Responses to Pippin, Macbeth and Haugeland

Robert B. Brandom

1. Comments on Pippin

Robert Pippin's rich and generous paper shows just how much work he has put in—not just for this occasion, but over the years—in figuring out what philosophical lessons I claim to learn from Hegel and in assessing what is and is not supportable and progressive in that reading. I am sure that I will be wrestling with his insightful comments here for some time to come. At this point, I find less to disagree with in them than he probably expects. Certainly as to the *incompleteness* of my treatment of Hegel, I am in complete accord. My discussion of Hegel is narrowly focused on his account of the nature of the *conceptual*: of conceptual normativity and the determinate contentfulness of concepts. I think this is an axial issue for Hegel, but it is not a traditional way into his texts, nor is its centrality patent on their surface. He certainly talks about *lots* of other important things. And it is not at all obvious, at least at first glance, what the articulation of the conceptual has to do with such grand topics as 'the history of the progress of the consciousness of freedom' (a phrase, by the way, that my teenage son liked so much he adopted it as the name of his garage band). Further, Hegel spends most of his time talking, not about about ordinary determinate empirical and practical concepts, but about metatheoretical philosophical concepts, the ones that are in his sense 'logical' or 'speculative': metaconceptual structures such as Ansichsein and Fürsichsein, Being and Essence, *the* Concept, in the sense of a vast, comprehensive, holistic system that comprises all ordinary concepts and their use in judgment and reasoning (both theoretical and practical), and the Idea, which is a unity of Being and Thought, of the objective and the subjective, the immediate and its mediation. I claim that the way to understand those metatheoretic philosophical and logical concepts is to see what Hegel uses them to say about the workings of ordinary empirical and practical concepts. And I would say the same thing about Kant, whose long discussions of pure categorical concepts and synthetic *a priori* truths are most usefully understood, I think, in terms of what he is saying about the use of ordinary empirical concepts in synthetic judgments *a posteriori*.

So I agree that my attention is selective and that it remains to be seen just how valuable and illuminating the perspective afforded by this selective emphasis turns out to be. But Pippin isolates four areas where he thinks the narrowness of focus of my approach risks not just leaving things out, but substantial distortion. I can here only begin to address some of the considerations he advances.

European Journal of Philosophy 13:3 ISSN 0966-8373 pp. 429–441

Let me talk first about one of the most fundamental: the nature of Hegel's *idealism*. Here Pippin concentrates on my reading of what I call '*objective*' idealism. His worry is that the view I attribute under that rubric is—to use his polite but pressing term—merely 'anodyne': not a view with any bite in it, not one that threatens any orthodoxy or expresses any radical insight or controversial claim. I have often heard responses generally of the sort Pippin is here expressing. The most extreme case was someone who, after hearing a sketch of my account of this dimension of idealism said: 'But that view can't be idealism—it's not crazy'. It would clearly be no great contribution to our understanding of German idealism to recoil so strongly from the danger of attributing crazy views under that heading to attributing trivial ones.

Some background will be helpful here. In *Tales* I discuss three distinct dimensions that I see as essential to Hegel's Absolute idealism: what I call 'conceptual realism', 'objective idealism', and 'conceptual idealism'. The doctrine Pippin focuses on is just one of these. It is not put forward as all there is to idealism, and should be understood in the context of the other aspects. Conceptual realism is the claim that to construe the objective world as *determinate*—as being one way rather than another—is necessarily to construe it as *conceptually* articulated. Such a view requires a notion of the conceptual that is resolutely non-psychological. For Hegel, as I understand him, conceptual articulation is a matter of material relations of incompatibility and consequence—what he calls 'determinate negation' and 'mediation'. Conceptual realism says that the world, whether understood as a constellation of *facts* or of *objects*, or otherwise, is *determinate* only insofar as some ways it can be *exclude* other ways it can be, and *include* or entail still others. On this view *modal* realism entails *conceptual* realism. Being copper is incompatible with being an electrical insulator and entails melting at 1025°C. One of Hegel's most basic claims—one he learns from Kant—is that one can only be a modal realist (which for him means a conceptual realist) by also being an idealist.

