

THE HERMENEUTICAL PHENOMENOLOGY OF LANGUAGE IN THE LATER HEIDEGGER AND WITTGENSTEIN

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1. *The Question of “Phenomenology” in Heidegger and Wittgenstein*

In an essay on Wittgenstein and Heidegger which uses the term “phenomenology” in its title one is immediately confronted with a difficulty of a rather formidable sort and that is this—can the term “phenomenology” be said to apply properly to the philosophies of *either* Heidegger or Wittgenstein? To be sure Heidegger in his early years was closely associated with Husserl who took up his duties in Freiburg in 1916 and became his assistant. His intense interest in phenomenology can further be seen from the fact that from 1919, when he first announced a course entitled “Phenomenology and Transcendental Philosophy of Value”, till 1923, the date of his departure for Marburg, he offered courses and seminars every semester in which the term “phenomenology” occurred. In 1927, in *Sein und Zeit*, he wrote “*Ontologie ist nur als Phänomenologie möglich*” (Heidegger’s emphasis).¹ But after this the use of the term practically disappears from his writing. In *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, 1929, it occurs only twice, and plays no significant role. And after this it does not occur at all except for two places in *Über den Humanismus*,² 1947, in which he appears to disassociate himself from it all together.

Thus using the term in Heidegger’s case has some definite problems connected with it. But if this is true of Heidegger it is even more so in the case of Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein did indeed use the term, but quite

¹ *Sein und Zeit*, 8th ed. (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1957), p. 35. Hereafter, SZ.

² *Über den Humanismus*, (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1947).

briefly, in 1930, in his *Philosophische Bemerkungen*. There are twelve instances of its use in this work.³ Thus he speaks of “phenomenological investigation of sense impressions” (no. 224), “phenomenological description” (no. 230), “phenomenological language” used in the description of immediate experience (nos. 1, 213), and so on. Further we know from Waismann that Wittgenstein spoke about phenomenology in his Christmas visit to Vienna and the Vienna Circle, 1929.⁴ Waismann also tells us that he discussed the ideas of Heidegger, particularly his phenomenology of Angst.⁵ But then the term is dropped almost immediately and does not occur after January 1930.⁶ The investigation of the complex reasons which caused Wittgenstein to cease using the term so abruptly would call for speculations that would take us too far afield.⁷ But the fact that he stopped using the term “phenomenology” does not necessarily mean that he stopped using phenomenological concepts and at least some sort of phenomenological method. And of course this is true of Heidegger as well. Just because he stopped, or at least virtually stopped, using the term “phenomenology” does not say that the concepts and the method were abandoned. And, indeed, we shall try to show that this is true of both Heidegger and Wittgenstein. This will not mean, to be sure, that all of the complexities such as the transcendental reduction, intentional structures of consciousness, modes of appearance, the constitution of phenomena, etc. introduced by the later Husserl can be found. Clearly they will not. But this does not necessarily mean that we are no longer dealing with authentic phenomenology, since most of Husserl’s early disciples also did not follow him in these matters.

But even if this is true we are left with the question: Is there present in both Wittgenstein and Heidegger at least something like what we might call a ‘minimum requirement’ less than which one could not be

³ *Philosophische Bemerkungen*, 1930. Ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), Chapter I, nos. 1, 4; Chapter VI, no. 57; Chapter VII, no. 75; Chapter XX, nos. 213, 217; Chapter XXI, no. 218; Chapter XXII, nos. 224, 230.

⁴ *Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis. Gespräche aufgezeichnet von Friedrich Waismann*, ed. by B. T. McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 19.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ See G. E. Moore’s account of these lectures in “Wittgenstein’s Lectures in 1930–33,” *Mind*, 63: 289–316 (1954), and *Mind* 67: 1–27 (1955).

