 102)

Again, he is trying to free linguistic practice from a particular methodological framework, the framework that privileges notions such as reference, propositional form, scope, and instead relocate language within a very different context: one that understands it in terms of Dasein and Dasein's activities, i.e. one committed to what I called *H* and its variants such as *H/Assertion*. The result is that *Present-at-hand* is intended by Heidegger only to establish a link between propositional acts such as assertion and the present-at-hand in so far as the former are subject to a specific and questionable philosophical programme. In contrast, on the Carman–Wrathall model, the explanatorily primary level of Dasein's intentionality is characterised by a distinctively rich or fine-grained set of relations which no proposition can capture. Recall, Wrathall's remark:

> In natural perception, then, we ordinarily perceive a whole context that lacks the logical structure of linguistic categories.[32]

Or Carman's:

> Propositional content therefore derives from a kind of privation, or perhaps a refinement or distillation, of practical interpretative meanings. Indeed 'levelling down' the interpreted intelligibility of entities of all kinds to mere determinations of [present-at-hand] objects is 'the speciality of assertion' (*SZ*: 158).[33]

Their position implies that any assertion, no matter how casual, is fated to miss or distort or "level off" this primary perceptual content.

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32 Wrathall 2011: 20
33 Carman 2003: 219. Carman uses "occurrence" for "*Vorhandenheit*" and its cognates: I have modified the text for the sake of terminological continuity.

But as Heidegger himself makes clear, "a poem or a living conversation between human beings" need not distort anything (Ga36/37: 104).[34]

One benefit of my approach is that it frees Heidegger's work from what seems an otherwise inescapable self-reference paradox. If, in line with the dominant interpretation, one takes him to endorse *Present-at-hand** then his blithe willingness to describe his own claims as both "propositions" and "assertions" must seem bizarre (for example Ga24: 461); surely it would imply that his own work, supposedly devoted to escaping from a present-at-hand view of Dasein, in fact reinforces such a view with every line? Dahlstrom, for example, argues that Heidegger's early work is plagued by a persistent paradox, in so far as its assertive and avowedly scientific form means that it "thematises and thereby objectifies" its subject matter.[35] Heidegger's stance on science and his gradual rejection of it as a model for philosophy are complex and I cannot treat them here. But what I want to emphasise is that the mere fact that his work consists in scientific assertions designed to thematise and objectify does not, given his understanding of those concepts at least in 1927, imply any risk of paradox: scientific assertions are simply assertions motivated solely by a desire to reveal entities as they genuinely are (Ga25: 26; Ga24: 455–6), objectification is simply a process of rendering the being of some entity explicit (Ga25: 26), and thematisation is simply the related process of spelling out the assumptions in terms of which an entity is "projected" or understood (*SZ*: 363). None of these activities need imply that we distort that about which we speak nor that we force it into a particular framework: thus Heidegger is clear that the way in which an entity is objectified should vary "in conformity with the intrinsic content and mode of being of the specific region of being" to which it belongs (Ga24: 457). For these reasons, I think that Dahlstrom materially overestimates the danger posed by his "paradox of thematisation".

None of this is to deny, of course, that Heidegger thinks that it will be extremely difficult to identify which propositions regarding Dasein are true. One reason for that is his epistemology and the emphasis

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34 One tactic which Carman and Wrathall might pursue in response is to argue that in texts such as Ga19: 253 Heidegger does not mean "language" in any standard sense. The exegetical issues here are intricate and linked to those surrounding *logos:* I treat them in Chapter 3. For the moment, I want simply to emphasise that Ga19: 253 does indeed seem to be talking about "language" in the ordinary sense of that term; hence, for example, its reference to "the Indo-Germanic languages".

35 Dahlstrom 2001: 433–4; similarly 204–9.

which it places on personal experience, an emphasis arising in part from his belief that testimony is contaminated by 'the one' (*SZ*: 127). So, for example, having made several claims about the early Christian experience of time, Heidegger states that:

> [I]n this presentation our basic determinations run like propositions; but they are not to be understood as propositions that are to be proven afterwards. Whoever takes them as such misunderstands them. They are phenomenological explications. (Ga60: 80)

