

Three Types of *Vorhandenheit*

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The category of *Vorhandenheit*¹ in Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (SZ) is much more puzzling than it seems at first. On first reading it seems that *Zuhandenheit* is the primordial way in which things are: the primordial Being of things is their presence to us as handy tools within the context of our project and the workshop context (the hammer is understood as part of our projects to build a house and with reference to nails, lumber etc.) *Vorhandenheit* seems to be nothing but a privative way of Being which we achieve by stripping *Zuhandene* of their contextual meaning so we can just gaze at them as if they were nothing but lumps of matter, devoid of significance. For something to become *vorhanden* we must cease unreflectively using it and must instead step back and reflect on it cognitively.

If, however, we attempt to think through the category of *Vorhandenheit* (a task Heidegger does not make easy for us), we find that it is more complex and primordial than it seemed at first look. Indeed, we shall find that *Vorhandenheit* in SZ is not a univocal term; there are at least three different meanings for it. By examining these meanings and by reflecting on the type of *Vorhandenheit* required by the text (although it is not clear that Heidegger in SZ was always explicitly aware of this need), we will find a root meaning of *Vorhandenheit*. Our investigation should show what is at stake in the question of *Vorhandenheit*: nothing less than SZ's ability to talk

about real things as being more than our understanding of them.

We will also have to take issue with two main contentions of the first-reading interpretation, namely that *Vorhandenheit* is found only by cognition and that *Zuhandenheit* is the primordial way in which non-*Dasein* entities are. Against this we shall maintain that there are three ways in which *Vorhandenheit* is found and that the two categories are equiprimordial (*gleichursprünglich*): the two categories contain 'moments' of each other and Heidegger at times seems to be aware of this. If we are successful in resuscitating *Vorhandenheit*—if we can show that it is more than just failed *Zuhandenheit*—the ground will be prepared for clearing up certain difficult passages in *SZ*, for reading certain later works of Heidegger's in a new light, and for addressing what I take to be a fundamental problem for phenomenology: can phenomenology ontologically account for the presence within *Dasein*'s horizon of entities which appear to be ontologically independent of *Dasein*?

Heidegger tells us what he means by *Zuhandenheit* but he is much less forthright about the meaning of *Vorhandenheit*. He begins by telling us that the "existentia ontologically is tantamount to *Vorhandensein*, a kind of Being which does not befit entities of *Dasein*'s character" (42).² In *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* he again refers us to the Schoolmen's notion of existentia and adds that *Vorhandenheit* "is the title for the way of Being of natural things in the widest sense".³ This refers us to a history of thought which has not been able completely ontologically to clarify what 'existentia' means: "Because as yet the ontological problematic of Being has been primarily understood in the sense of *Vorhandenheit* ('reality', 'world'-actuality), but the Being of *Dasein* has remained ontologically undetermined . . ." (183).⁴ Because Being is to be understood by investigating *Dasein*, the traditional understanding of Being as *Vorhandenheit* is inadequate. Thus, when Heidegger explains *Vorhandenheit* by referring us to existentia, he is not enlightening the matter much.

If we want to progress past this reference to a traditionally unclear category, we turn to Heidegger's discussions of how *Vorhandenheit* is disclosed. He discusses at least three ways: through cognition, unusability and anxiety (*Angst*). He does not seem to realize that the *Vorhandenheit* disclosed in these various ways is not in fact the same. Indeed, they are incompatible. Let us examine them.

1) He first discusses *Vorhandenheit* as the type of Being revealed by cognition or knowing (we shall use either term to translate *Erkenntnis*). Knowing, Heidegger tells us, is "grounded beforehand in

a Being-already-alongside-the-world which essentially constitutes *Da-sein's* Being'' (61).⁵ He goes on to say:

Because of this kind of Being towards the world which lets us encounter entities encountered within-the-world purely in the way they look (eidos). . . an express look at what is thus encountered is possible. Looking at something in this way is sometimes a determinate taking up of a direction towards something, an aligning of our sighting of the Vorhanden In this kind of "dwelling" as a holding-oneself-back from any manipulation or utilization, the perception of the Vorhanden comes to pass. (61-2)⁶

This perception is itself a way of Being-in-the-world (62). Cognition is still a way in which we are in the world and is not a neutral way of getting access to "things-in-themselves".

