

BOOK REVIEW

Denis McManus'

*Heidegger and the Measure of Truth*

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Denis McManus. *Heidegger and the Measure of Truth: Themes from His Early Philosophy*.  
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256 pages.

Denis McManus's book is less a commentary on Heidegger than an attempt to think through in a fresh way some central themes of Division I of *Being and Time* as they emerged in Heidegger's early lecture courses from 1919 to 1925. In light of Heidegger's methodological emphasis upon formal indication to circumvent the pull toward idle talk, McManus's approach seems especially appropriate for Heidegger's philosophizing. His itinerary is also an informative complement to John Haugeland's posthumously published *Dasein Disclosed*. Haugeland insists upon explicitly rethinking every theme in *Being and Time* in light of the question concerning the sense of being; McManus instead lets the being question come to light indirectly. It emerges through Heidegger's early thoughts about constitution, "original havings," and the *vorgängiger*

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*Hinblick* and *Woraufhin* that must be already operative in any intentional directedness, as a “measure” presupposed in any determination of truth as correctness.

McManus’s reflections consistently reward thoughtful consideration. I will consider six topics: his initial discussion of Heidegger’s early appropriation and subsequent abandonment of Husserl’s conception of constitution; his extended examination of *Vorhandenheit* and *Zuhandenheit* in *Being and Time*; his critical assessment of Hubert Dreyfus’s influential interpretation of the *Vorhandenheit-Zuhandenheit* relation; McManus’s own reflections on measurement and the “measure” of truth; his reconsideration of Heidegger’s early philosophy of science, guided by his discussions of constitution and “measure”; and his concluding metaphilosophical speculations about the “subject-correlate” of philosophy, with implications for the place of *Being and Time* in Heidegger’s philosophical thinking.

McManus’s opening chapters on constitution, the categories, and Heidegger’s rejection of a “con-formist” conception of intelligibility provide a strong introduction, setting the stage for his subsequent discussion. McManus begins with Heidegger’s early phenomenological recovery of distinctive “subject-correlates” or “original havings” in religious life. Prayer, love of God, and living in “expectation” of the Last Judgment exemplify diverse forms of understanding that are distorted philosophically by an all-encompassing, homogenizing Theoretical Attitude. These considerations guide Heidegger’s challenge to what McManus calls “con-formist” conceptions of intelligibility. Thinking of conformity or non-conformity between objective categories of what there is, and subjective categories that structure thinking, generates realism and idealism as familiar philosophical stances. McManus reads Heidegger’s rejection of both stances as a rejection of their underlying con-formism, and argues that Heidegger abandoned his early talk of “constitution” and “subject- and object-correlates” for its recurrent temptation toward con-formism. McManus also usefully connects Heidegger’s concerns with John McDowell’s Wittgensteinian insistence that a “sideways-on” view of ourselves in the world is illusory and senseless.<sup>1</sup> The result is not an “internal” perspective on intelligibility, but a

rejection of spatial metaphors of “perspectives” as internal or external. These chapters’ themes are not unfamiliar, but McManus’s treatment is deft, cogent, and illuminating.

The contrast between a Theoretical Attitude and diverse “original havings” easily segues into McManus’s initial discussion of *Vorhandenheit*. McManus identifies 36 different characterizations of *Vorhandenheit* in *Being and Time* or prominent commentaries. He initially argues against efforts to systematize these uses coherently, including efforts to identify *Vorhandenheit* as what is revealed in asserting, in the sciences, in a generic Theoretical Attitude, or in relation to *Zuhandenheit*.<sup>2</sup> Later, McManus proposes a 37<sup>th</sup> specification of the term as better indicating what Heidegger is getting at, even if not fully accommodating all uses. He argues that Heidegger primarily uses the term diagnostically, tracking a characteristic tendency toward confusion in our thinking (*Seinsvergessenheit*) rather than marking out a coherent ontological domain.

I think McManus is importantly right on both counts, the theoretical incoherence of the manifold invocations of *Vorhandenheit* and their diagnostic coherence. *Vorhandenheit* primarily denotes both the understanding of being predominant in the Western philosophical tradition, and the understanding implicit in everyday as well as philosophical covering over of the being question. Haugeland makes a similar point more briefly,<sup>3</sup> but their different formulations are instructive. Haugeland interprets this period in Heidegger as governed by the dimensions of the being question laid out in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*: ontological difference, articulation of being, regional differentiation of multiple ways of being, and the truth-character of being. He can say succinctly that unlike *Zuhandenheit*, *Vorhandenheit* does not identify a region of being, but only traditional philosophical conceptions of entities as independent of anything else (including any understanding of being or “measure” of truth). McManus’s suggestion that *Vorhandenheit* is a diagnostic category follows naturally from this formulation, as does his rejection of broadly pragmatist interpretations that take *Vorhandenheit* in general as founded on *Zuhandenheit* (for Haugeland, those interpretations amount to a category mistake).