⁷ As to the reasons why Wittgenstein should have discontinued its use see Herbert Spiegelberg’s excellent article “The Puzzle of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s ‘Phänomenologie’ (1929–?)”, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 5: 244–256 (1968).

considered to be doing phenomenology in any meaningful sense of the term? I should like to argue that there is, and that the following elements of phenomenology can be found in both of the philosophers that we are considering. This phenomenology:

- 1) would be a study of the phenomena given in experience;
- 2) its work is to describe, not explain;
- 3) it has a key phenomenological element: “away from theory—to the things themselves”;
- 4) its task is to grasp and describe the essential features or essence (*Wesen, Wesenschau*) of experience.

We shall attempt to show how this is true by looking at how each employs what I will call the “hermeneutical phenomenology of language”.

2. *The Hermeneutical Phenomenology of Language of Heidegger*

Heidegger in his treatment of language lays stress upon what we might call the hermeneutical structure of language. In reflecting on language he says that what he aims for is a hermeneutic *experience* of language.⁸ Man does not have language as one “faculty” among others (US, p. 11). He *lives* in language; his thought has its starting point from language and its term in language (US, p. 159). To grasp thought adequately it must be thought from language (US, p. 11). Heidegger has constantly struggled against the conception of language which sees it only as a means or instrument, e.g. for communication. But in order for language to be simply a means, or one more instrumental ability among many others which man has, one would have to suppose that man had a first a separate, solitary, speechless existence apart from language and that only at some later date he is introduced into it, and that then he begins to communicate by this “means”, language. The opposite is rather the case. Man is born into language, has constantly to do with it. It is the “environment” in which he lives, and without which he cannot live as man. Therefore we may speak of a hermeneutical structure of language.⁹ Language creates a space in

⁸ *Unterwegs zur Sprache* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1959), p. 159. Hereafter, US.

⁹ Concerning the hermeneutical structure of language in Heidegger see for example Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), pp. 361–449; also Jürgen Habermas, “Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften,” *Philosophische Rundschau*, 5: 149–176.

which man may dwell (US, p. 14, HW, pp. 60–61). Language gives man has world, or more precisely it summons a world (US, pp. 21–22). It gives a total context of meaning within which things may appear as things.

In meditating the poem *Winter evening* of Trakl in US (pp. 17–33) Heidegger searches for the function of the words of the poem. What do they intend and what do they achieve? The first four lines of the poem are as follows:

Wenn der Schnee ans Fenster fällt
Lang die Abendglocke läutet,
Vielen ist der Tisch bereitet
Und das Haus ist wohlbestellt.

When the snow falls against the window,
Long sounds the evening bell,
The table is laid for many,
And the house is well-provided.¹⁰

The third and fourth verses speak of the table which is set for many guests and a house which has been prepared for a festive gathering. The two verses seem to have the form of assertions, to speak of things already present-at-hand, *Vorhandene*. But the “is” here is not the apophantic “is” of the assertion but it speaks a summoning. It calls forth things into a world. It invites them to become a concern for man, and in calling forth the things a world is at the same time summoned, for thing can be thing only in a world. A thing can be meaningful, can be thing, only in a context of total meaningfulness, that is, within a world.

What does the first strophe summon? It calls things, bids them to come. Whither?... The place of arrival to which they are co-summoned is being present which is hidden in its being absent. By naming them the summons bids them to come forth to such arrival. The summoning is an invitation. It invites the things as things to become a concern for man... In naming, the things which are named are called into their thing-ing. By their thing-ing they unfold a world in which the things abide and thus are the ever abiding ones.¹¹

¹⁰ All translations are my own.

¹¹ “Was ruft die erste Strophe? Sie ruft Dinge, heißt sie kommen. Wohin?... Der im Ruf mitgerufene Ort der Ankunft ist ein ins Abwesen geborgenes Anwesen. In solche Ankunft heißt der nennende Ruf kommen. Das Heißen ist Einladen. Es lädt die Dinge ein,