What does he mean here? His point, I suggest, is that one cannot recognise the truth or indeed the meaning of his claims without having undergone, without having lived through in some strong sense, similar experiences (Ga61: 34, 60–1, 169–71). This is a familiar theme in Heidegger's work: as Dahlstrom observes, it is closely tied to the idea of philosophical concepts as "formal indications".[36] It is a theme with much plausibility. He returns to the point a few pages later where he emphasises again that:

> One cannot prove these 'theses'. Rather, they must prove themselves in phenomenological experience itself. (Ga60: 82)

It seems likely that such experiential epistemic barriers exist to grasp the evidence for many kinds of claim: one needs, for example, to have undergone a certain training and habituation in order to read the results of cloud-chamber experiments. Yet that does not suffice to show that the claims which I do then grasp, the claim for example that certain particle interactions have occurred, are not propositional. By extension, the fact that I can grasp the true facts about the content of human intentionality only by undergoing certain experiences does not, on its own, suffice to show that content cannot be captured by propositions. As Heidegger puts it elsewhere:

> The knowledge of essence cannot be communicated in the sense of the passing on of a proposition, whose content is simply grasped without its foundation and its acquisition being accomplished again … knowledge of the essence must be accomplished anew by each one who wishes to share it. (Ga45: 87)

The claim here is not that propositionality itself obscures "knowledge of essence". If that were the case, *SZ* would be caught immediately in a

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36 Dahlstrom 2001: 244.

Tractatus-style bind, seeking to show what it could not say.[37] Yet such an assumption is both exegetically unfounded and philosophically problematic; how, for example, would Heidegger handle Ramsey's warning that what we can't say, we can't whistle either?[38] Instead, Heidegger's objection is to the types of "passing on" which he thinks propositional knowledge enables, whereby agents with no real understanding of the matter parrot out insights, rapidly diminished into clichés, which they have stolen from others (*SZ*: 127). The result of such parroting is a failure to grasp the true content of the relevant claims: for example, by misconstruing Paul's discussion of the *parousia* as referring to an event that will happen at some particular date, rather than as a demand that one adopt a certain attitude, a certain orientation (Ga60: 102–3). But the problem in such cases is not with the propositional itself but rather with the audience's failure to understand it. Heidegger himself typically reiterates this point whenever expounding the dangers that propositionality brings. Thus he highlights, for example, the danger of reducing the question of being to something "propositional … just passed along" and a few pages later he warns that "there is a danger that [primordial concepts] may degenerate if communicated in the form of an assertion" (*SZ*: 19, 36): in the first case he is careful to stress the phenomenon of "passing on", whilst in the second he deliberately talks only of a danger which may be realised, a "possibility" which phenomenology seeks to combat.

2.3. *Present-at-hand* and its relationship to *Derivative*

The purpose of this chapter has been to defend a new account of *Present-at-hand*; I have argued that it should be read as *Present-at-hand#*. I further argued that Heidegger's case for *Present-at-hand#* has reasonable plausibility with respect to present-at-hand[3], some with respect to present-at-hand[1] and none with respect to present-at-hand[2]. Two general comments on these results can be made. First, Heidegger's arguments are a matter more of ethos than entailment: at best, his claim is that certain ways of thinking about intentionality will make one inclined to construe that which is intended in a certain way. After all, it is logically possible to insist that the proposition be analysed in terms of subject–predicate form, say, and yet to refuse to make any metaphysical claims

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37 Indeed, Dahlstrom explicitly draws this comparison: Dahlstrom 1994: 787–8.
38 Ramsey 1978: 134.

at all. Second, my reconstruction of *Present-at-hand#* shows how difficult it is to extract individual Heideggerian arguments from their place in his thought as a whole. For example, nothing has been said to explain why philosophers have found supposedly questionable methodologies like *M* so attractive: just as Nietzsche linked subject–predicate grammar to the slave revolt, Heidegger's answer will be in part psychological in a broad sense, grounded on his view of humans as agents who persistently obscure their own nature (*SZ*: 322).[39] Similarly, to return to the point introduced with the example of the Fregean who attempts to develop an account of social or instrumental relations, nothing has been said to justify the weight Heidegger attaches to concepts like "primary". Suppose, for example, I employ a version of *M*, say Kant's. In line with *Present-at-hand#*, my primary philosophical analysis of the proposition, and by extension the intended entities, will make sense of those entities as substances, cut off from the Heideggerian world. But why cannot I then *add* an account of, say, social and environmental relations on top of this metaphysical base? Heidegger insists repeatedly that such progressive modification is impossible: the entities would still "have their sole ultimate ontological source in the previous laying down of ... things as the fundamental substratum" (*SZ*: 99). But further arguments are needed to justify this: I return to the issue in Chapter 4.