It is for this reason that Heidegger can write that *Zuhandenheit* is not to be understood as merely a way of taking them, as if such 'aspects' were read into the 'entities' which we proximally encounter, as if some world-stuff which is proximally *vorhanden* in itself were 'given subjective coloring' in this way. Such an interpretation would overlook the fact that for this to be the case these entities would have to be understood and discovered beforehand as something purely *vorhanden*, and must have priority and take the lead in the sequence of those dealings with the 'world' in which something is discovered and made one's own. But this already runs counter to the ontological meaning of cognition which we have exhibited as a *founded* mode of Being-in-the-world. (71)⁷

This supports the idea that all *Vorhandenheit* is the sort found by cognition. We can see this if we put the argument slightly more formally:

- (i) Cognition is a founded mode of Being-in-the-world.
- (ii) Cognition discloses and discovers the *Vorhanden*.
- (iii) We can only give an 'entity' 'subjective coloring' if we have already disclosed it as *vorhanden*.
- (iv) But, because the *Vorhanden* is disclosed and discovered by cognition, and because cognition is a founded mode, we do not first (i.e., 'already') have 'entities' *vorhanden*.
- (v) Therefore we do not constitute the *Zuhanden* by throw-

ing 'subjective coloring' over a *vorhanden* 'entity'.

Notice that this argument only works if we take (ii) as saying that *only* cognition discloses and discovers *Vorhandenheit*. Yet, as we shall see, he talks about the *Vorhandenheit* disclosed by unusability and anxiety. The point is not that we should take the 'subjective coloration' theory seriously, but only that Heidegger here seems to be assuming that *only* cognition discloses *Vorhandenheit*, despite the claims made in other sections of SZ.

It is clear that Heidegger believes that the *Vorhandenheit* we discover through cognition—what we shall call cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*—is not what it first seems to be. Cognition does not give us access to things-in-themselves, for it is not a neutral act. It is a special type of comportment by *Dasein*, "just-tarrying-alongside" (61).⁸ *Dasein* has to hold-itself-back "from any manipulation or utilization" to disclose cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*, and thus the revelation of this category of Being depends on *Dasein*'s attitude.

Further, cognizing is interpretive: "Perception has the kind of coming-to-pass of the *address to* and the *speaking about* something as something. On the basis of this *interpretation*—interpretation in the broadest sense—perception becomes determinate" (62).⁹ Perception is an interpretation which strips things of their usual appearance. We cannot use perception to explain the presence of a pre-interpretive given.

Cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*, then, is the presence of a phenomenon from which we have attempted to strip all concernful involvement with our usual projects and our usual world; it seems to be independent of us, but even its "just looking so-and-so" remains involved with us, for this 'looking' is in fact an interpretation.

2) Matters stand differently with the *Vorhandenheit* that comes forward when a tool (*Zeug*) becomes unusable. We shall call this unusable-*Vorhandenheit*.

When a tool breaks, it becomes conspicuous. We cease unreflectively using it and instead "it shows itself as a tool-thing that looks so-and-so . . ." (73).¹⁰ Here we seem to be faced with the same type of *Vorhandenheit* we find through cognition. Yet Heidegger's phenomenological comments about unusable-*Vorhandenheit* quickly distinguish the two.

First, unusable-*Vorhandenheit*

announces itself in the tool, but only in order to withdraw itself again into the *Zuhandenheit* of that with which one concerns oneself, that is to say, the *Zuhandenheit* found in

that which has been repaired. This *Vorhandenheit* of the unusable still has not simply dispensed with all *Zuhandenheit*; the tool which is *vorhanden in this manner* still is not a merely occurring thing somewhere (73).¹¹

Unlike cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*, unusable-*Vorhandenheit* retains the horizon of repairability; it enters into a possible project of unreflectively grasping it as a phenomenon on which we shall work.

Second, this points to a fundamental difference between the two types of *Vorhandenheit*, a difference Heidegger slights: we bring ourselves to cognition (we sit in our chair armed with the project of reflecting on the 'real nature' of things), whereas unusable-*Vorhandenheit* intrudes itself counter to our project.

Third, we comport ourselves to the unusable differently than we do to the object of reflection. The broken hammer, the bottle of beer for which we lack an opener, disturb (*stört*) us (74). But if we finally reflectively achieve the presence of cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*, we are pleased with ourselves, thinking we have finally reached a true appearing of the phenomenon.

Fourth, and related, "The unremediable standing-there-before-us the Being-nothing-but-*vorhanden* of a *Zuhanden* as a deficient mode of concern" (73).¹² As a deficient mode, it remains a way of concern, of caring. Since "Being-in-the-world is essentially care" (193),¹³ both types of *Vorhandenheit* have to do with care, for we cannot escape our Being-in-the-world. But they are different sorts of care. The *Vorhandenheit* of the unusable tool is disclosed as a denying of the possibility of the actualization of our project, whereas cognitive-*Vorhandenheit* is a fulfilling of our project (although this latter project is one that hides from itself its projective, interpretive nature). Unusable-*Vorhandenheit* more clearly refers itself to the *Zuhandenheit* which it has disrupted, for as the denial of a project it retains the project as its horizon. Similarly, a missing tool can only make another tool unusable because the two tools are understood within their relation, the same relation which characterizes the workshop as a whole. An unopenable beer bottle is *Vorhanden* only because the possibility of opening it remains visible as an unactualizable possibility. The cognitive-*vorhanden* entity does not present its privative character as clearly; indeed, Heidegger is attempting to unearth this privative character of the cognitive-*Vorhanden* for the first time.