In the naming of the poem both things are summoned to come forth and be things, and world is summoned, for the thing cannot be thing in isolation from world and world cannot be world apart from thing. In naming a being one summons it forth into appearance (US, p. 227). Where there is no naming there is no openness (HW, p. 61). The word which is born of naming is not simply a label applied to a being already present at hand. "It is not merely the naming grasp for that which is already present and proposed as such" (US, p. 227). It is rather the naming which makes it possible for a being to be present. The last strophe of the poem *The Word* of Stefan George which Heidegger chose for a subject of his reflection in US summarizes Heidegger's view on this point: "Let there be no thing where the word is lacking" (US, p. 220). In naming, a being is summoned forth, a clearing is projected in which it can appear as a being. And in the appearance of the thing through the word which calls it forth, both thing and world appear together (US, p. 22). They do not exist apart from each other; they permeate one another, and yet not in such a way that there is a fusion, or perhaps better, confusion.

For the world and things do not exist along side one another. They permeate one another. In this sense the two traverse a center. In this center they are united. And as united they are intimately associated with one another. The center of the two is their closeness to each other. The middle of the two our language names the in-between... The closeness of world and thing is not a fusion. The closeness holds sway only where what is close, i. e. world and thing, are clearly separated and remain separated.¹²

The thing which is summoned bears the world in which it appears and can sojourn as the thing that it is. In this way the saying (*Sagen*) summons both world and thing together, for although there is a difference between (*Unter-Schied*) them, they are never separated from each other. In

daß sie als Dinge die Menschen angehen... Im Nennen sind die genannten Dinge in ihr Dingen gerufen. Dingend ent-falten sie Welt, in der die Dinge weilen und so je die weiligen sind." (US, pp. 21–22).

¹² "Denn Welt und Dinge bestehen nicht nebeneinander. Sie durchgehen einander. Hierbei durchmessen die Zwei eine Mitte. In dieser sind sie einig. Als so Einige sind sie innig. Die Mitte der Zwei ist die Innigkeit. Die Mitte von zweien nennt unsere Sprache das Zwischen... Die Innigkeit von Welt und Ding ist keine Verschmelzung. Innigkeit waltet nur, wo das Innige, Welt und Ding, rein sich scheidet und geschieden bleibt." (US, p. 24).

language's saying, therefore, both world and thing are called forth (US, p. 24). It summons things to come into a world, and a world to things. Since things and world never exist apart from each other and yet are not fused into each other in such a way as to lose their identity, in the saying of language which summons them the ontological difference comes to pass. It opens up the middle in which world and things are united with each other and yet remain distinct. The saying of language in making the things to be things and the world to be world preserves them in their difference, but in calling them forth unites them in the middle, and in such a unique unity that they exist in the closest proximity to each other, pervade each other, but yet without losing their difference from one another. The saying of language thus grants a dimension within which each can be itself, and each can only be itself inasmuch as it bears toward (*dif-ferre*) the other. In this way the saying of language calls forth the difference between world and thing, which is yet a difference which bears an essential correlation of each to each. It is in this way that the ontological difference, the difference between Being and beings, World and things comes to pass in language (US, p. 28). The coming-to-pass of the difference is to be understood as a process in which both World and thing "bear toward" (*zutragen*) each other in a middle (*eine Mitte*) (US, pp. 25–26) which opens up in the coming-to-pass of each as it is, World as World, and thing as thing. In the coming-to-pass of the difference between them, they are at the same time borne toward each other (US, p. 27). They share a common center, come to presence in a common "middle", and adhere to each other. The ontological difference is a scission (*Schied*) between (*unter*) them, i.e., between World and things, between Being and beings, which unites them and refers them to each other in the very act of cleaving them in two.

From these considerations the hermeneutical structure of language can be seen—language co-summons world and things, the horizon of total meaningfulness within which things can appear as things, and the concrete meaning structures which can only be meaningful within a horizon of total meaningfulness. In naming individual beings man simultaneously lets appear the horizon within which these things appear to him and affect him. But neither of these, World or things, are produced by man. He receives them. Things could not affect man, he could not encounter them unless they were already in a World and the World in the things. Language brings to the fore this being-in-one-another, and in this proximity of World and thing the hermeneutical structure of language becomes evident. Man does not have command over language as a pure

means. If this were the case one would have to suppose that man could have an existence apart from language, whereas it is clear that he lives in language and is formed by it. Whenever man discusses an object or state of affairs, an action to be undertaken, or anything else, he already presupposes that language has brought with it the horizon of meaningfulness within which these things can be meaningful. Thus language is clearly hermeneutical in its essential structure.