The first grade of idealism, *objective* idealism, says that this apparently perfectly objective notion of the conceptual in play in conceptual realism in fact essentially involves a subjective dimension: an implicit reference to our practices or processes of *using* or *applying* concepts in judgment. There is an internal conceptual connection between the objective incompatibility of properties and the subjective incompatibility of commitments—between the sense in which one and the same *object can*not simultaneously have the property of being spherical and of being cubical and the sense in which one and the same *subject ought* not be simultaneously *committed* to its being spherical and to its being cubical. I think it obvious neither *that* this is so, nor *what* sort of internal conceptual connection there might be between the relations of objects and the practices of subjects, between the *modal* sense in which objects, as Hegel puts it, 'repel' incompatible properties (a matter of what is objectively impossible) and the very different *normative* sense in which subjects 'repel' incompatible commitments (a matter of what is subjectively appropriate). One view, which *is* crazy, and which has not infrequently been attributed to Hegel and other idealists is that the relation

between these is one of *reference*-dependence: unless there were subjective practices of making claims, there would be no objective facts. What I call 'objective idealism' is rather one of *sense*-dependence. What we are *saying* about the world when we talk about its objective structure including *objects*, *facts* about those objects, and *laws* relating those facts is not intelligible apart from an understanding of what we are *doing* when we *use singular terms*, *make claims*, and *reason counterfactually*. The point is subtle, and it is not crazy, but it is not at all trivial. Of course it *is* trivial that we can't *say that* the world comprises objects, facts, and laws without in fact *using* singular terms, sentences, and counterfactual conditionals. And that fact may be the source of Pippin's concern. But that what an object *is* is *essentially*, and not just accidentally, what can be picked out by a singular term, that what a fact *is* is essentially what can be *stated*, that what necessity or lawfulness *is* is essentially what supports counterfactual reasoning, those claims of constitutive conceptual relations between objective categorical and modal notions, on the one hand, and subjective normative practical notions on the other, are not trivial. First, notice that objective idealism is not entailed by the mere *rationalism* that Pippin describes. That experience *consists in* the application of concepts, and hence cannot be thought of as a semantically foundational concept-independent ultimate source of content for concepts does not yet say anything at all about how the activity of applying concepts is related to the conceptual structure of the objective world. Second, objective idealism in this sense rules out an *objective realism* that plans *first* to explain how the world is, in terms of objects, facts, and laws, and *then*—and *only* then—by appeal to that objective structure to explain what it is to *experience*, *think* or *talk* about, gain *knowledge* of that objective structure. Frege exploits this nontrivial idealism to argue that numbers are objects because numerals are singular terms, and a corresponding nontrivial argument underwrites the status of modal, probabilistic, and normative facts—by contrast to a logical atomist or Tractarian picture, for instance.

The third element of Absolute idealism distinguished in *Tales*, conceptual idealism, is the further claim that the whole constellation of subjects engaging in concept-using practices and objects standing in conceptual relations should itself be understood on the model of the practical object-involving activities of subjects, not just on the model of objective relations between subjects and objects: we should construe it not just as Substance, but as Subject. This view is a more likely candidate for being crazy, though I think that if we read it in the light of Hegel's understanding of subjectivity, it turns out to be quite interesting and possibly correct. I'm not going to pursue that thought here, except to say that it, too, is an essential element of what Hegel means by 'idealism', which accordingly does go well beyond the strand of objective idealism.

Pippin also has doubts about the adequacy of my rendering of Hegel's rich notion of the nature of normativity. There are a number of interesting points here, but let me register one important disclaimer. At the basis of several of Pippin's concerns in this vicinity is the mistaken impression that I seek to identify Hegel's notion of normativity with the one I expound in *Making It Explicit*. In fact, from my point of view these are wholly disjoint. The methodology of *MIE* requires

appealing to the very weakest, most primitive sort of social normativity possible. I do not at all think that Hegel's full-blooded, many-faceted notion of conceptual normativity can be understood on that basis. Indeed, the sort of phenomena Pippin points to as underlining the disparity are among those that motivate my interest in Hegel's way of thinking about norms.