Fifth, there is a point Heidegger does not explicitly recognize. In disrupting our projects, the unusable-*vorhanden* entity presents possibilities of its own, and presents these possibilities as being its own. The boulder which breaks our plow does not stand there stripped

of all meaning and possibility. Rather, it is revealed in its refusal of the cut of the plow. This refusal (its hardness and bulk) is revealed despite our project of tilling the field. Thus, hardness and bulk appear to be properties (better: possibilities) belonging to the boulder itself, not dependent on our will. (This is part of what it means to say that the unusable-*Vorhanden* reveals itself "in its *Zuhandenheit* as looking so-and-so was constantly also *vorhanden*", [73]¹⁴) This stands in sharp relief to the possibilities of the cognitive-*Vorhanden* (its *eidōs*) which we can only reveal through an explicit act of willful consciousness, i.e., the effort of ripping the phenomenon out of its worldly context.

3) *Vorhandenheit* is also revealed through anxiety. Anxiety serves a special function in *SZ*: it reveals *Dasein's* totality of Being. But, I shall maintain, it does so at the cost of not fully revealing the things of the world.

"As one of *Dasein's* possibilities of Being, anxiety—together with *Dasein* itself as disclosed in it—provides the phenomenal basis for the explicit grasping of *Dasein's* primordial totality of Being" (182).¹⁵ Heidegger has already laid out 'theoretically' *Dasein's* totality. In anxiety, an existential state of mind, *Dasein* can actually come to grips with its primordial totality; it serves to disclose to existing factual *Dasein* the truth of what Heidegger has explained. The possibility of anxiety is *Dasein's* possibility of discovering its own totality. By pointing to anxiety, Heidegger is able to say that the totalization he has laid out is not merely a theoretical possibility; it is the type of totalization we actually find in factual *Dasein*.

Anxiety discloses *Dasein's* Being towards its end (254) and its thrownness (276, 342). It reveals the uncanniness of everyday familiar Being-in-the-world (342) and brings *Dasein* to its own that-it-is-ness (343). It also reveals the world as such (186, 286-7); it reveals "primordially and directly the world as world" (187).¹⁶ But in this revelation of the world as world, the things of the world become obscured. Indeed, anxiety is distinguished from fear by the fact that the latter is afraid in the face of a particular entity whereas the former faces no particular beings.

Dasein usually interprets itself in terms of the entities closest to it. I lose myself in my projects and forget that I am projecting them. I forget my own role in interpreting the world and the things of the world. In anxiety, however, the things of the world are stripped of their involvement with me. Detached from them and my projects, there is no thing which claims my attention; this no-thing is the world (186-7). The things of the world refuse my projections and so my pro-

jective nature is revealed. It is my contention that this refusal by things is not to be taken as indicating their deepest ontological nature. Heidegger writes that:

the threat does not come from the *Zuhanden* and the *Vorhanden*, but rather directly from the fact that all the *Zuhandene* and *Vorhandene* 'say' simply nothing any more. *Dasein* has no involvement with the environmental entities any more. The world in which I exist has sunk into insignificance, and the world thus disclosed can free only entities in the character of uninvolvedness. The nothing of the world, in the face of which anxiety is anxious, does not signify that perhaps in anxiety an absence of *Vorhandene* within-the-world has been experienced. The *Vorhanden* must be encountered in such a way that has *exactly no* involvement *whatsoever* with it and so it can appear in an empty mercilessness (343).¹⁷

Things do not simply vanish because of our mood of anxiety. Surely this would be a rank subjectivism! Heidegger instead maintains that the *Vorhandene* are present in anxiety, but they are encountered as having exactly no involvement; they appear as merciless and empty of all the meanings and projects I wish to thrust upon them. We may say that the anxious-*Vorhandenheit* has the distinct character of *refusing* projections. Because we *encounter* them as uninvolved, we see that we are still involved although in a modified way. Empty mercilessness is still a character of Being.

We can then distinguish the three types of *Vorhandenheit* in at least the following ways:

i) To find the cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*, we enter into the project of reflecting. Finding *Vorhandenheit* is the aim of our project. We find unusable-*Vorhandenheit* when it intrudes into our projects and disrupts them. We find anxiety-*Vorhandenheit* in a mood which comes upon us. Each of the three, then, is a disruption of our normal way of projecting. The first is found through a project which is not ordinary and everyday (requiring a disengagement from the world of concerned dealings). The second is found when an everyday project is disrupted by a failure of the tools involved in the project. The third is found when the possibility of everyday projects is negated not by the tools involved in it but by an existential state of mind.