3. *The Hermeneutical Phenomenology of Language of Wittgenstein*

If the language question was central to Heidegger's problematic from the very beginning of his way, no less was it at the center of Wittgenstein's thought.¹³ In the *Tractatus* (hereafter TLP) Wittgenstein endeavored to construct an ideal logical language which would eliminate the obscurity and ambiguity which permeate our everyday language (TLP, 3.325). Many of the problems which gave rise to the pseudo-science of philosophy became problems simply because of a confused use of language. The logician should work toward the construction of an ideal language which would remove the ambiguity and obscurity which characterize our use of language in everyday life. Such an ideal logical language would make the logical structure of language clearly visible (TLP, 6.12, 6.124). Philosophers would see that many of the problems with which they had struggled through the centuries were actually simply the result of misuse of language, and they would then disappear (TLP, 4.003). Wittgenstein later rejected the idea that an ideal language was the key to bringing about perfect clarity in language.¹⁴ In the PI it is not an ideal symbolic language which furnishes the key to language but rather ordinary language (PI, 81, 98, 100, 120, 134, 494). The language philosopher's work is one of description (PI, 124). "We must do away with all *explanation*, and description alone must take its place" (PI, 109). It is not his business to set up *a priori* what the requirements of language are. He must *look* at the way language is actually used.

¹³ In PI, 92, for example Wittgenstein remarks: "...we too in these investigations are trying to understand the essence of language—its function, its structure... We ask: 'What is language?'..." *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953). Hereafter, PI.

¹⁴ *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), pp. 25, 27–28.

Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? —Don't say: "There *must* be something common, or they would not be called 'games'" —but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. —For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look.¹⁵

The task of the philosopher of language is not to develop abstract theories of language, independent of the way language is actually used (PI, 109). Man does not, so to say, exist for a while and only after some unspecified period of time come into contact with language. He is immersed in it, born into it and lives in it. And the language in which he lives is not one which is awaiting clarification at this late date in its history through an ideal language constructed by a logician. It is already formed and is correct as it stands (PI, 98). But although the language is perfect as it stands, and although the work of the language philosopher is not to dream up abstract *a priori* theories to which language is then compelled to conform, still there is a constant tendency to misuse language. Language itself tends constantly to bewitch the intelligence. The philosopher of language must constantly struggle against language's intrinsic tendency to seduce our intelligence: "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language." (PI, 109). The philosopher's work will consist in a kind of therapy. "The philosopher's treatment of a question is like the treatment of an illness" (PI, 125). Philosophy is not a theoretical science but rather proceeds in a piecemeal fashion, analyzing individual cases and proposing intermediate cases by which the mystification of our intelligence by language is dispelled (PI, 122).

The chief source of our confusion lies in the fact that we do not pay attention to how words are actually used in a living linguistic context in everyday life.

A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words.¹⁶

¹⁵ PI, 66.

¹⁶ PI, 123.

Our failure to observe how words are actually used has been the source of many of the traditional philosophical problems. In a way which is strikingly similar to Heidegger, Wittgenstein wants to win words back from the metaphysical overlay with which they have become encrusted.

When philosophers use a word—"knowledge," "being," "object," "I," "proposition," "name," —and try to grasp the *essence* of the things, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home? What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use.¹⁷

The desire to break out of the language of the Western metaphysical tradition is also central to the Heideggerian problematic.

At the very beginning of the PI Wittgenstein takes up the related problems of naming, definition, meaning and reference. His treatment of these problems is especially helpful in throwing light on his use of hermeneutical phenomenology. The opening lines of PI are a quotation from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine describing the process by which he as a child learned the names of objects in the world (PI, 1). The learning process which is described by Augustine is one in which the predominant feature is the ostensive definition—pointing to the object and saying the name. The words of a language name the objects that correspond to them.

