Chapter 4 - Heideggerian Aprioricity and the Categories of Being

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We have seen that Sartre’s account of intersubjective encounters bases the recognition of the other’s selfhood on one’s own experience of objectification, thereby leading him to fall into the same difficulty that he accuses Heidegger’s account of endorsing: namely, that I may have the experience that is supposedly unique to encountering another person in the absence of anyone’s concrete presence. Sartre accounts for the fact that my experience of the world is heavy with the presence of others by assuming a Heidegger-style position that takes a social dimension of experience to be a necessary condition of my very way of being in the world. Not only does Sartre fail to go beyond Heidegger’s position in this regard, but in the following sections I will demonstrate that the primary motivation for Sartre’s critique of Heidegger’s position—the fact that it seems to preclude the concrete immediacy of another person from being experienced as such—does not apply. In order to do so, I will show that the existential category through which I recognize others is itself responsive to and dependent on particular concrete encounter experiences. This will entail showing how Dasein’s categories do not simply impose an interpretive framework on things but are responsive to the things themselves. This account will take some cues from Heidegger’s distinction between Zuhanden (available, “handy” things) and Vorhanden (objectively present or “occurrent” things), but ultimately it will argue that responsiveness to other Dasein must be formulated in another way—a way that leads through a discussion of Kant and his notion that temporality is the form of all intuition. Despite Heidegger’s claim that Dasein’s way of being grounds the frameworks of understanding through which the world has meaning, then, we will show that these frameworks nevertheless adapt in light of the way things are.

By grounding the meaning of particular entities in referential totalities that are themselves grounded in human categories of understanding and projects of existing, claiming categorical responsiveness to the thing’s kind of being seems problematic at best. Such a worry is evident in Ernst Tugendhat’s powerful critique of Heidegger’s theory of truth in *Der Wahrheitsbegriff bei Husserl und Heidegger.* Tugendhat accuses Hei-
degger of being unable to account for how the thing known can act as a standard according to which the way of knowing it—the mode of “unconcealing”—can be assessed for accuracy. According to Tugendhat, Heidegger simply equates truth with unconcealing, thereby dropping truth’s normative dimension, which demands that the latter—in order for it to be true—must reveal the thing as it is in itself, and not simply in whatever way one’s preexisting horizons of understanding happen to reveal it: “It is here a question not of bringing the subject-matter to givenness but of validating the givenness with reference to the subject-matter. Only through this second direction does the first acquire a validity, so that the revealing, which would otherwise be arbitrary, is directed toward the entity as it is itself.” By defining truth as simple disclosure, argues Tugendhat, Heidegger is guilty of “giving up the regulative idea of certainty and the postulate of a critical foundation.”

The relationship between Tugendhat’s position and Sartre’s critique is evident: the latter claims that Dasein’s way of being may conceal or distort the person as she is in herself by subsuming her to established frameworks of understanding that are themselves not open to critique or revision in terms of their accuracy in revealing her. Though Tugendhat aims his critique at what he sees as the arbitrariness and relativism of Heidegger’s historically and culturally determined horizons of meaning—and Sartre’s emphasis is on being-with as a priori structure—Tugendhat merely expands on Sartre’s fundamental point: that on Heidegger’s account of experience, the way things are encountered—whether persons or otherwise—is not held to any standard whereby Dasein’s categories and interpretive frameworks can and should get the things right as they are in themselves.

If we are to account for how Dasein can disclose the world in such a way that “innerworldly beings themselves are freed, . . . freed for their own possibilities” (BT 144/135)—the Sartrean/Tugendhatian critique must be answered. Though Dasein encounters the world as meaningful through its projects, it does not simply “project” meaning onto things arbitrarily; it can “draw the conceptuality belonging to the beings to be interpreted from these themselves or else force them into concepts to which beings are opposed in accordance with their kind of being” (BT 150/141)—a distinction indicating Heidegger’s belief, at least, that his position does not commit him to the latter alone. Indeed, as Henry Pietersma notes, drawing one’s conceptuality from the beings themselves is what Heidegger means by his notion of “letting be” (Seinlassen): “An agent lets something be if he allows his actions to be determined by the nature of the things in the environment or world, rather than imposing his own preconceived ideas.”

Investigating the responsiveness and sensitivity of one’s interpretations to the beings to be interpreted comprised a significant part of Heidegger’s philosophical inquiry—particularly his early work, which is largely ori-
ented toward finding a theory of categories that both accounts for the objective validity of knowledge—its binding character—as well as its conceptual, “subjective” status. Despite Heidegger’s own claims regarding the dependence of truth on Dasein, then, such as: “All truth is relative to the being of Da-sein” (BT 227/208), this subjective element does not compromise truth’s objectivity. For Heidegger, Dasein’s un concealing of particular beings through a priori structures and historical frameworks of meaning is exempted from “the province of ‘subjective’ arbitrariness and brings discovering Da-sein before beings themselves . . . The ‘universal validity’ of truth, too, is rooted solely in the fact that Da-sein can discover and free beings in themselves. Only thus can this being in itself be binding for every possible statement, that is, for every possible way of pointing them out” (BT 227/208–9). The problem, as Heidegger saw it, was one of navigating between a Kantian idealism and an Aristotelian realism; both of which failed to adequately account for one or the other feature of knowledge.

Every experience is in itself an encounter and indeed an encounter in and for an act of caring. The basic character of the object is therefore always this: it stands, and is met with, on the path of care; it is experienced as meaningful. To interpret what is meant by saying that the world “is there” (i.e., to interpret the character of the actuality of the world of factical life) is neither as easy as transcendental theory of knowledge imagines nor so self-evident and unproblematic as realism believes. (PIA 68–69)

Heidegger thus clearly recognized both the need for—and the extreme difficulties involved in providing—a theory of Dasein’s categories in which they are constrained by the particular things known such that both subjective and objective dimensions of knowing are accommodated. In demonstrating that Dasein is responsive or “beholden” to the concrete particularity of the things known, the claim that Dasein cannot encounter or learn from individual others is called into question. Though he did not analyze the nature of being-with in this regard, I will show both that Heidegger’s work develops a theory of responsive categories, and that it can be successfully applied to the case of being-with, though Heidegger himself failed to do so in detail.

Encountering Things

Before examining the social encounter, we will turn first to the way in which Heidegger most recognizably distinguishes between subject-dependent
and subject-independent reality—between Dasein’s arbitrary subsumption of things to its categories, and the constrained responsiveness of the categories to the things themselves. This occurs in his distinction between Zuhanden (handy, available) things and Vorhanden (objectively present, occurrent) things. The obvious emphasis on Dasein’s Zuhanden way of being throughout Being and Time is largely responsible for the tendency to interpret Heidegger as claiming that all meaning is simply imposed on things in terms of their practical usability for Dasein’s projects, whether these projects are understood in terms of an individual constituting ego (idealism) or socially determined roles and norms (pragmatism).