Pippin's final criticisms are addressed to my attempt to understand various aspects of Hegel's account of the way conceptual contents are progressively determined through a historical process of experience in terms of the model of the way concepts of common law develop via the reciprocal interaction of each judge's simultaneous responsibility to the precedential authority of prior concept-applications and exercise of authority to set precedent provisionally binding on future cases. One of his criticisms concerns the *level* of Hegel's discussion. So Pippin points out that:

> one of the aspects of what has been made explicit across historical time is not just a set of particular normative commitments (which are administered, altered, perhaps substantially revised by a successor ethical community) *but the nature of normative authority itself* . . .

I agree with that, but I think that *what* we are eventually to learn about the nature of normative authority itself—when we have achieved the stage of self-consciousness about it that Hegel alarmingly calls 'Absolute Knowing'—should itself be understood in terms of the common-law model. Roughly, what we must learn is how to accept *both*:

a) that the common law model is right about how our concepts acquire content and authority—the sense in which common law *is* 'judge-made law', the sense in which our norms and concepts are *our creation* (not, in the first instance, *mine*, but *ours*) and,
b) that this does *not* in any way undercut their bindingness.

But to reconcile these we must reconstrue the concept of *normative authority*. This *is* the issue of the 'conflict of freedom and authority' that Pippin rightly identifies as a major theme of the *Phenomenology*.

I think the common-law model can make sense of the fact that, as Pippin says, crises like incompatible commitments or tragic dilemmas must be understood as arising from *within* the community's own experiences. Precedents can both underdetermine the applicability of concepts to a new set of facts, and can overdetermine it, where a new set of facts shows up hitherto unremarked *conflicts* and *collisions* between the principles codifying those precedents. Here Pippin observes that it is not at all clear that all the cases of collision between a general notion of normative authority and particular applications of it that motivate changes in the general notion in the *Phenomenology* are occasioned by novel sets of facts. I actually think that with a suitably broad construal of 'novel set of facts', this is a pretty illuminating way of thinking about what goes on there—but I'll have to leave that here as a mere claim. More important is the fact that I want to apply the model at the base level, as a way to think about the development-

through-determination of ordinary empirical concepts, not the higher-level philosophical, logical, 'speculative' concepts that embody and express views about the nature of normative authority itself. As far as *that* development is concerned—the one recounted in the body of the book—the model of the evolution of concepts through the processes of common-law adjudication is meant to model the *final* understanding of the structure of normative authority, the one that gradually emerges into explicitness over the course of the narrative as having been implicit all along. My reading of each of the intermediate stages and transitions has the form of showing which features of the final understanding *are* made explicit at each point, and which are still merely implicit, awaiting later revelation.

2. Comments on Macbeth

Macbeth ingeniously ties together the construction I call 'holistic role abstraction', in the first Hegel chapter, the account of what I call his 'two-ply account of observation', in the Sellars chapter, and the basic critical argument of the first Frege chapter, and offers a common diagnosis of them all as mistaken due to the conflation of considerations proper to concern with *symbolic* languages with considerations proper to concern with *natural* languages. I think she is on to something important about the in-principle limitations of formal semantic metalanguages for natural languages. But I cannot see that Macbeth's way of setting things out can do the work she calls on it for. These are deep waters, and in these remarks I can only splash around a bit in the shallows.

Both the bit of the Hegel chapter Macbeth is concerned with and the Sellars chapter address the question of how two basic elements of empirical conceptual content can be understood to be related. They are the possibility of non-inferentially eliciting perceptual responses and the inferential articulation of those responses. It is worth noting first that these are the two aspects into which logical empiricism sought to analyze knowledge and second that contemporary theories of concepts typically take either perceptual-observational concepts or logical concepts as their paradigms: Fodor's theories are instances of the first approach and Dummett's of the second. (More balanced approaches, such as Peacocke's, are rarer.)