Put differently, we find cognitive-*Vorhandenheit* by purposefully projecting it. We find unusable-*Vorhandenheit* when one of our purposeful projects is disrupted by the thing's own possibilities. We find

anxiety-*Vorhandenheit* when all our projects are disrupted by the thing's lack of possibilities.

ii) In line with this, the cognitive-*Vorhanden* appears to lack all of its own possibilities except certain 'substantial' ones such as extension and resistance (depending on which metaphysical projection we are dwelling in). The unusable-*Vorhanden* is revealed, however, as having definite and 'resolute' possibilities of its own, possibilities understood within the horizon of our concerned dealings. Thus, the boulder reveals its hardness and bulk, the missing opener reveals the steadfastness of the bottle cap. The anxiety-*Vorhanden* is revealed as lacking all possibilities of its own.

Clearly, the three types of *Vorhandenheit* we have discerned are not mutually compatible.

iii) Because they are different, we comport ourselves to them differently. We tarry-alongside the cognitive-*Vorhanden* and are glad to do so. We get annoyed at the unusable-*Vorhanden* and plunge it back into a work-context in our attempt to repair the broken tool or to find a substitute for the missing tool. We shrink back from the empty mercilessness of the anxiety-*Vorhanden*, or at least we are tempted to do so; we choose authenticity or inauthenticity and thus come out of anxiety.

iv) Each reveals concern differently. The cognitive-*Vorhanden* does not reveal explicitly its privative nature. The concern which enables it to show itself remains hidden. The unusable-*Vorhanden's* privative nature is much closer to the surface: we are still obviously *concerned* with the failure of our project. The anxiety-*Vorhanden* is explicitly privative; only within the horizon of 'full and merciful' entities can their 'empty mercilessness' show itself. In anxiety we are deprived of the objects of our concern and so the concern itself comes to the fore.

The texts, then, do not hold up to our first-reading interpretation which takes all *Vorhandenheit* to be the sort discovered by cognition. In a way this should be taken to be a strength of the text, for a simple phenomenological investigation of the three phenomena (an investigation taken without regard to *SZ*) shows that indeed we are dealing with three different phenomena.

Consider, for example, the difference between reflectively and purposefully stripping things of their ordinary work-context and discovering that a tool is broken. In the first case we end up with, perhaps, a lump of pure matter or substance, extended, shaped, perhaps colored. But in the second case—my favorite recording of Beethoven's Ninth turns out to be deeply scratched and unplayable—we do not have before us a mere lump of extended matter. To

interpret the unusable tool in terms of the item found by armchair reflection would be to do real violence to the phenomenon as it shows itself. We are true-er to the phenomenon if we interpret it along the lines Heidegger has laid down in Section 16 concerning usable-*Vorhandenheit* by saying that the record is present as an unexpected, undesired obstruction of my project of listening to the Ninth Symphony. To get the damned record to appear as an extended lump of matter, I would have to step back reflectively from it, but in fact we rarely do this; instead we engage in a new project (selecting a different record, contemplating ways of repairing or replacing the broken record).

Unusable-*Vorhandenheit* should be given a certain priority, I believe. By according it this priority, we can begin to unearth the *Vorhandenheit* that subtends the three forms we have discerned. We shall call this root-*Vorhandenheit*.

Unusable-*Vorhandenheit* should be given priority because it is the least deceptive appearance of *Vorhandenheit*. First, cognitive-*Vorhandenheit* is clearly thought by Heidegger to be a dissemblance, for it hides the role of our interpretive projection which is necessary for its presence. Anxiety-*Vorhandenheit*, I have maintained, similarly hides its own ontological condition: it appears to resist all projections, but this appearance is itself due to a type of projection. It can only appear because at bottom every appearing of any phenomenon depends upon *Dasein's* understanding of Being (*Seinverständnis*). Unusable-*Vorhandenheit* does not as obviously have the taint of dissemblance. It is made possible by our concerned Being-in-the-world, and it brings forth this concern in terms of disappointment, frustration and irksomeness. Our projective nature is not explicitly revealed, but we continue to dwell in it without assuming that we are not projectively committed to the world (as in cognition) and without forgetting that even when entities seem to resist our projects they are still succumbing to the projective involvement which lets them come forward as resistant to that involvement.

Second, *Vorhandenheit* is one of a pair of terms, the other being *Zuhandenheit*. The distinction is most clear and most necessary when discussing tools and broken tools. The distinction is lost in anxiety. In cognition, *Zuhandenheit* plays no major explicit role, according to what Heidegger has written. (We shall see that *Zuhandenheit* in fact plays a hidden role in cognition.) We see the two most starkly together and apart when considering the realm of tools and broken tools. (The appropriate contrast is between a tool and a broken tool, not between a tool and an object of cognition; this becomes apparent as soon as we

distinguish between cognitive-and unusable-*vorhanden* entities.)