The individual words in language name objects—sentences are combinations of such names—. In this picture of language we find the roots of the following idea: Every word has a meaning. This meaning is correlated with the word. It is the object for which the word stands.¹⁸

In this conception of language, naming is seen as some sort of mystical connection between the word and the thing named, a kind of "baptism of an object" by a name.

This is connected with the conception of naming as, so to speak, an occult process. Naming appears as a *queer* connection of a word with an object.—And you really get such a queer connection when the philosopher tries to bring out *the* relation between name and

¹⁷ PI, 116.

¹⁸ PI, 1.

thing by staring at an object in front of him and repeating a name or even the word "this" innumerable times... And *here* we may indeed fancy naming to be some remarkable act of the mind, as it were a baptism of an object.¹⁹

This is an extremely interesting text on several counts. The theory of word, thing, and meaning-relation which is being rejected as inadequate to do justice to the wide variety of uses words have is attributed to Augustine. The roots of such a theory go back to the Aristotelian notion of language and the relation of word to thing, as Specht has correctly pointed out.²⁰ In the Aristotelian approach to language the object which is named has an existence which is independent of man who names it, and of the language by which it is named. Ontology gives the first access to the object rather than language. Language comes along afterwards as it were; the word denotes a thing which is already present-at-hand. In this scheme of things the primary point of orientation is the things which are already present-at-hand; the names are then abstracted from them, e.g. bread, wine, table, etc. Such an approach to language could be called a *correspondence* theory of naming, since the word *corresponds* to the thing.²¹ It is this type of correspondence theory, which is the foundation of Augustine's theory, which is rejected by Wittgenstein as inadequate. Heidegger would certainly agree with Wittgenstein in his rejection of the correspondence theory, and this for several reasons. The theory presupposes a radical split between man and the things of his world. This in turn leads to a divorce between theoretical and practical knowledge. It seems to be for reasons similar to these that Wittgenstein also rejects the correspondence theory, a point which should become clearer shortly. Following the correspondence theory, which presupposes a cleavage of man from the things of his world, the problem arises as to how the word can be connected with thing. "Naming appears as a *queer* connection of a

¹⁹ PI, 38.

²⁰ E.K. Specht, *Die sprachphilosophischen und ontologischen Grundlagen in Spätwerk Ludwig Wittgensteins* (Köln: Kölner Universitäts-Verlag, 1963), pp. 156–157. See also Karl-Otto Apel, "Die Entfaltung der 'sprachanalytischen' Philosophie und das Problem der 'Geisteswissenschaften'" *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 72: 270 (1965); and "Wittgenstein und Heidegger. Die Frage nach dem Sinn von Sein und der Sinnlosigkeitsverdacht gegen alle Metaphysik", *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 75: 77–81 (1967).

²¹ See for example PI, 39, 40, 51, 53, 55, where Wittgenstein examines the weaknesses of the correspondence theory.

word with an object" (PI, 38). But this only becomes a problem if one takes as a starting point: here, man—there, thing. With such a starting point the object is regarded as something present-at-hand, at a distance from man to be stared at. Here the similarity between Wittgenstein's language and Heidegger's is so close that Wittgenstein's words could easily be Heidegger's, or vice versa: "...staring at an object in front of him" (PI 38).

But before we attempt to develop a comparison between our two protagonists further, let us return to observe the way in which Wittgenstein presents his argument, for some of the salient points which are brought out during the course of it will be essential for our dialogue.