Macbeth's idea seems to be that the distinction between the contribution to conceptual content made by reliable differential perceptual responsiveness and that made by inferential articulation lines up with the distinction between natural and symbolic languages, at least to the extent that sensory responsiveness is necessary *only* for the contentfulness of natural languages. Accordingly, she sees the argument that I advance on Hegel's behalf for the unintelligibility of *strong semantic holism*—the idea that conceptual content can be conferred *solely* by relations among such contents, without regard to any relations to anything else—to apply only to natural and not to symbolic languages. Symbolic languages, as Macbeth understands them, neither permit nor require help from matter-of-factual relations between symbols and non-symbols.

As far as I can see, this way of lining things up runs together *what* is expressed or represented—concepts of empirical vs. abstract objects—with *how* it is represented: in natural or symbolic language. Although there are heuristic connections, these seem to me in principle orthogonal. On the one hand, symbolic languages are not restricted from representing empirical states of affairs in a way that depends on some uses of symbols being reliably elicited as non-inferential responses to environing stimuli. A finite state transducer reads and writes a purely symbolic language, even though the set of stimulus-response connections that make up each of its states includes responding to stimulus-kinds that are not symbols by writing tokens of symbolic kinds and responding to symbol-tokenings not only by writing other symbols and changing states, but by producing non-symbolic performances. Such an automaton can represent empirical states of affairs and not just abstracta such as numbers. On the other side, natural language is capable of representing not only theoretical objects—by which I mean those that are *only* accessible inferentially, and not observationally—but also abstracta such as the numbers used in counting, directions of lines, and so on. So I just don't see that it is true that, as Macbeth claims, the concepts of natural language are 'inherently sensory', or even 'for the most part concepts of sensory entities'. What *is* true is that the purely theoretical and abstract concepts do not constitute an *autonomous* stratum of language: their use is not a language game one could play though one played no other. Unless one can apply observational concepts non-inferentially, one cannot deploy theoretical or abstract concepts inferentially either. But I take it that *that* much is *also* true of *symbolic* languages even in the narrow sense in which Macbeth is thinking of them: as having *only* abstract subject-matters. After all, to use those languages one must be able to respond non-inferentially to symbol-tokenings according to their type—that is, one must be able to *read* them.

I think Macbeth takes too seriously a few relatively off-hand remarks I make about mathematics. The basic view is that for concepts to be determinately contentful in an empirical and practical sense—for them to be about how worldly things are—they must be inferentially articulated in the broad sense that includes inferential relations between circumstances and consequences of application that are in many cases themselves *non*-inferential: for instance, the visible presence of red things on the side of perceptual language entries and the movement of my fingers on the side of practical language exits. Purely theoretical concepts are those that themselves have *only* inferential circumstances and consequences of application. But these are linked inferentially to observational and practical concepts, and those links are essential to their contents. I ask whether it is intelligible that, within such a field of concepts whose content depends on their links to perception and action, there should be a constellation of concepts whose contents owe nothing to such inferential links—a group of concepts that are inferentially isolated and insulated from all the rest. My tentative answer is that I do not see why not, and I suggest that the best candidates might be concepts of the purest of pure mathematics: abstract algebra and pure set theory, for instance. I may be wrong about the intelligibility of this idea of inferentially insulated

concepts, but if so, no essential element of my view of conceptual contentfulness is affected. I certainly never envisage understanding ordinary concepts as the result of combining such concepts with something else. So I do not accept Macbeth's characterization of my view as based on the claim that 'specifically conceptual content is given by inferential role in abstraction from sensory experience'.