McManus would nevertheless likely resist Haugeland's formulation, for two related reasons. First, he is also suspicious of the coherence of *Zuhandenheit*. Second, McManus implicitly seeks to separate Heidegger's early reflections on *Hinblicke* and measures of truth from the project of fundamental ontology that distinctively marks his *Being and Time* period. I return to both points below in considering McManus's concluding metaphilosophical reflections.

McManus further develops his skepticism about most versions of the "Primacy of Practice Claim" in an extended critical discussion of perhaps its best-known version. Hubert Dreyfus insists, both in his own voice and Heidegger's, that propositional attitudes and conceptual content are only intelligible against a background of non-conceptual coping skills.<sup>4</sup> Dreyfus treats Heidegger's phenomenological characterization of dealings with equipment as exemplary of these quasi-foundational "coping" skills, although not exclusively so. I also criticize Dreyfus's efforts to found conceptual or theoretical compartments on a distinct "level" of practical coping, and our criticisms substantially overlap even though I do not address Dreyfus on Heidegger.<sup>5</sup> I will not here sort out parallels and differences in our responses to Dreyfus, but only call attention to an especially interesting aspect of McManus's discussion. Dreyfus's ongoing debate with John McDowell about the scope of conceptual understanding has received extensive discussion (see Schear, *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World*). McManus nevertheless adds a new dimension by tracing their disagreements to Dreyfus's effort to solve, where McDowell would instead dissolve, some familiar philosophical puzzles. On this reading, Dreyfus's appeal to skillful coping as terminating a regress of rules, his aspiration to a philosophical account of intentionality, and his fascination with neural nets to replace traditional approaches to artificial intelligence research surreptitiously presuppose a "sideways-on" conception of the world that both Heidegger and McDowell reject.

In the book's pivotal arguments, McManus connects Heidegger's early reflections on constitution and *Hinblicke* with his discussions of truth in the 1925 *Logic* lectures and throughout the *Being and*

*Time* period. His extended discussion of measurement indicates how traditional conceptions of truth as correspondence or correctness rest upon a form of understanding that is not “con-formist.” As McManus rightly insists, “the ‘formal’ notion of a ‘constituting’ ‘anticipation’ which provides a ‘measure’ – up to which entities may or may not match – represents an important continuous theme that runs through the young Heidegger’s work” (111). Speaking of truth as correspondence presupposes a grasp of the *way* in which a comportment corresponds to an entity or not, and that understanding is not itself subject to con-formist questions. McManus finds here “a sense for the idea of a non-subjectivist *a priori*... in that we can make no sense of the idea of finding out ‘more’ – through other ‘means’ – about those entities that might subsequently undermine the understanding embodied in these modes of understanding” (121–2). Mastering such a way of possible correspondence provides access to entities: learning *of* them rather than *about* them, in McManus’s succinct formulation.

McManus first uses this development of Heidegger’s early notion of a *vorgängiger Hinblick* to explicate Heidegger’s well-known criticisms of skepticism, and his characterization of Dasein as “in the truth.” His primary deployment, however, is to read differently the sense in which Heidegger takes practice as primary. He first argues that *Zuhandenheit* exemplifies a non-conformist mode of understanding. There can be no intelligible sense in which hammering “fits” hammers, or vice versa. He then turns to measurement practices as disclosing the possibility of conformity or non-conformity in some measurable respect. In mastering a measuring practice (e.g., measuring lengths with a ruler), one is not learning the correct way to measure independently determinable lengths, but learning *of* length. The concept and the practice are inextricable. McManus then defends this “constitutive” role for measuring practices both against objections that measurements can be improved and thereby corrected, and against efforts to diminish the legitimacy of the practices and measures thereby established. These chapters conclude with an informative discussion of “methodological fetishism,” arguing that measurement practices can be rejected as trivial or insignificant, but not as incorrect. McManus notes that further discussion of

such issues requires exposition of *Eigentlichkeit*, which goes beyond the scope of the book (below, I comment further on the project's confinement almost entirely within the scope of issues from Division I).