Despite Heidegger’s emphasis on our primarily Zuhanden mode of encountering things, however, thingly encounters can nevertheless provide a resistance to Dasein’s interpretive categories and frameworks against which the truth of these practical frameworks may be measured. In other words, the distinction between available and occurrent things allows Heidegger to acknowledge the reality of entities independent of human practice and therefore to recognize that what motivates the realist/idealist distinction cannot simply be done away with. Further, these ontological categories of occurrentness and availability do not stand in any metaphysical order of primacy. Though Heidegger stresses the Zuhanden throughout Being and Time, this is due to (1) a priority in the order of discovery, and (2) the fact that “our familiarity with available things . . . is a condition of our interpretation of entities as having some definite, specifiable character, for example, as cognizable objects with determinate properties standing in objective relations.” Heidegger’s point is not that things cannot or do not exist independently of human meanings and practices; rather, his point is that recognizing or experiencing such independent existence will require an unnatural, distanced, “apraactical” attitude toward these things—an attitude fostered, for example, in philosophy and the sciences: “Not free from prejudice but free for the possibility of giving up a prejudice at the decisive moment on the basis of a critical encounter with the subject matter. That is the form of existence of a scientific human.” Such an attitude is secondary to the ordinary mode of practical engagement with the world and must be recognized as a type of achievement. Heidegger acknowledges the possibility of a stance toward the world characterized by a “critical encounter with the subject matter,” but argues that such “ideally objective” world interpretations only arise through the bracketing or loss of the practices that ordinarily give things their meaning. Though experiencing things in abstraction from our ordinary contexts of relevance is not our ordinary way of encountering them, then, it is not impossible. Indeed, as Charles Taylor notes in “Engaged Agency and Background,” the legacy of modern
philosophy has been to “ontologize” this ability: “The disengaged perspective, which might better have been conceived as a rare and regional achievement of a knowing agent whose normal stance was engaged, was read into the very nature of mind.”

Heidegger’s distinction between available and occurrent modes of experience is similar to John Searle’s distinction between “institutional” and “brute” facts; the former being characterized as facts that “require human institutions for their existence,” while the latter “require no human institutions for their existence.” Unlike Searle, however, who takes “brute facts” to be primary because institutional facts must have some physical realization, Heidegger argues that understanding brute facts as such is the consequence of a particular type of practical breakdown that allows one to recognize the radical independence of things from how one understands them—in other words, it provokes a shift from Zuhanden to Vorhanden modes of being. Heidegger’s well-worn example of such breakdown is of the damaged hammer that interrupts and resists the practical activity of hammering, requiring one to stop and assess the hammer in terms of its occurrent qualities. Such breakdown need not always result in a shift from Zuhanden to Vorhanden, however—one may simply adapt to what is broken or missing or getting in the way and continue with the project. According to Heidegger, however,

the more urgently we need what is missing and the more truly it is encountered in its unhandiness, all the more obtrusive does what is at hand become, such that it seems to lose the character of handiness. It reveals itself as something merely objectively present, which cannot be budged without the missing element. As a deficient mode of taking care of things, the helpless way in which we stand before it discovers the mere objective presence of what is at hand. (BT 73/69)

In every case, however, this deficient, helpless mode is derivative of my everyday practical coping. Depending on what is normally at hand as a thing available for my projects—be it “brute” physical things such as rocks, or social things such as money—there are various ways in which these modes of caring engagement can become deficient. In the case of physical reality, this type of practical distance and its corresponding recognition of occurrent independence is precisely the mode of comportment that is nurtured in the physical sciences. Indeed, because of the primary role that the physical sciences play in our social self-understandings, the derivative nature of the objectively present from the ready to hand—of the theoretical from the practical—is often obscured. The role that our own body plays in the practical context of knowledge, for example, is
generally masked by a scientific understanding that takes our physical size, orientation, and makeup as foundational for knowledge—but without acknowledging it as such. The physical world is experienced as being composed of a certain set of brute facts taken to be independent of us because we have already dealt with the brute fact of being endowed with particular types of bodies. We encounter “medium-sized” objects as objects—but we have a much harder time experiencing quarks or planets as such. Experiencing things like mountains and snow only makes sense “against the background of this kind of embodiment . . . the nature of this experience is formed by this constitution, and how the terms in which this experience is described are thus given their sense only in relation to this form of embodiment.”

Though experiences of resistance and breakdown may be more difficult to achieve for such foundational and generally unrecognized practical interpretive frameworks as those of embodiment, they too are possible. This is evident, for example, not only in quantum and Einsteinian physics, but in types of abnormal experiences accomplished in meditation, illness, or substance abuse. For Heidegger, the most extreme form of such loss of handiness in engaging with the world arises through Angst, being-toward-death, and the call of conscience—the modes of disclosure whereby worldly significance itself falls away.

Though the primary way that one understands things on Heidegger’s account is in terms of their practical usability, then, this practical priority does not commit him to anti-realism. Underlying all of my practical engagements is the threat of a resistance ranging from broken hammers to broken worlds. Despite this eternal threat of failure, however, the groundedness of cognition in human practical care for its own existence indicates that ways of understanding things other than as available for projects will be secondary or derivative modes of understanding. As chapter 2’s discussion of mineness and Dasein’s worldly self-understandings indicated, however, it is precisely the possibility of failure that gives success its meaning. It is just this point—that Dasein cares for its own existence and measures its success in expressing this care through worldly engagements—that will allow us to recognize the normative dimension of the world’s resistance to Dasein’s practical modes of comportment.

Though the mere resistance of things to certain practical interpretive frameworks will demonstrate that Dasein’s frameworks are not all-powerful or unquestionable in terms of meaning-constitution, then, the question remains as to whether there is some standard according to which one interpretive framework can be deemed more accurate than others in the face of practical breakdown. Recall that to overcome Tu-
gendhat’s critique it is not enough for there to be mere resistance to arbitrary “unconcealments”; the resistance must be normatively determined by the nature of the thing as it is in itself. Though the appropriateness of a mode of concealing will generally depend on the practical context for Heidegger, in the case of breakdown there will invariably be cases in which the appropriateness and truth of the entire practical framework of interpretation are called into question.

As John Haugeland argues in his article “Truth and Finitude: Heidegger’s Transcendental Existentialism,” the issue is such that if there is to be a significant distinction between “getting an entity right” and failing to do so, there must be some way—some feasible and nonarbitrary way—of telling it in particular cases . . . Comportments in themselves, however, do not wear their ontical truth on their sleeves. Therefore, something else, some further comportment or comportments, must be involved in telling whether they are true or not. So the question at this point resolves into these: how can some comportments impugn the ontical truth of others? And, supposing they can, how can the choice among them be nonarbitrary?²¹

Haugeland addresses himself to this problem by arguing that Dasein’s self-disclosing is “inseparable from a disclosing of the being of other entities,” because “in knowing how to be me, I must know how to deal with the entities amidst which I work and live—indeed, these are often just two ways of looking at the same know-how.”²⁰ This claim recalls us to the discussion of mineness, where Dasein’s care for its own being pushes it to seek standards of self-assessment within its practical engagements with worldly things. Though Dasein tends to take it easy by simply accepting the truth of these worldly standards, the close relationship between self and world-disclosure brings with it a requirement that those who dismiss Heidegger as an idealist or a relativist tend to overlook; namely, because I assess myself in terms of the entities with which I am engaged, I need to know if I am getting them right in some sense. And if it is possible for me to “get them right” then there must be a difference between those modes of understanding through which I do or do not get them right—a difference that is itself a function of the things themselves. The consequence of this is that my modes of understanding will be in some sense in the service of the things that they disclose.²¹

Assessing the accuracy of one’s interpretive frameworks will depend on their mutual compatibility; my stances are called into question by the kind of breakdown that results when the entities themselves would be impossible if both comportments have gotten it right.²² Being a good Satanist
and being a good sister cannot both be true, since sisterhood involves norms of kindness, generosity, forgiveness, and so on that are directly antithetical to Satan worshippers (or so I understand). An important aspect of the ability of one comportment to impugn the truth of another, however, is that the person involved is immersed in an orientation bent on truth-finding; an orientation in which conflicts and impossibilities are unacceptable. Such unacceptability encourages one to make a choice between the incompatible interpretations and to engage in procedures of confirmation and clarification such that this choice is not—or not completely—arbitrary.