Accordingly, I want to take issue with the first half of her claim: that the first step in the dialectic, from atomism to strong holism, makes no sense for natural language. The question is how mere *things*—noises, marks, performances that can be specified as the distinct things they are in wholly non-intentional terms—can come to express or be bearers of specifically semantic or intentional content. The problem is that the relations those conceptual contents stand in to one another, paradigmatically inferential and incompatibility relations, are essential to the identity and individuation of those contents. How are the relations between the atomistic signs and the holistic contents to be understood? How is the transition made from the one to the other? The solution in brief is to acknowledge a pragmatic level that mediates between the syntactic and the semantic ones. Broadly consequential relations among performances—the way in which producing one noise, in what will eventually be intelligible as having specifically assertional force, normatively permits certain other such moves, requires one to be willing to make others yet, and precludes one from making still others—articulate what it is for those noises to play roles identified and individuated by those relations, and in those terms we can make sense of them as expressing contents recognizable as *conceptual* contents in that they stand to one another in inferential and incompatibility relations. A story along these lines may or may not work, but it is a story addressed wholly to *natural* languages—a story that owes nothing to any ideas about late-coming, artificial symbolic languages.

Let me close by saying something about Macbeth's discussion of one of my Frege arguments, which I think is largely independent of these other considerations.

My claim about Frege concerns the 'Julius Caesar problem'. In the early *Grundlagen*, Frege objects to one proposed definition of number that it would not settle whether Julius Caesar was a number. The final definition he offers understands numbers as the extensions of concepts of the form 'equinumerous with . . .'. In an astonishing footnote, he says 'I assume it is understood what the extensions of concepts are'. In later work, he defines concept-extensions as a kind of 'course of values'. I look at the details of the intricate technical argument he offers in the *Grundgesetze* to define courses of values, to see whether it solves the Julius Caesar problem, by settling the truth-values of identity claims not of the form 'the course of values of concept F = the course of values of concept G'. I conclude that it does not, because it attempts to stipulate that all these 'heterogeneous' identities are false by use of an appended extremal clause of the form 'otherwise, the identity is false'. This is okay in the narrow confines of the *Grundgesetze* construction, since the only kinds of objects that need to be covered by that clause are those few kinds that have already been explicitly

constructed. But in a wider philosophical context, we can ask whether Frege's definition of 'course of values' solves the Julius Caesar problem he himself had raised. I argue that it does not, because in order to tell whether Julius Caesar should come under one of the early clauses of the definition, or under the final one, what we need to know is precisely whether he is identical to the course of values of any concept. Viewed as an answer to the Julius Caesar question, Frege's definition is question-begging.

I go on to argue that things are even worse, because *all* of Frege's key philosophical concepts are given definitions of the form in question. The *only* identities involving *Sinne* that are settled by Frege's essentially substitutional principles of individuation, for instance, are the 'homogeneous' ones in which the items on *both* side of the identity are of the form 'the sense of the expression E'. We are given no principle that would settle whether Julius Caesar is the sense of any expression. And corresponding remarks apply to the other central concepts of Frege's semantics: *Bedeutung*, and *truth-value*. Officially, the inter-substitution requirement does not by itself even settle it that Julius Caesar is the *referent* of any expression—even of the expression 'Julius Caesar'. That is, we need some *further* principle to bring together the two aspects of Frege's discussion of *Bedeutungen*, sameness of semantic role and the name-bearer model, so as to understand the intersubstitutivity of the name 'Julius Caesar' with some other singular term, say 'the conqueror of Gaul', as *expressing* the claim that Julius Caesar *is* the conqueror of Gaul, and *hence is* (is identical with) the referent of the expression 'the conqueror of Gaul'. But we have no idea what further principle could settle whether or not Julius Caesar, in addition to being the referent of an expression, was the sense of one, or the truth-value of a thought. Macbeth claims, in effect, that this observation should not be understood as pointing out a defect in Frege's account, since the criterion of adequacy that fails to be satisfied—that the truth-values of *all* identities involving singular terms formed by the use of these semantic sortals be settled by their introduction conditions—applies only to *symbolic* languages, and *not* to the *natural* language in which Frege's elucidations of his symbolic language are expressed.