McManus also reconsiders Heidegger's early views on the sciences throughout these chapters. McManus has the right over-arching orientation on this issue, "to question the notion that Heidegger is, in some way, hostile to the sciences," even while also recognizing Heidegger's conjoined effort "to reveal a way in which scientific practices can obscure as well as illuminate our world" (137). McManus takes two early articles<sup>6</sup> as recurrent foils for his treatment of Heidegger on science. I would have emphasized common ground there rather than differences (most notably in undermining rather than merely reversing traditional distinctions between theory and practice), but a review is not the place to defend my own earlier work. I instead focus on what McManus illuminates, and what he misses, in Heidegger's early discussions of the sciences. On one point, however, McManus's focus on my own article misses an important point about Heidegger's views, by not noting the companion piece that connects the criticism of *Being and Time* to Heidegger's own revised views in "Die Zeit des Weltbildes."<sup>7</sup> Heidegger has not been well served by that article's English translations, which are insensitive to its bearing on anglophone philosophy of science. McManus himself does not address Heidegger's later views directly, but the specific continuities and discontinuities in the earlier and later views on science may disrupt the metaphilosophical suggestions he makes at the end of the book.

A strength of McManus's discussion of measurement is that it usefully brings out *how* Heidegger's views undermine both realist and anti-realist philosophies of science. Measuring practices cannot be adequately understood either as providing epistemic access to an independent property of entities, or as constructing or imposing a conceptualization somehow alien to them. Heidegger's typical locutions for this "non-conformist" understanding of scientific disclosure are that scientific research "lets entities be" or "frees them." McManus summarizes this theme by saying that in developing practices of measurement, "we do not learn how to measure characteristics that we previously could

not measure; instead we come to measure characteristics with which we had previously not engaged” (143). Haugeland makes a similar point more perspicuously, however. Commenting on Heidegger’s claim that scientific projection “aims at a setting free of entities ... [such that] they can ‘throw themselves against’ a pure discovering” (GA 2: 480/SZ 363), Haugeland says that in introducing measuring instruments and accepting their “readings” as evidence, “we let [entities out of the darkest of all prisons, the prison of utter obscurity] by bringing them to light (into the clearing); and we enable them to throw themselves against a pure discovery by erecting a pure discovery in their path and accepting what happens as the result of their coming up against it.”<sup>8</sup> Sellars also offers a useful locution here in saying that such practices and concepts usher these aspects of the world into the space of reasons, thereby enabling us to act toward and reason about them.<sup>9</sup>

In some respects, however, the use of simple measurement practices to exemplify Heidegger’s early use of “measure” understates the breadth and significance of this notion for understanding the sciences. In effect, McManus is still thinking of the relevant *Hinblick* as something like a “subject-correlate,” such as rulers and their appropriate use allowing things to show up with determinate lengths. In experimental science, however, it is not just the instruments and their uses that establish a measure with respect to which judgments can be or not be in accord. The objects of inquiry must also be worked upon; if not sufficiently simplified, purified, isolated, shielded, recombined, or standardized, they are incapable of displaying the determinations scientific understanding makes salient. Experimental systems themselves, and not just the instruments and skills we bring to bear on them, establish the measure by which scientific conceptualizations bear on the world.<sup>10</sup> Often, what was once an object of inquiry or an explanatory model then becomes a tool for posing and exploring new issues. Moreover, those conceptualizations belong together holistically, in ways that belie the apparent autonomy with which rulers let us know of lengths. That is why Heidegger insisted upon the role of a *theoretical* projection of entities in the sciences, and also why Heidegger highlighted the possibility

of crises in the sciences' basic concepts in initially introducing the question of the sense of being.

Several interrelated aspects of scientific disclosure are thereby obscured despite McManus's illuminating treatment. Centrally at issue here is his insistence that measures of truth cannot themselves be held accountable to the entities and properties they uncover.<sup>11</sup> McManus is right that traditional conceptions of correspondence or con-formity cannot explicate such accountability (one might say with McManus that "measures" cannot be *false*, while insisting that they might nevertheless conceal rather than disclose). I would argue that at least four aspects of Heidegger's account are central to his "non-conformist" approach to the truth-character of a science's *vorgängiger Hinblick*. First is the regional character of a science's disclosure of entities. A science can only discover entities and properties from "within" an understanding that discloses an interconnected domain of entities and manifestations.<sup>12</sup> Second is the modal character of such disclosure, as opening intelligible *possibilities*. In the anglophone tradition, Nelson Goodman, Wilfrid Sellars and Carl Hempel fundamentally transformed philosophy of science by showing how empirical confirmation, explanation, and other aspects of scientific reasoning required alethic modalities. Heidegger's earlier exploration of that terrain has yet to be adequately explicated, but it is central to his understanding of the sciences. Third is the essential interplay between alethic modalities and mattering, expressed in Heidegger by the equiprimordiality of *Verstehen* and *Befindlichkeit* for any thrown projection. Fourth is Heidegger's recognition that the intelligibility of entities in terms of possibilities that matter depends upon Dasein holding itself and them accountable to what is at issue in those possibilities. That is why Heidegger's discussion of truth in section 44 directly leads into Division II, with its consideration of the possibility of the impossibility of an understanding of being. Only here is Heidegger's initial appeal to scientific crises redeemed, as openness to the ever-impending possibility, in any scientific domain, that there "is" no *Da* there.