Even if these two reasons are not compelling, we can proceed with our attempt to find a root meaning of the three types. The meaning will turn out to be closest to that of unusable-*Vorhandenheit*.

At root, *Vorhandenheit* is the character of Being of non-*Dasein* entities according to which the phenomenon shows itself as having its own determinate possibilities independent of *Dasein* and *Dasein's* projects. It is to be contrasted to *Zuhandenheit* in which these possibilities are taken up in their meaning for *Dasein* and *Dasein's* projects.

Three points must be made quickly. First, it is not clear that Heidegger saw this when writing *SZ*, although I think his later writings bear it out. I put forward the root meaning as a possible exegesis, and possibly one which uncovers something which Heidegger left hidden; yet I think there are indications in *SZ* that at times he recognized it. Second, this root meaning clearly distinguishes cognitive-and anxiety-*Vorhandenheit*; the former looks for actuality, not possibilities, and finds things to lack any but the meagrest possibilities of its own (if any), and the latter finds things to lack all possibilities. Third, it must be stressed that the *Vorhanden's* showing of itself as having independent possibilities is still a showing of itself, and so it remains within the realm of disclosure; it is to be distinguished from *an-sich* entities which are defined as entities which are simply independent from *Dasein* (although traditionally we forget that *an-sich* entities are only possible insofar as they show themselves to *Dasein* as being *an-sich*). This play between the thing's independence and its ontological dependence on showing itself to *Dasein* is, I believe, at the heart of the question of the phenomenological ontology of the thing, but we cannot delve into the matter here.

Although the three are incompatible, they can have a single root meaning because two of the types dissemble themselves. We can see the root in each form if we look at how each shows itself.

We find the cognitive-*Vorhanden* by attempting to eliminate the 'subjective' element; we attempt to become pure recipients. This is, of course, impossible. (Here the fact that the independence shows itself comes into play.) We have in fact brought about a modification of the 'subject' and such a modification is never neutral. We attempt to just look in order to see how things appear when no one is looking. Heidegger wishes to re-think the metaphysics which says that reality is the highest category and knowing is the highest form of disclosure. The deception consists in forgetting that all appearances are appearances to *Dasein*. Cognitive-*Vorhandenheit* is root-*Vorhandenheit* because it appears to be independent of *Dasein*, although the role of the appearing-to-*Dasein* is suppressed. In anxiety, things appear to be

independent of *Dasein*, as in cognition, but unlike cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*, anxiety-*Vorhandenheit* seems to have no residue. In anxiety, to be independent of *Dasein* means to be totally devoid of meaning and possibility. Thus, anxiety-*Vorhandenheit* is root-*Vorhandenheit* because it appears to be independent of *Dasein*, although what appears (the things which mercilessly resist our projections) is suppressed in favor of the fact that appearance is itself dependent on *Dasein*. With unusable-*Vorhandenheit* neither the appearance nor the independence is suppressed. The thing shows itself in its own, independent possibilities, and those possibilities are taken up and understood within *Dasein*'s projects—both the failed project and the new project which shapes itself around the unusable item.

This will become clearer as we turn to the question of the primordially of *Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit*. The first-reading interpretation takes the former to be primordial, and there are texts which seem to support this. There is no doubt that all three types occur when there is a break in our everyday world. Reflection, unusability, and anxiety are all extra-ordinary experiences. Yet it is the aim of phenomenology to see through ordinary appearances to the uncanny and unfamiliar roots of that experience. So we can admit that *Zuhandenheit* is primordial if by 'primordial' we mean 'that which is ordinary, proximal and nearest to hand.'

But this is a relatively uninteresting interpretation of 'primordial'. The German '*ursprünglich*' is better rendered as 'original' in the sense of what gives origin. Thus to say that *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* are equiprimordial (*gleichursprünglich*) is to say that they give rise to each other. In this sense, *Vorhandenheit* can be a privative mode in that it only comes to appearance when we are deprived of what is usually "proximal and for the most part" (*zunächst und zumeist*) but this does not mean that it is any less ontologically primordial than *Zuhandenheit*. After all, things may not be as simple as they ordinarily appear to be; this is what gives phenomenology its critical function.