But why are such ostensible impossibilities unacceptable? As we noted above, since my ability to be depends on the possibilities specified by social norms governing the way I comport myself in the world, how I deal with entities—the truth of my comportments toward them—directly relates to my ability to be me. The consequence of understanding the relationship between the disclosure of world and the disclosure of self in this way—their mutual implication, so to speak—allows us to recognize some important (and often misunderstood) aspects of Heidegger’s position:

My self-understanding, therefore presupposes that I understand the being of the entities amid which I live . . . But, if my self-understanding depends on my understanding of the being of other entities, then I must be able to project those entities onto their possibilities. This ability, therefore, belongs essentially to my ability-to-be me. My ability to project those entities onto their possibilities is not merely another possibility onto which I project myself, but is rather part of my ability to project myself onto my own possibilities at all. In other words, my self-understanding literally incorporates an understanding of the being of other entities.23

Our engagements with things are definitive of who we are, and we care about who we are; the result being that we care about the consistency and appropriateness of our engagements with things. Getting things right is one of the most fundamental ways of ascertaining whether, loosely speaking, we have gotten ourselves right. Though the achievement of a disinterested knowing whereby we can explicitly test the consistency of our practical, interested knowing is a derivative mode of being, it is nevertheless a permanent possibility based on the world’s resistance to our practical frameworks and the fact that we care about what this resistance says about who we are. One’s care about getting something right—care for truth and consistency—is rooted in the fact that one is entrusted
with the mineness of one’s own existence. The possibility of the disinterested knowing that this self-responsibility allows undermines the dictatorship of Zuhandenheit’s subsumption of worldly things to the category of usability.

Encountering Others: The A Priori Nature of Being-With

Though resistance to Dasein’s interpretive categories is evident in the possibility of the Vorhanden interrupting the Zuhanden, and the reengagement with the practical seems to be constrained by Dasein’s desire to reach an accurate world and self-understanding, it is not yet clear how this will help us solve Sartre’s difficulty, since Heidegger explicitly claims that the occurrent and the available are not modes of being that can apply to encountering other Dasein. Being-with is essentially different than the worldly categories of practical interpretation; indeed, its nature qua existential grants it a radically different categorial status—the consequence being that the above discussion will not solve our problem regarding the possibility of recognizing other Dasein as such (as opposed to mere instances of the category Mitsein). The fundamental distinction between being-among things and being-with others is evident in his claim that “being-in-the-world is with equal originality both being-with and being-among” (BPP 278). Heidegger elaborates further by articulating how encounters with others are worldly but nevertheless not thingy—that is, occurrent or available—because others are themselves Dasein: “Taking care of things is a character of being which being-with cannot have as its own, although this kind of being is a being-toward beings encountered in the world, as is taking care of things. The being to which Da-sein is related as being-with does not, however, have the kind of being of useful things at hand; it is itself Dasein” (BT 121/114). Note the unequivocal claim that Dasein cannot encounter others as it does things. Not only is the mode of being of the others different from that of things, then, but so too is the manner in which I encounter and interact with them. Because of this radical distinction, we cannot understand the social encounter through the categories of the Zuhanden and the Vorhanden.

However, commentators have argued that though such a distinction is present in Heidegger it is nevertheless undermined by the priority that his work consistently gives to Zuhanden and Vorhanden—thingly—existence. As Michael Theunissen notes, “Regardless of the declared fact that Dasein-with cannot be traced back to the ready-to-hand [Zuhanden],”25
Heidegger’s emphasis is nevertheless on the experience of the other as mediated by the ready-to-hand. The point, argues Theunissen, is not “the dependence of one kind of being upon another but of the inner order of the event of encountering. However, for Heidegger, in this order (and this must be firmly grasped) equipment is the first to be encountered.”

Heidegger’s claim that we encounter others through the world indicates, for Theunissen, that despite all claims to the contrary, being-with others has a derivative and secondary status to being-among things—and so, presumably, that the former can be understood in terms of the latter.

It is far from clear that this is the case for Heidegger, however. Though equipment may be the first to be encountered in Being and Time’s analyses, this does not mean that Dasein’s existence is fraught with this priority—that I first encounter stuff and then infer the presence of others. Heidegger explicitly denies this: “The others who are ‘encountered’ in the context of useful things in the surrounding world at hand are not somehow added on in thought to an initially merely objectively present thing, but these ‘things’ are encountered from the world in which they are at hand for the others” (BT118/111). Though Heidegger begins his discussion of being-in-the-world with an analysis of the way that things exist, he indicates that he does not address the being of other persons at this point not only because he wants to simplify the initial discussion, but above all, because the kind of being of the existence of the others encountered within the surrounding world is distinct from handiness and objective presence [Zuhandenheit and Vorhandenheit]. The world of Da-sein thus frees beings which are not only completely different from tools and things, but which themselves in accordance with their kind of being as Da-sein are themselves “in” the world as being-in-the-world in which they are at the same time encountered. These beings are neither objectively present nor at hand, but they are like the very Da-sein which frees them—they are there, too, and there with it. (BT118/111)

Encountering others “in” the world does not mean that there is some sort of equipmental screen thrown up between me and others—the other is not simply “mediated by equipment,” as Theunissen claims;27 rather, equipment is “mediated” by the other. Though I may experience the presence of others in terms of equipment despite their absence—in the cultivated field, for example—the encounter is experienced as personal insofar as particular dimensions of the equipment are salient. I do not recognize the other merely through this or that expanse of dirt—I recognize her in terms of its relevance (BT118/111): in the trace of her purposive activity, in the fact that this expanse of dirt is cultivated: “These others
do not stand in the referential context of the environing world, but are encountered in that with which they have to do, in the ‘with which’ of their preoccupation as the ones who are preoccupied with it. They are encountered as they are in their being-in-the-world, not as chance occurrences but as the ones who till the field” (HCT 240).

This is a point to which we will be returning below. It is important to be clear, however, that worldly encounters with others do not preclude directly encountering these others—their worldliness cannot be taken to grant priority to Dasein’s thingly modes of encounter. For Heidegger, the thingly does not have priority over the social dimension of worldly encounter. Indeed, it will become clear that the priority is precisely the opposite in the “inner order of the event of encountering”—despite the fact that this priority is forgotten and concealed in our everyday way of being. As we will come to see, without encountering the others with whom this world is co-constituted, the innerworldly things that Dasein encounters in Zuhandenheit or Vorhandenheit modes would be inaccessible.

Despite the tendency of ontological interpretations to equate our equipmental, Zuhanden mode of thingly encounter with the indifference of our everyday modes of being-with, Heidegger is clear that “ontologically there is an essential distinction between the ‘indifferent’ being-together of arbitrary things and the not-mattering-to-one-another of beings who are with one another” (BT 121–22/114). For Heidegger, the way in which the being of other Dasein is disclosed differs fundamentally and categorially from the way in which things are disclosed, despite the tendency of ontological theorizing to reduce all to the same: “Being-toward-others is ontologically different from being toward objectively present things. The ‘other’ being itself has the kind of being of Da-sein. Thus, in being with and toward others, there is a relation of being from Da-sein to Da-sein” (BT 124/117). If the encounter with other Dasein is fundamentally different than the Zuhanden and Vorhanden modes of engagement with worldly things, then the above discussion regarding the thingly resistance that evokes the shift from the former to the latter will not allow us to meet Sartre’s criticism, though it will become clear that in both cases—the thingly and the social encounter—Dasein’s self-responsible way of being qua mineness plays an essential role. To refute Sartre’s critique, then, we must demonstrate that individual others themselves offer some principled resistance to the a priori category being-with. But in order to do so, we must first determine how Heidegger’s existential analytic characterizes the a priori categories of experience in general. By showing how the categories are responsive to “the things themselves” we can demonstrate how Mitsein is not an arbitrary imposition upon other
Dasein but a responsive disclosing of them in all their particularity and specificity.