The Augustinian correspondence theory, so Wittgenstein argues, is adequate, but only up to a point. One could indeed envisage a primitive language-game for which it would be sufficient, but it is not adequate to explain the wide range of complexities of *our* language (PI, 2, 3, 4.). It is based upon a model of language in which the words that you have in mind are primarily nouns and proper names (PI, 1). It does not, however, take sufficiently into account the varied ways in which words are used, and the kinds of words (PI, 10). In *our* language not only nouns and proper names are important, but action words, relations, etc., are also of the very greatest importance. The correspondence theory in which the focal point is the naming of nouns rather than action words is taken from a language model which is more primitive than ours. One could imagine such a language-game, and one could also imagine that this theory would be adequate to explain all of the phenomena in it. In such a primitive language-game in which the relation of word to thing is explained on the basis of correspondence the philosophical problem of meaning develops. but it only develops on the basis of the initial starting point of this theory.

The philosophical concept of meaning has its place in a primitive idea of the way language functions. But one can also say that it is the idea of a language more primitive than ours.²²

In such a primitive understanding of language the ostensive definition will play a central role. The parent or teacher points to an object and says, "this is called...", and the appropriate name is substituted for the object in question, book, rock, or whatever (PI, 6). Wittgenstein argues that making

²² PI, 2.

the ostensive definition the key to learning language is based on a false analogy, that of a person learning a foreign language (PI, 32). However, while there are certain similarities between the process in which a person learns a foreign language and the child learning language for the first time, there is one essential difference between the two processes. In the case of a person learning a foreign language he is already the master of a language, while the child learning language for the first time is not. Because of this radical difference in the two situations one cannot argue from the fact that the ostensive definition plays the key role in the learning of a foreign language to its playing the same role in the learning of one's own.

Ostensive definition can, no doubt, play a very important and useful role in the learning of one's language but it always rests upon something more primordial: before the ostensive definition can be understood one must first have some mastery of a language (PI, 33). The ostensive definition is not sufficient of itself to insure that the person will understand the object in question, for it is quite possible for an ostensive definition to be interpreted in any number of different ways (PI, 28). Thus for example if the teacher were attempting to teach a child the definition of the number two he might point to two chairs and say, "that is called two." But obviously this is no assurance, even if repeated a number of times with different objects, that the child will know what the number two is. He might conceivably think that it refers to the group, the material, the shape, color, size, or any other feature that they might have in common. Over and above ostensive definition one has to be able to interpret such a definition and this presupposes that one already has some grasp of language. In order to understand an ostensive definition a certain *training* is also required. Only then will one know how to interpret it. And when can we be sure that someone has understood it and interpreted it correctly, that is to say that he knows the *meaning* of a word? Only when he can *use* it in an appropriate way in this language-game (PI, 6, 10, 43, 197). The teacher will know that the child has learned the meaning of the word hammer, for example, when he can use it in an appropriate way, compose a sentence with the word correctly used, pound a nail in a board, pry out a nail, and so on.

The meaning of a word, therefore, so Wittgenstein argues, is the use that it has in a given language-game. What does a word *signify*? "What is supposed to show what they signify, if not the kind of use they have?" (PI, 10). One of the principal limitations of the correspondence theory lies in

the fact that it is a simplistic view of language and does not adequately take into account action words. This feature of language can be brought out more clearly, so Wittgenstein feels, by stressing the *use* of words in a language-game. Another difficulty with this theory is that since the word names a thing, every word must have some object to which it corresponds. But what of words like "this", and "that"? (PI, 38). They are obviously not taught by an ostensive definition which points to some object to which they correspond (PI, 9). Or what of a sentence such as, "Excalibur has a sharp blade" (PI, 39)? The sentence makes sense (*Sinn*) even if the object is destroyed. But if the name's meaning were its correspondence to an object, this sentence would have no sense, since it contains a word which has no meaning (PI, 39). The conclusion would seem to be that since the sentence obviously does have sense even if the object to which one of the words refers ceases to exist, meaning is not correspondence to an object, but rather use in a language-game (PI, 41, 43, 44).

The language-games that Wittgenstein has in mind are, of course, not simply linguistic wholes, but rather language and action interwoven:

I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the "language-game."²³

Language and human action go together, they interpenetrate one another in such a way that neither the one nor the other taken alone constitutes a language-game. Language and action are inextricably bound together.