One text is sure to be cited by those arguing for the primordially of *Zuhandenheit*, a text we have already quoted: *Zuhandenheit* "is not to be understood as merely a way of taking them, as if such 'aspects' were read into the 'entities which we proximally encounter, as if some world-stuff which is proximally *vorhanden* in itself were 'given subjective coloring' in this way", for we do not first have cognitive-*Vorhanden* entities before us; cognition is a founded mode of Being-in-the-world (71). This supports the primordially of *Zuhandenheit* only if we say that the first phenomenon we disclose is necessarily the most primordial. But suppose we have to go through the initial ap-

pearance to find what is primordial? The passage under discussion goes on to mention such a possibility:

Only by advancing *through* the *zuhanden* entities of our concern does cognition lay bare what is only and nothing but *vorhanden*. ZUHANDENHEIT is the ontologico-categorical determination of beings as they are "in themselves". But only on the ground of *vorhanden* entities "are there" *zuhanden* entities. But, granting this thesis for now, does it follow that *Zuhandenheit* is ontologically founded on *Vorhandenheit*? (71) ¹⁸

Heidegger's own position in this quandary is not entirely clear, but it is certainly clear that if there are *Zuhandene* only on the ground of (or, by reason of) *Vorhandene*, then, yes, it does indeed follow that *Zuhandenheit* is ontologically founded on *Vorhandenheit*—unless the two categories are grounded in each other, i.e. are equiprimordial.

The force of the thesis temporarily granted in the passage under discussion—namely that there are *Zuhandene* only on the ground *Vorhandene*—is greater than it might at first seem. True, in the next paragraph Heidegger denies the thesis by offering the possibility of demonstrating the primordially of *Zuhandenheit*. But it is not clear that Heidegger actually takes up the possibility, for he is aiming at showing the worldly character of the world, and he asks whether a demonstration of the primordially of the *Zuhandene* would advance that inquiry. In the next section (Section 16), he shows that unusable-*Vorhandenheit* lights up the phenomenon of the environment and its involvement. Thus he shows that it is through unusable-*Vorhandenheit* that the worldly character of the world becomes accessible. In a sense this should lead us to say that *Vorhandenheit* is primordial. (It should be noticed that the shift from cognitive-to unusable-*Vorhandenheit* goes unnoticed by Heidegger here.)

It is not right to say that either category is primordial. This accounts for the perplexing indecisiveness of the passage. The categories are equiprimordial; one cannot adequately found the other for each contains a moment of its other; they make each other possible.¹⁹

It is not difficult to see how *Zuhandenheit* remains involved in *Vorhandenheit*. This is clearest in the case of unusable-*Vorhandenheit* where the withdrawn *Zuhandenheit* remains the horizon within which unusability becomes possible. Heidegger is clear about this in his repeated references to the *Vorhandenheit* of something *zuhanden* (73, 74). Heidegger does not make the case with regard to cognitive-*Vorhandenheit*, but we can supply it by imagining

an encounter with a cognitive-*Vorhanden* without the horizon of *Zuhandenheit*. We would encounter it purely through cognition and would discover that it in no way could enter into any possible context of projects. If such an encounter were possible, it surely would be different from the cognitive encounters Heidegger has in mind. Perhaps in an aesthetic encounter the horizon of *Zuhandenheit* can be absent, but that is not the type of reflective, Cartesian project Heidegger seems to have in mind. Hidden in the background of the cognitive-*Vorhanden* is the possibility of it becoming once again *zuhanden* in some way. Similarly, an anxiety-*Vorhanden* is only empty and merciless because the context of *Zuhandenheit* is present as conspicuously absent: things *no longer* are suitable for our projects.

But how does *Vorhandenheit* make *Zuhandenheit* possible? In effect we will be trying to show that only because things appear as having their own possibilities independent of *Dasein* can there be *zuhanden* entities; that is, here we can and should restrict our discussion to root-*Vorhandenheit*.

In SZ Heidegger recognizes that things appear as having their own definite possibilities but he does not discuss this at length. He says, for example, that equipment can only genuinely show its Being in dealings cut to the measure of the tool (69), and that the *Zuhanden* "is in any case either suitable or unsuitable" (83),²⁰ as opposed to being a mere thing (*Ding*) with properties attached. An entity can be either suitable or unsuitable for our projects because entities have their own possibilities. Because of this we have to cut our projects to the measure of the tool, and not attempt to make a strongbox out of feathers or sit in our "rocket to the moon" before rocket engines have been invented.

In later works, Heidegger more explicitly recognizes this fact. In *Einführung in die Metaphysik* he puts it well: The possibility of the chalk's

being guided along the blackboard and of being used up is not something we add to the thing by thought. It is itself, as this entity, in this possibility. Otherwise it would not be chalk . . . Correspondingly, every entity has in it this potentiality in a different way . . . It has in itself a definite aptitude for a definite use.²¹

Without these aptitudes, any thing would be as good as any other for our projects. But of course this is not so. It is better to hammer with a hammer than with a stethoscope. It is only because things enter disclosure as having their own possibilities independent of our pro-

jects that we can take them up into our projects in a sensible way. *Vorhandenheit* lets there be *Zuhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* lets there be *Vorhandenheit*. They are equiprimordial.