The Heideggerian A Priori

In contrast to traditional characterizations of the a priori as an unchanging, complete set of categories, Heidegger’s aim in *Being and Time* is to ground the a prioricity of the I in its particular existence, emphasizing the fact that the existence character of the I is precisely what cannot be bracketed. The existential analytic’s shift away from traditional accounts lies in its insistence on recognizing that the a priori categories are only ever found within this or that Dasein’s particular, finite existing. Thus Heidegger asserts in the first pages of *Being and Time* that questioning the meaning of being cannot simply be assumed as an abstract ability belonging universally to all things of the type “human,” because the attitudes and activities of inquiry are “themselves modes of being of a particular being, of the being we inquirers ourselves in each case are” (*BT* 7/6). In other words, such abilities cannot be understood in abstraction from the concrete context of the particular life in which they come to be, but must be responsive to it in its concrete particularity. “These investigations have the peculiar character of leading out from the discipline [of phenomenology] to a peculiar connection of phenomena: existence. Becoming free from the discipline for existence itself. This ‘becoming free’ means seizing the possibilities of making this existence itself the theme of a research determined by existence itself” (*IPR* 81). So too, then, must questioning the meaning of social encounter be grounded in the modes of Dasein’s concrete existing. If we are to fully understand the implications of Heidegger’s shift to the existential analytic, we must examine the manner in which the ontological categories determining Dasein’s way of being—including being-with—are themselves shaped by the ontic existence in which they play their interpretive role. To take seriously the fact that the mode of being of Dasein is always this or that finite, factual existence involves recognizing that the categories are themselves dependent on the particular beings encountered in that existence. For Heidegger, ontic encounters reveal and evoke the ontological categories operating within my existence; they initiate and enrich them. Heidegger’s claim that “ontology has an ontical foundation” (*BPP* 19) means not only that the question of the meaning of being arises in the ontic existence of concrete Dasein; it also points to concrete encounters as the necessary condition for the possibility of an ontological category’s meaning hold-
ing for what it does. This does not mean that there must always be concrete particulars present if the category is to be operating—since this would return us to Sartre’s difficulty in explaining residual traces or false alarm experiences—but they must have been present at some point if this category is to be at work in a particular Dasein’s existence. Dasein’s categories of being cannot easily be defined as “ontic” or “ontological,” then, insofar as they designate a constitutive ontological dimension of being-in-the-world that nevertheless stipulates an ontic condition—a type of “contingent necessity.” To exist as a finite being is to always already exist in certain determinate possibilities that involve encountering concrete particulars. The implication of this claim is that if I had never encountered another Dasein then the category of understanding specific to others would be unavailable—since it is dependent on the intuited beings that exist in their own right. In other words, in the complete absence of particular instances of concrete encounter, there could be no genuine being-with.

This is a somewhat controversial claim, considering traditional notions of the a priori and the fact that Heidegger’s views seem to be ambiguous at points—he claims, for example, that despite ontology’s ontic foundation, “being and its attributes in a certain way underlie beings and precede them and so are a proteron, an earlier” (BPP 20). This appears to be a clear statement of the ontic’s ontological foundation, and those who interpret Heidegger as advocating a type of uncomplicated transcendental idealism understand such statements as making just such an assertion. But like Husserl, Heidegger was intent on reformulating the categories by rejecting the Kantian assumption that a complete, preestablished set of categories could simply be deduced from a logical architectonic or taken over from the philosophical tradition. As László Tengelyi notes, “Husserl’s main contention, on the contrary, is that the categories, far from arising through reflection upon certain intentional acts, have their origin in the fulfillment of some intentional acts.” Heidegger continues this Husserlian notion of the a priori as originating in particular modes of encounter. He expands on it, however, by emphasizing the manner in which such modes of encounter are not mere epistemological categories but are deeply implicated in who it is to be me. Heidegger further differs from Husserl by maintaining a crucial aspect of the Kantian approach—the view that these modes of encounter are all types of responsiveness to temporal intuition, which provides the horizon within which all category-initiating and enriching encounters may occur. The section below entitled “Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics” will examine this further. In the course of that discussion it will become evident why the relationship between the ontic encounter and the a priori
ontological structure of being-with cannot be characterized as a simple priority of the latter over the former. Though the ontological cannot be reduced to the ontic, the pitfalls of a reduction in the other direction must also be avoided:

No understanding of being is possible that would not root in a comportment toward beings. Understanding of being and comportment toward beings do not come together only afterward and by chance; always already latently present in the Dasein’s existence, they unfold as summoned from the ecstatic-horizontal constitution of temporality and as made possible by it in their belonging together. As long as this original belonging together of comportment toward beings and understanding of being is not conceived by means of temporality, philosophical inquiry remains exposed to a double danger, to which it has succumbed over and over again in its history until now. Either everything ontical is dissolved into the ontological (Hegel), without insight into the ground of possibility of ontology itself; or else the ontological is denied altogether and explained away ontically, without an understanding of the ontological presuppositions which every ontical explanation harbors as such within itself. (BPP 327)

As we saw in the previous chapter, it is precisely this failure to understand his own ontological presuppositions that afflicted Sartre’s ontical explanations. So too does Heidegger reject the very position that Sartre accuses him of accepting, however, for Heidegger recognizes that without concrete encounters with other Dasein, the ontological category “being-with” could not “unfold as summoned from the ecstatic-horizontal constitution of temporality.” The ontic encounter is what “summons” the ontological structure to “unfold” or come into concrete existence. Or, to speak more plainly, if one were born and raised in complete isolation, the social dimension of selfhood would be an ontological structure of my way of being that could not find enactment or expression in my ontic existence. Heidegger’s shift to the existential analytic allows him to claim that the categories of meaning only ever arise in this or that existence and are responsive to its concrete texture. Heidegger does not want to claim that Dasein’s essential structure qua being-in-the-world means that Dasein necessarily exists—rather, he says that “if Dasein in fact exists, then its existence has the structure of being-in-the-world” (MFL 169). My related claim is that if Dasein in fact exists, then other Dasein also in fact exist or once existed and it is only in inaugural encounters with them that the existential category “being-with” comes into being.

One might read such an approach to the a priori as a direct inheri-
tance from Husserl—though it is unlikely Heidegger would be willing to recognize it as such. Though the Husserlian *epoché* is often taken to distance Husserl’s account from the concreteness and contingency of being-in-the-world, Husserl’s reformulation of the Kantian *a priori* was itself an attempt to accommodate it. Tugendhat makes this point when he describes Husserl’s *a priori* as “hypothetical” and “relative” in character—as opposed to the absolute universality that characterized its traditional understanding. This does not undermine the necessity of its nature, but it becomes, so to speak, a *conditional* necessity, a necessity dependent on the contingent presence of things at a particular time: “während Husserls Apriori an sich zwar absolut gilt, aber nur relativ auf die jeweilige Sachhaltigkeit, die selbst nicht notwendig ist.” Thus Husserl characterizes the relationship between the intuition of individual and essence as follows: “Intuition of essence has as its basis a principal part of intuition of something individual, namely an appearing, a sightedness of something individual, though not indeed a seizing upon this nor any sort of positing as an actuality; certainly, in consequence of that, no intuition of essence is possible without the free possibility of turning one’s regard to a ‘corresponding’ individual and forming a consciousness of an example” (*Ideas I*, 12).