I want to close by linking the position I have defended back to the broader question of Heidegger's theory of intentionality. I have denied that Heidegger sees propositions per se as necessarily rendering entities as present-at-hand; I have argued instead that he allows that propositions might, as in *SZ*, be used to refer to any entity and to attribute to it any features. This has immediate advantages: as noted, if there is no type of entity such that it cannot be captured by propositions, then the fact that *SZ* itself consists of propositions does not, *contra* Blattner, trigger a fatal self-reference problem.[40] But my approach also leaves me facing an obvious challenge. The challenge is this: if there is no class of content such that it cannot be captured by propositions then how can I explain *Derivative*? How can there be a mode of intentionality which is distinct from, and prior to, the propositional if all content can be intended propositionally? I will conclude by indicating how this challenge might be met, and in a way that meshes perfectly with Heidegger's text.

39 Nietzsche 1994: 1.13.   40 Blattner 2007: 23–7.

The basic move is simple: if two modes of intentionality feature irreducibly different types of content that may suffice for those modes to be irreducible – but it is not necessary for it. Specifically, I believe that Heidegger recognises a mode of intentionality which is irreducible to the propositional not because the two modes have different contents but because they have irreducibly different *grammars*, i.e. irreducibly different mechanisms for delivering that content. This is exactly what the text of *SZ* itself suggests. The crucial sections, *SZ*§§33–4, devoted to the derivative status of assertion make no mention of the perceptual or motor intentional content appealed to by Carman and Wrathall; instead, Heidegger summarises his argument by stating that his aim is to "liberate grammar from logic" (*SZ*: 165). From Heidegger's point of view, there are thus *two*, quite distinct, mistakes that the tradition had made: it has developed a way of analysing propositional intentionality which distorts the objects of such intentionality (thus *Present-at-hand#*), and it has failed to recognise that, even were propositional intentionality freed from such an analysis, such intentionality would remain explanatorily dependent on a form of experience defined by a very different grammar (thus *Derivative*).[41]

What does this mean? What might it mean to say that the primary form of Dasein's intentionality possesses the same content as, and yet a different grammar from, the propositional? The answer, I suggest, is that the primary form of Dasein's intentionality is conceptual *and yet* nonpropositional. This possibility has been overlooked for two reasons. On the one hand, Heidegger himself obscures matters by often using "*begrifflich*" to denote explicit or focused attention (for example Ga25: 24): I am obviously not claiming that our experience primarily has that property. On the other hand, even the most acute commentators typically conflate the conceptual and propositional. This is Carman's argument against the view that Heideggerian intentionality is conceptual:

> Fore-conception in Heidegger's sense, it seems to me, involves nothing like fully articulated concepts, that is, recurring and reidentifiable constituents of propositional contents. For example, Heidegger nowhere says that fore-conceptual aspects of interpretation correspond to particular linguistic predicates.[42]

41 I cannot pretend that Heidegger always distinguishes these arguments as well as he might, but no interpretative proposal can claim to transform his texts into perfect models of analytic clarity.

42 Carman 2003: 214.

I agree that the primary form of intentionality as Heidegger under-
stands it cannot be analysed in terms of "linguistic predicates" or
"propositional constituents". But this does not imply that Heidegger
is a nonconceptualist. That follows only if one holds that conceptual
intentionality must be cashed in terms of propositional intentionality;
as claimed, for example, by Kant when he states that "all functions
of the understanding can be reduced to the capacity to judge" or by
Frege on one reading of the context principle.[43] But those are sub-
stantive claims – and claims which I believe Heidegger is trying to
undermine. It was, of course, the Kantian version of such views with
which Heidegger was most familiar: Kant justified it by arguing that
only "pure, general logic" could provide the "universal grammar" of
conceptuality.[44] It is against this backdrop, I suggest, that one should
see Heidegger's ambition to "liberate grammar from logic" (*SZ*: 165;
Ga20: 344). By extension, it is to the idea of grammar that one should
look for an account of *Derivative*; that is the task of Chapter 3.

43 *KrV*: A69/B94; Frege 1953: Introduction.   44 *Log.*: 12.