If this interpretation is correct, it has a bearing on our reading of other passages in *SZ*, on our understanding of the path of Heidegger's thought throughout his philosophical career, and on a fundamental problem for phenomenological ontology.

It will have an effect on how we view the change over (*umschlagen*) from *Zuhandenheit* to *Vorhandenheit*. The change over, as discussed in Section 69, seems to be a change in our understanding of Being. This change in our understanding changes the very Being of the things of the world. Thus Being seems to be at the whim of understanding. But if Heidegger acknowledges root-*Vorhandenheit* (and it must be stressed that it is not clear that in *SZ* Heidegger ever explicitly came to grips with it), then he has acknowledged at least the appearance of independence of things from *Dasein*. By carefully working out the relation between the appearing and the independence which appears, we may be able to save Heidegger from the charge of subjective idealism which must be levelled against one who says that a modification of our understanding results in a modification of Being. We must think about the relation in terms of temporality.

Second, we can help clear up Section 43, on *Realität* which seems to say that real things can *be* even when there is no more Being. This seems to drive a wedge between Being and beings, a wedge acceptable only if we say (counter to Heidegger) that Being is itself an entity which can fall out of Being without affecting the existence of other entities. We need not resort to this grossly metaphysical interpretation if we instead read Section 43 as Heidegger's confused attempt to come to grips with the announced independence of things which we have called their root-*Vorhandenheit*.

Finally, we can see that the question of the relation of *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* is part of the larger question of the relation of projective disclosure and that which is disclosed. Granted that the disclosed is in some way dependent on its disclosure, how much weight are we willing to give to what is disclosed? Things seem to be independent of disclosure; this is how we distinguish objects of imagination from those encountered as real things. But is this appearance of independence a dissemblance? If so, then we seem to be left with a subjective idealism, for all will be dependent upon disclosure. But if we too simply say that they are just independent, we will have no phenomenological way of accounting for them, for their Being will always stand outside of the realm of disclosure.

I believe there is a solution to this problem, a solution Heidegger attempts to achieve throughout the rest of his career; it is part of the topology of the landscape which the path of his thought follows.

NOTES

¹Just as it has become customary to leave *Dasein* untranslated, I will leave *Zuhandenheit* and *Vorhandenheit* untranslated. In *Being and Time*, the translation of *SZ* by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Harper and Row: New York, 1962), *Vorhandenheit* = "presence-at-hand" and *Zuhandenheit* = "readiness-to-hand." Because of the awkwardness and unfamiliarity of these phrases (and because I can think of nothing more suitable), the original German words can serve us as well. In addition, by not translating them we can avoid misleading ourselves in this present investigation into their meaning. Note that *Vorhandenheit* is an abstract noun, whereas *Vorhanden* refers to an entity characterized by *Vorhandenheit* (We shall denote the plural in the German manner by affixing an *e*: *Vorhandene*.) The lower case *vorhanden* is an adjective. *Mutatis mutandi* for *Zuhandenheit*.

Also note that numbers in parentheses refer to the appropriate page in *SZ* (Max Niemeyer: Tübingen, 1972, 12th ed.). The Macquarrie-Robinson translation contains the German pagination.

²"existenzia besagt ontologisch soviel wie *Vorhandensein*, eine Seinsart, die dem Seiendem vom Charakter des Daseins wesensmässig nicht zukommt."

³"ist der Titel für die Seinsweise der Naturdinge im weitesten Sinne." *Gesamtausgabe*, Bd. 24, (Vittorio Klostermann: Frankfurt am Main, 1975).

⁴"Weil bislang die ontologische Problematik das Sein primär im Sinne von *Vorhandenheit* ("Realität," "Welt"-Wirklichkeit) verstand, das Sein das Daseins aber ontologisch unbestimmt blieb, . . ."

⁵"vorgängig gründet in einem Schon-sein-bei-der-Welt, als welches das Sein von Dasein wesenhaft konstituiert."

⁶"Auf dem Grunde dieser Seinsart zur Welt, die das innerweltlich begegnende Seiende nur noch in seinem puren *Aussehen* (*eidos*) begegnen lässt, . . . ist ein ausdrückliches Hinsehen auf das so Begegnende möglich. Dieses *Hinsehen* ist jeweils eine bestimmte Richtungnahme auf..., ein Anvisieren des Vorhandenen. . . . In sogeartetem "*Aufenthalt*"—als dem Sichenthalten von jeglicher Hantierung und Nutzung—vollzieht sich das *Vernehmen* des Vorhandenen."