Husserl addresses this issue in the sixth of his *Logical Investigations* with his notion of categorial intuition, which he characterizes as a type of *perception* of meaning objectivities—not simply of sensory data—which, qua perception, depends on concrete fulfillment experiences. It is as a result of this discovery of categorial intuition, Heidegger claims, that the “original sense of the *a priori*” becomes intelligible, which, along with intentionality and categorial intuition, together comprise what Heidegger dubs the three “decisive discoveries” of Husserl’s phenomenology (*HCT* 27). This is instructive for our account, since Heidegger acknowledges that “everything categorial ultimately rests upon sense intuition,” as long as we understand that “sensuousness is a formal phenomenological concept and refers to all material content as it is already given by the subject matters themselves. This is to be contrasted with the proper concept of the categorial, that is, of the formal and objectively empty. Sensuousness is therefore the title for the total constellation of entities which are given beforehand in their material content” (*HCT* 70). Heidegger goes on to clarify that the categories are ways in which to “bring out” the “content of a subject matter” (*HCT* 71) and are “not something made by the subject and even less something added to the real objects, such that the real entity is itself modified by this forming. Rather, they actually present the entity more truly in its ‘being-in-itself’” (*HCT* 70).

Though such a category/entity or Being/beings distinction may
appear to maintain the traditional Platonic and Aristotelian “two world” theories of Idea/reality and Form/matter, for Heidegger this distinction is meant to maintain their insights while overcoming the deep divide that such theories establish; it resists the tendency to “ontologize” meaning—to pass on as “fact” what is really a matter of validity. As Heidegger clarifies in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*: “Kant tries to understand the essence of categories in such a way that categories can be real determinations of objects (of appearances) without having to be empirical properties (of appearances). If determinations of being are not ontic properties of the things that are, in what way do they still belong to *realitas*, to the what-content of objects? Their reality, their belonging to essential content, is a transcendental reality, a finite, horizontal-ecstatic reality.”

As Steven Crowell makes clear in *Husserl, Heidegger and the Space of Meaning*, Heidegger followed Emil Lask in arguing that we “grasp the category as form—not as itself an existent, but as a moment of validity.” Like Lask, Heidegger understood category or form not as mental entity imposed from without but that which “holds” for the material of which it is the form; as Crowell notes, “If there is a plurality of forms (a ‘table’ of categories), the principle of differentiation must lie in the material itself.” From this—“Lask’s principle of the ‘material determination of form’—it follows that the discovery of categories will be, as Heidegger demanded, an empirical phenomenological affair.” This “empirical phenomenological affair” is precisely the analysis of the a priori in full awareness of its synthetic, contingent nature. As Tengelyi and Tugendhat note, the breakthrough of the phenomenological approach to the a priori—a breakthrough that Heidegger clearly followed—has to do with the origin of the categories; they cannot be deduced from a prior metaphysics but must be attentive to the manner in which they operate in and through particular encounters in concrete existence. For Husserl—and, I would argue, for Heidegger—even “the categories of pure logical grammar are rooted in the things present to consciousness. They are not purely formal; nor are they innate principles of mind . . . that are imposed upon a formless material.”

Thus Heidegger’s elaboration of the notion of categorial intuition confirms his indebtedness to Husserl in recognizing the responsiveness of the categories to intuition. As Kisiel notes, it is through such influences that Heidegger develops “a sense of intentionality and categorial intuition which allows him to move toward a new sense of the apriori, that of the facticity of historical meaning, which finds its norms in experienceability instead of knowability.” It is not only the case that the ontological is dependent on the ontic insofar as the latter provides an opportunity for the former’s application, then, but the a priori is itself
rooted in a type of *beholdenness* to ontic encounters in their experience-ability. As Tugendhat notes of this Husserlian—and, I believe, Heideggerian—understanding of the “synthetic *a priori*”: “bei Husserl gilt das Apriori überhaupt nicht mehr direkt von Seienden oder den Gegenständen unserer Erfahrung, und so ergibt sich die Möglichkeit einer offenen Pluralität der Erfahrungsweisen, jede mit ihrem eigenen Apriori.”40 This is not to imply that the transcendental conditions of meaning and possibility can be reduced to or are entirely subservient to the ontic realm of entities. But the interrelatedness of these “realms” indicates that whether a category holds of something is deeply dependent on the particular things through which this meaning is initiated and enriched, and recognizing the interrelatedness of the two is part of Husserl’s legacy to Heidegger.

Even if we are to speak of concrete ontic encounters as evoking, enriching, and inaugurating the categories through which they are understood, however, one may argue that such an interpretation must account for the fact that one must have the *potential* to exist in the mode of orientation particular to other Dasein. In other words, one must have some innate category “being-with” that is simply triggered by this or that other—otherwise those others could never be recognized as such. Though concrete others may be necessary as triggers, then, the innate idea or ability is already there, waiting for the inaugural instance of concrete otherness to “summon” it into “unfolding.” What type of priority must operate here? Does the presence of such “potential” categories ensure that Heidegger falls victim to Sartre’s claim that his position cannot account for direct, unmediated encounters with others?

The difficulty with such an objection is its illicit use of the notion of subjectivity that Heidegger has rejected. Thus it substitutes a *substantial* self—with an established set of attributes—for the relational self that is constituted through its activities of existing. Dasein does not exist in such a way that it can have a possibility simply waiting to be triggered, a “free-floating potentiality of being” (*BT* 144/135). On the contrary, “it is the possibility it is only if the Dasein becomes existent in it” (*BPP* 276). In other words, the possibility of understanding in terms of this or that category is only a possibility insofar as the category is “actualized” through a concrete encounter with the particular that inaugurates it. Thus in Division One, section 5 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger’s further elaboration of Dasein’s way of being acknowledges—but rejects—the temptation to view the features of being-in-the-world as an unyielding grid we impose upon it: “It must have seemed that being-in-the-world functions as a rigid framework within which the possible relations of Dasein to its world occur” (*BT* 176/165). Heidegger distances himself from such interpretat-
tions, however, which make use of this notion “without the ‘framework’ itself being touched upon in its kind of being. But this supposed ‘framework’ itself belongs to the kind of being of Da-sein” (BT 176/165). The framework in which the possible relations of being-in-the-world occur is itself relational, changing, and incomplete. In light of this, Sartre’s characterization of being-with as a mere abstract structure of my own being fails to recognize that the existential analytic has rejected the notion of abstract structures in favor of a picture of human being as immersed and responsive to its concrete worldly situation.

As Heidegger notes in the Aristotle lecture course of 1921 to 1922, interpretive categories “can be understood only insofar as factual life itself is compelled to interpretation” (PIA 66). Factual life is compelled to interpretation by my being thrown into a situation in which I must respond to it—I am condemned to existence and my categories of interpretation must be understood as responses to this condition: “The categories are not inventions or a group of logical schemata as such, ‘lattices’; on the contrary, they are alive in life itself in an original way: alive in order to ‘form’ life on themselves. They have their own modes of access, which are not foreign to life itself, as if they pounced down upon life from the outside, but instead are precisely the preeminent way in which life comes to itself” (PIA 66). The categories through which we understand the world are not dead things imposed from without—they are living orientations and responses evoked by the world-immersed living of the beings that we are. Heidegger makes explicit the vehemence with which he refuses to separate the ontological from the ontic in this regard: “These categorial nexuses are alive in genuinely concrete life and are not merely trivial and arbitrary observations . . . Furthermore, it must be understood that they are alive in facticity; i.e., they include factical possibilities, from which they are (thank God) never to be freed.”