Here the term language-game is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or a form of life.²⁴

For Wittgenstein, then, the word will only have meaning if it is integrated into the contextual whole of language and action. Therefore the ostensive definition which points to an object "over there" (to understand him from a Heideggerian point of view), cannot be adequate of itself to insure that the meaning be understood. The role of a word in language is analogous to a chess piece. One knows what the king is when one can use it in the game (PI, 31). The chess piece does not have meaning *as* a chess

²³ PI, 7.

²⁴ PI, 28.

piece unless it is related to the context of the game in which it is used. One will know the meaning of this piece when one can use it, make the various moves correctly and according to the rules of the game. The point is, of course, that the chess piece has meaning only in the context of its game. So too with words, they have meaning only when related to a total context (PI, 29, 30, 31, 47, 199). It is for this reason that Wittgenstein argued that the ostensive definition which points to an object must always presuppose something more fundamental before it can be correctly interpreted, and this is nothing else than language itself. This, it would seem, is to insist on what, within a Heideggerian frame of reference, one would call the hermeneutical structure of language, that is, the concrete meaning structures of language have meaning only within a horizon of total meaningfulness.

4. *Heidegger and Wittgenstein: Dialogue*

In much of the foregoing one can see a great deal of agreement between our two dialogue partners. To see the truth of this it might be of help to examine Wittgenstein's position from a Heideggerian standpoint. Both thinkers are in agreement that the Aristotelian model in which the meaning of the name is its correspondence to an object is inadequate to do justice to the richness of this function of language, viz. naming. As Wittgenstein views the matter, the problem of meaning arises as a philosophic problem only when the correspondence theory is accepted as a starting point and basic model of thought, as happens when the ostensive definition which points to an object becomes the key to understanding naming. Thus concerning the problem of meaning in relation to ostensive definition he remarks:

The philosophical concept of meaning has its place in a primitive idea of the way language functions. But one can also say that it is the idea of a language more primitive than ours.²⁵

That is to say that the connection between word and thing becomes a problem, becomes obscure, when objects become objects, *Gegen-stände*, severed from man and his world, seen as *Vor-handene*, something to be viewed (PI, 38). Both philosophers attempt to overcome this splitting in a way that is remarkably similar, viz. by stressing the hermeneutical structure

²⁵ PI, 2.

of language. For Heidegger poetic naming co-summons things and World. The thing can be thing only in a World. Where there is no naming there is no thing. "Let there be no thing where the word is lacking" (US, p. 220). A thing can have meaning, can be a thing, only in a context of total meaningfulness, that is, within a World.

In naming, the things which are named are called into their thing-ing. By their thing-ing they unfold a World....²⁶

In naming, then, both thing and World are co-summoned, for the thing can be thing only in a World. The word which is born of naming is not simply a label applied to a being already present at hand. *Vorhandene*, as is the case is ostensive definition.

It is not merely the naming grasp for that which is already present and proposed as such.²⁷

It is naming which makes it possible for a being to be present, and in the appearance of the thing through the word which calls it forth both thing and World appear together (US, p. 22).

From this we can see the hermeneutical phenomenology of language in both Heidegger and Wittgenstein—naming co-summons World and things, horizon of total meaningfulness within which things can appear as things, and the concrete meaning structures which can only be meaningful within a horizon of total meaningfulness.

As Wittgenstein sees it, the ostensive definition which points to an object (*Gegen-stand*), "over there" must presuppose something more fundamental if the meaning of the word is to be understood: man must already be *in* language. The ostensive definition always stands in need of an interpretation. But how does one know that the ostensive definition of a word has been correctly interpreted? When the person to whom it is given can use it. And Wittgenstein does not just mean use a word in the correct grammatical way in a sentence. Rather, he means when the person knows the meaning in a language-game, which is a form of life and interwoven with activity. One knows what a hammer is when he can use

²⁶ "Im Nennen sind die genannten Dinge in ihr Dingen gerufen. Dingend entfalten sie Welt..." (US, p. 22).