I don't see that this response lets Frege off the hook. His claim is that one has not successfully introduced a singular term or sortal unless one has *settled* the truth values of all identities in which it appears (whether or not we can *know* which of them are true is a further question, about which this semantic claim is mute). That is what is required to give the expressions introduced a definite *sense*. And Frege's view is that an *in*definite sense is no sense at all. Perspicuous languages associate a sense—which is to say the same as a fully determinate sense—with each expression. Now perhaps he thinks (or again, perhaps it is true) that only symbolic languages can be perspicuous in this *sense*. It does not follow—and I take it to be clear that Frege does not think—that *no* expressions of natural language can in principle express senses (as opposed to invoking vague clouds of related senses). After all, numbers are used in the first instance in *natural* language, to *count*, not just to form symbolic expressions. The theoretical expressions Frege introduces, as technical terms, to set criteria of adequacy for

perspicuity—whether of symbolic or natural languages—should surely themselves be required to be perspicuous. After all, what sort of a criticism is it of some use of natural language to say that it expresses no definite sense if the expression 'definite sense' has no definite sense?

And we need to know what senses are—what we are saying of something when we call it the sense of an expression—not just when two bits of language express the *same* sense, in order to answer a host of philosophically important questions. We want to understand, for instance what it *is* for a sign-design to express a sense, or for us to grasp or understand one. And besides these very basic questions, there are the more sophisticated theoretical ones, such as the one Dummett asks about the senses of predicate-expressions, where it seems that two of the things Frege says about senses collide. For his remarks about the compositional nature of senses as accounting for the possibility of grasping novel thoughts seems to require that the senses of predicates be functions from the senses of singular terms to thoughts (the senses of sentences). But his claim that senses determine or are modes of presentation of referents seems to require that the senses of predicate-expressions be modes of presentation of functions from objects to truth values. In order to understand whether these two demands can be reconciled, we need to settle the truth of *heterogeneous* identities involving senses. This issue concerns the fundamental coherence of the notion of *sense*. So I don't think Frege can be saved on this score by invoking the distinction between natural and symbolic languages.

3. Comments on Haugeland

All my work on Heidegger grows out of and builds on John Haugeland's. He's the one who taught me how to read and think about this stuff. In the essay in question, though, I take issue with a central tenet of the tradition of Heidegger interpretation to which, thanks to John, I am proud to belong. At least as I understood them, Haugeland, like his teacher Bert Dreyfus before him, reads Division One of *Being and Time* as presenting a kind of layer-cake picture of basic human capacities. The foundation layer is the equipmental significance things exhibit as playing roles in the skillful practical doings of beings who count as worlded in virtue of their embeddedness in such a setting. This is Heidegger's *Zuhandensein*: the readiness-to-hand or availability of worldly items. Our kind of Being, Dasein, *is* Being-in-the-World—hence the title of Dreyfus's seminal book on *Being and Time*. Built on this base is a second, late-coming, parasitic, and in an important sense *optional* superstructure, which is the capacity for things to show up as merely present-at-hand, merely occurrent: simply objectively *there* in a way that is independent of our involvements, practices, skills, interests, and projects. This is Heidegger's *Vorhandensein*. This is the kind of Being systematically revealed by natural science, but which shows up informally in ordinary descriptive factual assertions. As Heidegger reads the philosophical tradition—particularly, but not exclusively, the modern tradition—it treats objective

occurrence as the ontologically basic sort of Being, construing the practical significances things have as available for our use as—in one of his images—normative cloaks we throw over the objective things. Upstream from almost all of his other innovations in *Being and Time* is Heidegger's insistence on reversing that order of explanatory priority. *Vorhandensein* arises out of *Zuhandensein*, and can only be understood in terms of it.