Heidegger elaborates on this notion of “living categories” in his discussion of “The Task of Definition,” where he argues that for philosophy to understand a “principle”—“that on the basis of which something ‘is’ in its own proper way” (PIA 18)—it cannot be characterized as an established universal that encompasses all of the particular objects known. Rather, every object of knowledge “is always in some sense a principle, something which is at issue and which, with respect to and for something, has ‘something to say’” (PIA 19).

Anything that I can encounter exists in a regulating and enriching relationship to the categories through which it is encountered. Analyzing the relationship of the understanding to the thing known—such that the object of knowledge is recognized as both speaking its “something to say,” and as speaking it to me—is the heart of Heidegger’s enduring effort to find a middle way between a naive realism and a simplistic
idealism. It is this aim that must be kept in mind as we explore more fully Heidegger’s account of the relationship between spontaneity and receptivity, understanding and intuition, a priori and particular. We can do so by recognizing that for Heidegger, the three decisive discoveries of phenomenology can ultimately be understood as determinations of the first discovery—intentionality—and thus that understanding the nature of the a priori depends on a correct understanding of Dasein’s intentionality. This point is instructive, for it reminds us that the a priori categories and the categorial intuition on which they are based are rooted in the fundamental structure of Dasein’s way of being as transcending toward the world. It is for this reason that Heidegger will claim that the clarification of the sense of the a priori “presupposes the understanding of what we are seeking: time” (HCT 27); a claim—as we will see—that is only made good in his discussion of the relationship between the a priori and Dasein’s fundamental temporality in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. It is there that he explicitly addresses the claim that “finite intuition sees that it is dependent upon the intuitable as a being which exists in its own right.”14 By turning to this text we will be able to achieve a more nuanced reading of how Heidegger thinks different types of beings become available to the understanding in such a way that Dasein does not simply impose established a priori categories on the raw data it encounters in the world.

Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics

The transcendental project in both Kant and Heidegger lies in articulating the ontological knowledge that makes comporting oneself toward particular ontic beings possible; the quest for the synthetic a priori is a quest for the preexisting conditions of finite knowing that are nevertheless responsive to the being itself. “Because our Dasein is finite—existing in the midst of beings that already are, beings to which it has been delivered over—therefore it must necessarily take this already-existing being in stride, that is to say, it must offer it the possibility of announcing itself” (*KPM* 19). This invitation to self-announcing—the immediate presence of the being we intuit or “take in stride”—is limited by the finitude of the one who opens herself to its arrival. Nevertheless, this limiting must be understood as a restricting, not a simple failure, of accessibility.15 “The being ‘in the appearance’ is the same being as the being in itself, and this alone. As a being, it alone can become an object, although only for a finite [act of] knowledge. Nevertheless, it reveals itself in accordance
with the manner and scope of the ability that finite knowledge has at its disposal to take things in stride and to determine them” (KPM 22).

The manner in which we know things will only ever be finite and partial. This does not preclude accuracy in the way the thing is revealed in finite knowing, but this accuracy will never be “complete”—there is no god’s-eye view from which such completion could be accomplished. Pining for the thing-in-itself is a consequence of humanity’s failure to accept our radical finitude; we yearn for an infinite knowing that allows all aspects of the thing to be unconcealed simultaneously and forever, but this knowledge is necessarily unavailable to us and cannot even be proved as such from within the confines of our own finitude:

It is therefore a misunderstanding of what the thing in itself means if we believe that the impossibility of a knowledge of the thing in itself must be proven through a positivistic critique. Such attempts at proof presuppose the thing in itself to be something which is presumed to be an object within finite knowledge in general, but whose tactical inaccessibility can and must be proven. Accordingly, the “mere” in the phrase “mere appearance” is not a restricting and diminishing of the actuality of the thing, but is rather only the negation of the [assumption] that the being can be infinitely known in human knowledge. (KPM 23–24)

It is in light of this that we can recognize how Heidegger is not advocating a simple idealism, he is not claiming that the things known just are the way in which they are known; rather, his claim is simply that the things known cannot be known in the absence of the way in which they are known—as our discussion regarding Vorhanden and Zuhanden ways of being has already indicated. Conflating the two will only obscure the complexity of the interaction.

For Heidegger, the concealed inner passion of Kant’s work can be found in the recognition that the categories must be differentiated from “notions.” The former are applied by the understanding to content received through sensible intuition, while the latter are “concepts which are also given their content [Inhalt] a priori” (KPM 37–38). In other words, notions are not directly answerable to intuitions, but are “pure” of any such connection; as such, however, they are unable to account for the essential relatedness of thought and sensibility. Only when we recognize that “thinking is merely in the service of intuition” (KPM 15) can we understand the responsiveness of the categories—and derivatively, the notions that are based on them—to sensible intuition.

The relatedness of thought and intuition—this responsiveness of the former to the latter—springs from the nature of human subjectivity
as fundamentally temporal. *Temporality* is the form that all Dasein’s intuition must take and it is thus to *temporality* that the categories are in service. The authority of the categories—“the proof for the possibility of the a priori ability of pure concepts to refer to objects” (*KPM* 60)—will therefore lie in their ability to allow things encountered to show themselves in their particular temporal mode of existing. Insofar as they are grounded in temporality, the categories are both responsive to intuition and “given their content a priori”: “[They] are not notions, but rather pure concepts which, by means of the pure power of imagination, refer essentially to time. To the extent that they are this essence, however, they constitute transcendence. They are formed with the letting-stand-against-of . . . For this reason they are, in advance, determinations of the objects, i.e., of the being insofar as it is encountered by a finite creature” (*KPM* 61). The categories originate in the finite creature’s responsiveness to concrete encounters with objects; they are *formed* with the “letting-stand-against-of.” But the manner in which this “standing-against” nature of objects can be understood—their independence—depends on the function of receptivity and its relationship to the a priori “advance determinations of the objects” attributable to the knower; a relationship, Heidegger argues, that is rooted in the original unity of the faculty of imagination and its essentially temporal nature.44 By examining the imagination we will show how temporality unifies the spontaneous and receptive dimensions of Dasein’s encounter with that which “stands against” it. In doing so, we can recognize how Dasein’s way of being is an “invitation to self-announcing” in which Dasein’s encounters are both defined by a priori structures and responsive to the things themselves.