⁷"darf jedoch nicht als blosser Auffassungscharakter verstanden werden, als würden dem zunächst begegnenden "Seienden" solche "Aspekte" aufgeredet, als würde ein zunächst an sich vorhandener Weltstoff in dieser Weise "subjektiv gefärbt." Eine so gerichtete Interpretation übersieht, dass hierfür das Seiende zuvor als pures Vorhandenes verstanden und entdeckt sein und in der Folge des entdeckenden und aneignenden Umgangs mit der "Welt" Vorrang und Führung haben müsste. Das widerstreitet aber schon dem ontologischen Sinn des Erkennens, das wir als *fundierten* Modus des In-der-Welt-seins aufgezeigt haben."

⁸"nur-noch-verweilen-bei. . . ."

⁹"Das Vernehmen hat die Vollzugsart des *Ansprechens* und *Besprechens* von etwas

als etwas. Auf dem Boden dieses *Auslegens* im weitesten Sinne wird das Vernehmen zum *Bestimmen*."

¹⁰"es zeigt sich als Zeug-ding, das so und so aussieht . . ."

¹¹"meldet sich am Zeug, um sich jedoch wieder in die Zuhandenheit des Besorgten, d.h. des in der Wiederinstandsetzung Befindlichen, zurückzuziehen. Diese Vorhandenheit des Unbrauchbaren entbehrt noch nicht schlechthin jeder Zuhandenheit, das so vorhandene Zeug ist noch nicht ein nur irgendwo vorkommendes Ding."

¹²"Das ratlose Davorstehen entdeckt als defizienter Modus eines Besorgens das Nur-noch-vorhandensein eines Zuhandenen."

¹³"das In-der-Welt-sein wesentlich Sorge ist . . ."

¹⁴"in seiner Zuhandenheit als so aussehendes ständig auch vorhanden war."

¹⁵"Die Angst gibt als Sensmöglichkeit des Daseins in eins mit dem in ihr erschlossenen Dasein selbst den phänomenalen Boden für die explizite Fassung der ursprünglichen Seinsganzheit des Daseins."

¹⁶"ursprünglich und direkt die Welt als Welt."

¹⁷"die Bedrohung kommt nicht aus dem Zuhandenen und Vorhandenen, vielmehr gerade daraus, dass alles Zuhandene und Vorhandene einem schlechthin nichts mehr "sagt". Es hat mit dem umweltlichen Seienden keine Bewandnis mehr. Die Welt, worin ich existiere, ist zur Unbedeutsamkeit herabgesunken, und die so erschlossene Welt kann nur Seiendes freigeben im Charakter der Unbewandnis. Das Nichts der Welt, davor die Angst sich ängstet, besagt nicht, es sei in der Angst etwa eine Abwesenheit des innerweltlichen Vorhandenen erfahren. Es muss gerade begeben, damit es *so gar keine* Bewandnis mit ihm haben und es sich in einer leeren Erbar-mungslosigkeit zeigen kann."

¹⁸"Dieses dringt erst *über* das im Besorgen Zuhandene zur Freilegung des nur noch Vorhandenen vor. *Zuhandenheit ist die ontologisch-kategoriale Bestimmung von Seienden, wie es "an sich" ist.* Aber Zuhandenes "gibt es" doch nur auf dem Grunde von Vorhandenem. Folgt aber—diese These einmal zugestanden—hieraus, dass Zuhandenheit ontologisch in Vorhandenheit fundiert ist?"

¹⁹There is a similar indecisiveness on page 88 where Heidegger distinguishes *Zuhandenheit* as "the Being of entities proximally encountered in-the-world" and *Vorhandenheit* as "the Being of those beings which can be found and determined in an independent, disclosive passage through the beings we proximally encounter." We might read Heidegger's strange emphasis on the "of" as intending to indicate the ontological profundity of the category of *Vorhandenheit*. ("das Sein des zunächst begegnenden innerweltlichen Seienden . . . das Sein des Seienden . . . , das in einem eigenständig entdeckenden Durchgang durch das zunächst begegnenden Seiende vorfindlich und bestimmbar wird; . . .")

²⁰"hat allenfalls Geeignetheiten und Ungeeignetheiten . . ."

²¹"Die Möglichkeit, an der Tafel entlang geführt und abgenutzt zu werden, ist nichts, was wir zu dem Ding nur hinzudenken. Es selbst als dieses Seiende ist in dieser Möglichkeit, sonst wäre es keine Kreide . . . Entsprechend hat jegliches Seiende in je verschiedene Weise diese Mögliche bei sich . . . Sie selbst hat eine bestimmte Eignung zum bestimmten Gebrauch an ihr selbst." (Max Niemayer: Tübingen, 1958, 2nd. ed.) p. 23. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Ralph Manheim, translator (Doubleday Anchor: New York, 1961), p. 25.