A lot of work needs to be done to clarify the sort of priority, dependence, or order of explanation that is at issue in the conceptual sea-change that Heidegger is recommending. I think, for instance, that it is intimately bound up with the issues about sense-dependence and idealism that Robert Pippin and I were discussing before in connection with Hegel. But the general shape of the move is congenial to pragmatists in a sense broad enough to include not only the classical American pragmatists, but all those who seek to understand knowing-that in terms of knowing-how, a movement of thought comprehensive enough to comprise both the later Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations of the practical setting required to make sense of the possibility of *describing* things, stating *facts*, and referring to *objects*, and James Gibson's case for the priority of affordances in perception. Looking closely at Heidegger's text, however, I came to doubt that it has the layer-cake structure that would support an inverted priority thesis. Instead, I argue, Heidegger's view is that there is no Being-in-the-World, no *Zuhandensein*, without *Vorhandensein*, that these are, to use Heidegger's phrase, equiprimordial kinds of Being. Being able to treat things as merely occurrent is a fundamental existential characteristic of Dasein. Now maybe this conclusion is not surprising. After all, how could Dasein ask the question of Being without being able to talk? But there remains the question of whether talk of *some* sort is possible without the sort of talk that presents things as vorhanden. Perhaps the essay in question should be seen as belonging to the genre of *self*-education: clearing up a misunderstanding that originally afflicted only the author himself. But the prevalence in the literature of remarks that if so are at best very incautiously stated leads me to suspect that the contrary view is more widespread than that. But that's the background.

Haugeland expresses a worry about my approach to Heidegger cognate to one of Pippin's about my approach to Hegel: can the Division One issues I focus on really be pursued in abstraction from the issues of Division Two that articulate the ultimate point of the book? I do want to claim that the issues I address can be separated from those of anxiety, care, truth, death, conscience, authenticity, resoluteness, historicity, and time. I don't think they can be addressed without worrying about what Heidegger means by Being. But in the other chapter on Heidegger in *TMD*, I do say something about the question of Being, explicating the slogan (mine, not his): 'The meaning of Being is the being of meaning'.

Here, significantly extending (I think) work he has done elsewhere, Haugeland offers some careful and acute remarks about just how we should think about the *kind* of thing Dasein is, in line both with the peculiar grammar of this term (a mass noun) and the details of its deployment. I am much instructed. He closes by talking about:

> . . . *why* Heidegger is so interested in anxiety, being-toward-death, and conscience, each of which *individualizes* dasein. The resulting individualization is what he calls authenticity or ownedness. *Dasein*, and more particularly the understanding of being that it embodies, is *owned by* some individual person—in the sense of taking responsibility for its tenability.
>
> This seems to me just right: I take it that this individuating notion of *responsibility*, the normative status of *ownership*—a bundle of rights and responsibilities—is indeed one of Heidegger's principal topics in *Being and Time*. And I agree that the notion of normativity that I consider in the essay John is addressing is in fact only one aspect of that individuating responsibility—as he says, something like a precondition of it (though not, in the end, intelligible apart from wholly apart from it). Once again, the other Heidegger chapter in *TMD* has a good bit more to say about this aspect, in its discussion of the special-but-central case of *assertional* responsibility.

The most important thing I want to take issue with concerning Haugeland's discussion of Heidegger's views about language is the way of conceiving what is at issue that he expresses at the end of his discussion of the notion of 'idle talk', where he says:

> This leaves us with the question of what talking *is* 'really for'. Surely, it's 'for' communicating with others, sharing insights, coordinating activities, drawing distinctions, making plans, imparting understanding, and so on.

I think this is dead wrong—not the answer to the question, but the question itself. It is of the essence of Heidegger's contribution, *in particular* the language he gives us to think about *language*, that we *not* think of it *instrumentally*, that is, as being *for* something.

I think the idea of language itself as a kind of tool gets the essence of the linguistic precisely backwards. What is wrong about it is that making something intelligible as a tool is exhibiting it as a means to an end *that can be grasped or specified independently of consideration of that means*. Our antecedent grasp of the goal or purpose then provides the basis for normative assessments of success and failure of the tool, and so for comparison of various alternative means to that same end. My claim is that it is a mistake to seek to make discursive practice as a whole intelligible on this model.

The reason is straightforward. Though linguistic practice does, to be sure, help us in pursuing our ends, the vast majority of those ends are ones we could not so much as *entertain*, never mind secure, apart from our participation in linguistic practice. Most of the things we want to do we can only even *want* to do because we can talk. The very intelligibility of the ends depends on our linguistic capacities. They are precisely *not* goals we can make sense of *first*, so that later,

language can be brought into the picture playing the role of a possible tool for achieving them—as fastening two pieces of wood firmly together *can* be made sense of in advance of considering nails-and-hammers, screws-and-drivers, glue, clamps, and so on.