The Imagination

Heidegger (and Kant via Heidegger) is interested in the essential possibility of ontological synthesis—whereby “pure intuition and pure thinking should be able to meet one another a priori” (*KPM* 49). Such a synthesis is what grounds the possibility of any transcending toward particular beings: “The problem of the transcendental, i.e., of the synthesis which constitutes transcendence, thus can also be put this way: How must the finite being that we call ‘human being’ be according to its innermost essence so that in general it can be open to a being that it itself is not and that therefore must be able to show itself from itself?” (*KPM* 30). The answer, Heidegger thinks, lies in the temporalizing synthesis of the imagination, in which spontaneity and receptivity can be recognized not
as separate capacities but as facets of the fundamental unity characteristic of Dasein’s mode of being. In other words, the synthesizing unity of the imagination must itself be understood in terms of the essential unity of “the subjectivity of the human subject” (KPM 144) and its fundamentally temporal nature. By making use of Kant’s insights into the temporal structure of imagination, Heidegger hopes to capitalize on the claim that the unity of the self—a unity that guarantees the responsivity of Dasein’s a priori categories to the things themselves—is fundamentally the unity of time. “If a-prioricity is a basic characteristic of being, and if a priority is a time designation, and if being is connected with time in such a way that the understanding of being is rooted in the temporality of Dasein, then there is an intrinsic connection between the a priori and temporality, the being-constitution of Dasein, the subjectivity of the subject” (MFL 149–50). While Kant did not explicitly trace out the existential structure of the finite knowers that we are, he nevertheless recognized the unity of thinking and intuiting—a unity necessary for a finite being to “be open to a being that it itself is not” (KPM 30)—to lie in the prior unity of temporality-determined subjectivity. For Kant, this prior unity is accomplished in the pure faculty of the imagination. As Stephan Käufer notes in “Schemata, Hammers, and Time: Heidegger’s Two Derivations of Judgment,”

Time is the form of inner sense, for Kant, i.e. all representations occur in time. Hence categories, which condition the original synthetic unity of consciousness, must unify consciousness in such a way that it can synthesize the representations it has in time. The original unity provided by the categories, then, must in some way bear on the unity of time. Kant traces this connection in the schematism chapter, but he is notoriously unclear about the connection this chapter has to the deduction. But precisely this connection is key to Heidegger’s interpretation of Kant, which focuses on the underlying role of time in synthesis all along.45

A schema is described in Kant’s “Transcendental Doctrine of Judgment” as a “third thing” that lies between the sensible and the intelligible—through the schema, seemingly heterogeneous elements enter into relation by way of this mediating “third thing” that is itself homogenous with both elements.46

To illustrate this original unity of intuition and understanding, Heidegger argues that Kant engages in two ways of analyzing the relationship between them; the first way starts with the understanding and demonstrates its dependence on intuition; the second way reverses this
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approach. In both instances, however, “what is essential here is perhaps not a connection of two faculties thought of in a linear fashion, but rather the structural elucidation of their essential unity” (KPM 54). Early on in the text, Heidegger argues that this essential unity lies in the fact that both intuition and thinking share the same “species”: that of “representation in general,” which “has the broad, formal sense according to which one thing indicates, announces, presents another” (KPM 16). Both intuition and understanding announce or present an object: “The former relates immediately to the object and is single; the latter refers to it mediately by means of a feature which several things can have in common.” Both announce that which they allow us to encounter—the former directly and the other by means of some shared feature. What unifies these two varieties of representation—intuition and understanding—is their mutual representing of unity: each contains an inner reference to the other that is characterized in its pure form in terms of a representation of unity. This unifying is fairly obvious in the case of the conceptual representations of the faculty of understanding, which “gives in advance that which is contrary to the haphazard. Representing unity originally, namely, as unifying, it represents to itself a connectedness which in advance rules all possible gathering together” (KPM 52). As Heidegger points out, however, characterizing this faculty of rules as that which “regulates[s] in advance all that ‘intuition’ brings forth” seems to imply that it is being expounded “as the supreme faculty” (KPM 53).

In order to make good on the claim that intuition and thinking are interdependent, then—and that “all thinking is merely in the service of intuition” (KPM 15)—this conceptual representation of unity must be shown to be dependent on the representation of unity found in intuition: the unity presented or announced must be recognized as ultimately being that of the temporal immediacy of intuition. The receptive capacity of intuition must therefore be structured such that it may announce or present a unity—a presented unity that cannot be understood as a function of spontaneity but is itself given as intuition: “The represented unity first awaits the encountered being; and as such awaiting, it makes possible the encountering of objects which show themselves with one another” (KPM 56). The intuition’s representation of unity is a type of passive awaiting or primed receptiveness for a possible encounter with that which is capable of being experienced in intuition: “If what comes along is to be capable of being encountered as something which stands within connectedness, the sense of something like ‘connection’ must be understood in advance. To pre-present connection in advance, however, means; first of all to form something like relation in general by representing it” (KPM 58).
Prior to any particular intuitions, then, is an intuition of connection—an a priori relatedness in general that nevertheless does not undermine the character of the encounter as an immediate receptivity of the object in its singularity (KPM 16). This a priori horizon against which particular intuitions can be received—the “pre-presentation” of unity in general—is itself received in the manner of an intuition, not spontaneously formed—a point that is essential for refuting Sartre’s interpretation of Heidegger insofar as it demonstrates the deep responsivity present in Dasein’s encounters with otherness. For Heidegger, Dasein’s primordial openness to relation itself has the character of a passive offering of a site at which encounters can be given to intuition: “Taking-in-stride, however, if it is to be possible, requires something on the order of a turning-toward, and indeed not a random one, but one which makes possible in a preliminary way the encountering of the being. In order for the being to be able to offer itself as such, however, the horizon of its possible encountering must itself have the character of an offering. The turning-toward must in itself be a preparatory being-in-mind of what is offerable in general” (KPM 63). The priority of intuition to thought lies in its offering of this “horizon of possible encountering”—a horizon of intuitability that initially makes possible both the empirical receptivity at work in particular intuitions of things as “standing against” (KPM 63) and the concepts that arise in response to them.

The receptivity of the pure horizon of intuition also requires, however, that “the finite creature which turns-toward must itself be able to make the horizon intuitable, i.e., it must be able to ‘form’ the look of the offering from out of itself” (KPM 63–64), and we can see here the interdependence of pure intuition and pure understanding mediated through the imagination. Simple ontic intuiting “means the taking-in-stride of what gives itself,” while “pure intuition, in the taking-in-stride, gives itself that which is capable of being taken in stride” (KPM 122): in other words, the pure power of the imagination lies in its simultaneous forming and being offered of the general horizon of intuition that makes specific empirical intuitions possible. For imagination to be the root of Dasein’s very being, then, is for this complex interplay of spontaneity and intuition to allow Dasein to serve as the site at which a being may “announce itself.” The synthesizing of this interplay is Dasein’s transcendence—the primal unity of the subject that guarantees a relationship in which thought can be said to hold of the representations received in intuition.

What the Kant book ultimately shows us, then—revealing, in this regard, the manner in which it is a development of Being and Time—is the fact that such structures can only be understood in terms of Dasein’s primordial temporality. For Heidegger—and for Heidegger’s Kant—this
prior horizon of possible encountering given in intuition is time. Such a formal intuition accounts for both the passive and active dimensions of encounter since it encompasses Dasein’s turn toward the thing encountered in such a way that it enables it to come to appearance as what it is. This same role is played by the Kantian forms of intuition: “Space and time are not merely the means of receiving intuitions, but also they can themselves be intuited, and consequently they are intuitions, namely formal intuitions, which have their own character. Space and time are not merely featureless receptacles, but on the contrary have a characteristic way of receiving impressions.”\(^5\) Thus Dasein’s intuition announces or presents an object by representing a unified horizon in terms of which all possible particular intuitions may be received. Depending on the type of intuited concrete particular being given to/through intuition—be it numbers, rocks, persons, and so on—a corresponding horizon will be given in terms of which this concrete particular may be “taken in stride.” And for Heidegger, as for Kant, what unifies these particular horizons of intuition is the form of all of Dasein’s intuition—temporality. The unified horizon in terms of which all things can announce themselves to Dasein’s experience is not a function of the conceptualizing work of spontaneity, then, but is rooted in the passivity and particularity of Dasein’s finite temporality. As Robert Dostal notes: “Each of the categories, initially presented independent of time, is in the end nothing other than a form or configuration of time.”\(^6\) Temporality itself accounts for Dasein’s structure as the active passivity or passive activity which Heidegger here refers to as a “pure self-affection” (KPM 132) that “lets-(something)-stand-in-opposition” and “allows a space for play” in the “letting-stand-against-of” the object (KPM 50–51). Temporality is the underlying unity operating at the root of both receptivity and spontaneity—that “ambivalent middle voice at the heart of experience.”\(^7\)