²⁷ "Es ist nicht mehr nur benennender Griff nach dem schon vorgestellten Anwesenden..." (US, p. 227).

it. That is to say (interpreting Wittgenstein from a Heideggerian point of view) that the hermeneutic "as" (*als*) structure of interpretation in which the hammer is seen *as* hammer has the more primordial role in human understanding.²⁸ But the meaning of a word in a language-game is never understood in isolation from the language-game in which it is used. It presupposes a total context of meaning-fulness. As Wittgenstein points out by way of example:

'I set the brake up by connecting up the rod and lever.'—Yes, given the whole rest of the mechanism. Only in conjunction with that is it a brake-lever, and separated from its support it is not even a lever; it may be anything or nothing.²⁹

To be a lever it must be seen as part of a relational contextual whole. That is to say the thing is thing only in a world. Only in a world can the hermeneutical structure of understanding interpret it *as* lever. For Wittgenstein the total context of meaning in which the word and thing have meaning is a language-game which is a complexus of language and action in which the person who is speaking and acting has his existence. In Heidegger, too, Dasein's World is the totality of meaningfulness. Dasein has a radical openness to Being, and comprehending it, projects a world which is the totality of meaningfulness. The antecedent comprehension of Being is interpreted through the hermeneutical 'as' structure and articulated by *Logos* which is concretized in language. Language is meaningful as the concrete meaning structures of total meaningfulness which have now been articulated. Since the World is the totality of meaningfulness, it is only against this horizon that beings can be discovered *as* what they are. Thus a hammer is only discovered *as* a hammer when it enters the horizon of total meaningfulness which is the World projected by Dasein. It is only by Dasein's concerned dealing with beings ready-to-hand (*Zuhandene*) that they enter the horizon of meaningfulness, World, that they can be interpreted *as* what they are. The hammer is a hammer only when it enters Dasein's World.

²⁸ For an interesting study of Wittgenstein's hermeneutics of language see Habermas, "Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften...", ref. 9, pp. 124–176. Habermas critically examines Wittgenstein's hermeneutics of language, compares it with Gadamer's hermeneutics, and feels that there are certain inadequacies in Wittgenstein's position. For an excellent presentation of Gadamer's position see especially his work *Wahrheit und Methode*, ref. 9, pp. 361–499.

²⁹ PI, 6.

Thus for both Heidegger and Wittgenstein the structure of language is hermeneutical. For Wittgenstein the meaning of a hammer is understood when one knows how to use it. It has meaning only in relation to a total context of meaning, a language-game, which is a form of life, that is to say language and activity bound together. This seems to be very close to Heidegger's position. The hammer is interpreted as a hammer only when it becomes the subject of Dasein's concerned dealing. For both thinkers the thing can have meaning only in a context of total meaningfulness. Both thinkers attempt to overcome the subject-object dichotomy and the divorce of theoretical knowledge from practical, and both attempt to do this by seeing man and his world as inextricably bound together, and insisting that it is only in this world that there is meaning.

There certainly seems to be a striking similarity between the hermeneutical structure of language in Heidegger and the notion of language in the PI. For Wittgenstein, as for Heidegger, man lives in language. In order to analyze it, or speak about it he must use a language which already exists in a fully developed form.

In giving explanations I already have to use language full-blown (not some sort of preparatory, provisional one); this by itself shows that I can adduce only exterior facts about language. Yes, but then how can these explanations satisfy us? Well your very questions were framed in this language; they had to be expressed in this language, if there was anything to ask.³⁰

The language which man is attempting to analyze and explain must be used both in the questioning of the language and in answering the questions which were framed in it. For Wittgenstein, not unlike Heidegger, man lives in the language which he is examining; the language itself which is examined is used to pose the very questions about itself and is again used in giving solutions to the questions that it raised. This is simply to say that language has a hermeneutical structure and that the task of the philosopher in investigating it is not to attempt to impose *a priori* theories on it but rather to let it appear as it is. In short his method in uncovering this structure will be phenomenological.

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³⁰ PI, 120.