In fact, insofar as it makes sense to talk about language as *for* anything, what it *is* 'for' is making intelligible and accessible the possibility of *novel* ends. One of the founding insights on which Chomsky erected the edifice of contemporary linguistics is the observation that almost every sentence uttered by an adult native speaker is a novel one—not just novel in the sense that that speaker has never before heard or uttered that very sequence of words, but novel in the far stronger sense that *no-one* has ever before heard or uttered it. Linguistic know-how is essentially productive and creative, in the sense that the skilled linguistic practitioner can produce and understand an indefinite number of novel sentences, and that the core of linguistic practice consists in the exercise of that capacity. Participants in such a practice are bound by norms governing the use of familiar words: not just any use is appropriate. They accordingly surrender some negative freedom—freedom *from* constraint by such norms. But in return they are richly rewarded with positive freedom—freedom *to* do things they could never otherwise do or contemplate doing. For the novel, though norm-governed, rearrangements of those familiar words express candidate beliefs, desires, and intentions available for adoption or rejection by speakers and their audiences.

And this, if anything, is what language is 'for'. Only by its 'means' can one deny that for every tree there is another that is taller, or wonder whether it is always possible to do what one ought to do, or decide to devote one's life to relieving poverty. The essence of specifically discursive practice—the practice of deploying *concepts*—is precisely its engendering of this capacity to entertain an indefinite number of novel beliefs, and to frame an indefinite number of novel ends. Thinking of discursive practice itself in instrumental terms obscures just this defining feature of it. For the particular sort of intelligibility promised by exhibiting something as a means to an end depends on the end being specifiable antecedently to consideration of possible means for pursuing or securing it, on the in-principle possibility of alternative means to that same end, and on the availability of means of assessment of the success in achieving the goal that is independent of the means employed. The case in point satisfies *none* of those conditions of instrumental intelligibility.

Let me close by saying something about the charge that my emphasis on the *justification* of claims is un-Heideggerian. Haugeland invokes:

> the *other* way of hearing the charge: 'You don't know what you're talking about'. The allegation is not that the speaker is making *unjustied* claims, but rather (and perhaps worse) is making claims about something which he or she doesn't adequately *understand*. The relevant failing is not lack of evidence so much as being shallow, confused, and/or obtuse—what we sometimes refer to as 'just not getting it' . . . But if, as I suggest, it is the fundamental phenomenon of idle talk, then latching onto phrases like 'so

> because one says so' and 'passing the word along' is mistaking the salt for the soup.
>
> By way of rejoinder, it might seem possible to maintain that *understanding* something *just is* the ability to make justied true assertions about it. But, whatever its intrinsic merits, that idea certainly *isn't* Heidegger's.

Agreed. But for me (for instance, in *MIE*), and, I think, for Heidegger, what Haugeland takes to be two readings are *much* more intimately intricated with one another than this formulation suggests. The connection is not that understanding *is* making justified true assertions, but that understanding is practical mastery of justificatory, evidential, and inferential relations: knowing one's way around in the inferential network in which what can be understood is situated (the Being of the being).

So I fully agree when John says:

> [Heidegger] begins his own discussion of understanding with a reminder of the colloquial usage according to which it amounts to a kind of competence or ability-to-manage. And he then radically develops that into a more general account in terms of *projecting* entities (including but not limited to dasein itself) *onto their possibilities*. Whatever exactly we make of that, it's certainly not just a matter of checking one's premises.

On my reading, too, it is *not* just a matter of 'checking one's premises', but of practically being able to move in that space of reasons. That *is* the practical ability ('know-how') that 'projecting entities onto their possibilities' consists in: being able to tell what follows, what would happen, what is ruled out by some situations, and so on.

Robert B. Brandom
Department of Philosophy
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, PA 15260
USA
rbrandom+@pitt.edu