The concept of the “middle voice” is particularly relevant here, since it refers to those verbs in which one cannot distinguish between the active and passive elements of a particular happening or event: “The middle is distinguished from the passive in that the subject participates in this enactment, or is implicated in it, rather than being wholly at the mercy of another agent. There is neither a clearly demarcated agent, nor a receptive object.”\(^8\) One can find this structure throughout Heidegger’s work: in formal indication, authenticity, conscience, hearing, and the impersonal grammatical structures familiar from es gibt (“it” gives) and es wellet (“it” worlds). Such an actively passive structure is also what Heidegger is attempting to articulate with the notion of Seinlassen—in which Dasein enables that which it encounters to present itself from itself. This notion is often translated as “letting be” in order to capture
this middle-voice structure, since, as Olafson notes, “The prefix verb ‘to let’ still asserts an element of agency even in this passivity.”

Although the middle voice appears throughout Heidegger’s work, it is only in the work on temporality that we can see this structure operating on the most fundamental levels of Dasein’s being-in-the-world. Dasein itself is essentially “middle-voiced” because its very being is a unifying horizon of givenness in terms of which it opens itself to receiving encounters with otherness. The imagination’s interplay between spontaneity and receptivity produces a mode of encounter which is “less that of causing than enabling”—and this is possible because active-passive temporality is the essential structure not only of all of Dasein’s encounters, but of Dasein’s very existence as finite transcendence:

The interpretation of the transcendental power of imagination as root, i.e., the elucidation of how the pure synthesis allows both stems to grow from out of it and how it maintains them, leads back from itself to that in which this root is rooted: to original time. As the original, threefold unifying forming of future, past, and present in general, this is what first makes possible the “faculty” of pure synthesis, i.e., that which it is able to produce, namely, the unification of the three elements of ontological knowledge, in the unity of which transcendence is formed. (KPM 137)

Dasein’s way of being qua transcendence is nothing more than the synthesis of activity and passivity, intuition and understanding found in original time. The primal unity of the subject in time thereby guarantees “the possibility of the a priori ability of pure concepts to refer to objects” (KPM 60). As Frank Schalow puts it, the imagination’s “schema stands as the intermediary between the content of intuition and its determination by the signifying act of the category. Insofar as time is essential to the formation of this intermediating bridge, and the category’s applicability to objects hinges on its ‘translation’ into temporal terms (i.e. schematism), Heidegger argues that schematism charts the trajectory of finite transcendence.”

The combination of categorial subsumption and passive receptivity that allows for transcendence—for finite beings to encounter the thing as it shows itself from itself—is rooted in the synthesizing unity of Dasein’s temporal mode of being. By turning to an account of Dasein’s originary temporality, then—an account we will consider in detail in chapter 5—Heidegger can show how “the finite being that we call ‘human being’ . . . is according to its innermost essence so that in general it can be open to a being that it itself is not” (KPM 30).
The Temporal in the Concrete

In *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, Heidegger is engaged in a discussion of knowing as a particular kind of comportment, claiming that “this ‘typifying’ comportment at the point of departure . . . takes up what has already been made available (in a ready-made characterization) in the comportment of that curiosity which is pulled along by its objects” (*OHF* 47). Heidegger does say that this “point of departure” for classifying grasps what is known “in advance in terms of its types, its essential generalities. Only when the concrete has been defined in advance in such a manner does it have the conceptual makeup as an object which is necessary for it to be able to enter in any manner into a context of classification” (*OHF* 47). As Heidegger points out, however, “The work of classifying does not tarry here, but only begins there, i.e., it moves on” (*OHF* 47). This later work of knowing is then taken to be the true essence of knowing, and the transitional stage whereby the concrete becomes available to classification is quickly passed over and “remains conspicuously undefined in philosophy” (*OHF* 47).

In keeping with his interpretation of Kant, Heidegger argues that this transitional stage at the “point of departure”—the stage in which the concrete is grasped such that it is made available for conceptualization—must be understood in terms of temporal articulation. In other words, it is the temporal horizon against which particulars are encountered. What is defined in advance, he argues, is “the temporal itself, within the concrete” (*OHF* 46). Though today’s philosophers may recognize the departure point as the temporal, Heidegger argues, they nevertheless miss the point insofar as “their point of departure is characterized as an object” (*OHF* 47)—they assume its objectivity without analyzing how it becomes so from out of the concrete. What is of interest in this type of “knowing” attitude becomes simply the filing away itself—not the basis on which such filing is itself possible: “Something concrete is considered to be known when one has defined where it belongs, the place within the totality of the classificatory order where into it is to be inserted—something is seen to be defined when it has been put away” (*OHF* 48).

In contrast to this short-sightedness of knowledge, argues Heidegger, we must recognize the temporal in the concrete without assuming its status as object but recognizing it instead as horizon for all knowledge: “Time must be brought to light and genuinely grasped as the horizon of every understanding and interpretation of being” (*BT* 17/15). As our analysis of *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* has illustrated, this temporal horizon is the self-given openness or orientation to receptivity that makes possible the transcendence of Dasein’s way of being. Dasein’s primordial
temporality is the condition for the possibility of the encounter with that which it is not, a transcendence characteristic of its way of being: “Temporality is the primordial ‘outside of itself’” (BT 329/302). Thus as we can now see, Heidegger makes use of the Kantian orientation to time in order to further the Husserlian notion of the responsive, conditional a priori: “General logic presumes that the common ancestry each of the categories has in thought provides the basis for its grammar. The procedure of schematism, however, demonstrates this commonality by uncovering time as the one source from which the categorial determinations of objects spring.”

Following Kant’s understanding of time as an original single intuited unity—of which particular temporal experiences and horizons are simply limiting domains—Heidegger can characterize the unity of Dasein as temporality, but as a temporality that is fundamentally open to articulation. And following Husserl’s understanding of the a priori, Heidegger can characterize this articulation as a responsiveness to that which is given within the temporal horizon that defines the very subjectivity of the subject. Understood as such, Sartre’s understanding of the categorial status of the Heideggerian existentials is off the mark. Though Heidegger is, as Kisiel notes, interested in “the interpretation of life’s sense of being in terms of its fundamental categorial structures,” this means the conditions under which “factic life temporalizes itself and so speaks with itself . . . These conditions, understood categorically, are not ‘logical forms’ but rather the genuinely accessible possibilities drawn from the actual temporalization of existence.” Thus, contrary to traditional accounts of the a priori categories as organizing principles imposed from above, here they are understood as responsive to the givenness of intuition. The categories are not some type of established interpretive framework—rather, they articulate possibilities of experience that are dependent on the fundamentally temporal dimensions of Dasein’s intuition. To respond to Sartre’s critique, then—to understand how Dasein can encounter particular others as such—will be a matter of determining the mode of intuition (i.e., of temporal givenness) through which concrete encounters with other Dasein are experienced. In doing so, it will become clearer how the category being-with is a mode of openness to the specific temporality of other Dasein. This point brings us to Division Two of Being and Time, where Heidegger clarifies and deepens his analysis of Dasein’s care structure by demonstrating the way in which it must be understood most primordially in terms of temporality. To this analysis—and the role that others play in it—we will now turn.