The strength of McManus's reflections is nevertheless evident in how these themes still emerge within his discussion, despite his

inclination to reject their greater import in Heidegger. McManus calls explicit attention to Heidegger's 1928–29 claim that any scientific practice “‘stakes out a field’, ‘fixes on and demarcates’ a ‘determinate region’” (173), even though his own discussion does not draw upon this aspect of Heidegger. He recognizes in Wittgensteinian terms that a “measure” opens a “logical space” of possibilities (taking insufficient note of Heidegger's suspicion of appeals to logic for such purposes), even while developing his suspicions about Heidegger's talk of “projection” without noting that it is an essentially modal term (what is projected are possibilities). He similarly has a thoughtful footnote (169n4) concerning his neglect elsewhere of *Befindlichkeit*; his extended discussion of methodological fetishism and the possible triviality of some measures brings out that dimension of the accountability of “measures,” even though he resists its essential interconnectedness with the projection of *intelligible* possibilities. Relatedly, McManus at multiple points rightly recognizes that the issue at hand will ultimately depend upon Heidegger's account of *Eigentlichkeit* (without comparable acknowledgement that death and *Angst* are integral to that dependence), even though he would undoubtedly reject my view that it makes no sense to address Heidegger on truth and “measure” without making the Division II concerns central.

The book concludes with brief reflections on the metaphilosophical significance of its central themes, and their implications for understanding the fate of the *Being and Time* project.<sup>15</sup> McManus rightly poses the problem: “how does one distinguish ‘original havings’? From what point of view can one see the difference between [them]?” He also accurately identifies Heidegger's primary motivation for such distinctions: “the real sin that Heidegger wants to expose in our philosophical confusion is our allowing our thought and talk to descend into indeterminacy” (221), due to “a ‘forgetting’ of ‘the measures’ that we bring to bear” (217). Despite a thoughtful, insightful setting of the issue, however, McManus's treatment in my view underestimates the sophistication of Heidegger's response to these problems. McManus repeatedly overlooks the significance of Heidegger's insistence that the being of

entities is not an entity, whether in equating the question of the unity of the manifold senses of being with a genus-species relationship (211), or in repeatedly conflating Heidegger's treatment of regions of being with the determination of totalities of entities. Relatedly, in defending Heidegger against the objection that theoretical assertions could only reveal entities as *vorhanden*, he retains the presumption that a science of being would consist of assertions. Yet Heidegger himself dismissed as "an absurdity" that "philosophy, as science of being, is supposed to adopt specific attitudes toward and posit specific things about beings" (GA 24: 16/12). The issues McManus here raises about the *Being and Time* project, I would argue, require a recognition of the distinctive pragmatics of fundamental ontology as a theoretically articulated "call into normative engagement with the conditions and possibilities of disclosive engagement in general,"<sup>14</sup> rather than a fallen effort to describe those conditions systematically and thereby to determine them once and for all. For all his considerable depth of insight into why such a project would make no sense for Heidegger, McManus's metaphilosophical reflections may fall prey to his own criticism of Dreyfus for transforming the *Being and Time* project into a sense-less effort to view our involvement in the world "sideways on." His resistance to the possibility of a non-con-formist understanding of the truth-character of being as measure would relatedly neglect Heidegger's call to take responsibility for our involvement in disclosure.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994); "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following," in *Mind, Value and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).
- 2 McManus's demonstration of the incoherence of any systematic catalog of those entities whose way of being has been characterized as *vorhanden* undertakes systematically the kind of challenge I posed in a much more limited way to the association between

- science and the disclosure of entities as *vorhanden*: Joseph Rouse, “Science and the Theoretical ‘Discovery’ of the Present-at-Hand,” in D. Ihde and H. Silverman, eds., *Descriptions* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985), 200–210.
- 3 John Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 57.
- 4 Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991).
- 5 Joseph Rouse, “Coping and its Contrasts,” in Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas, eds., *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 7–28; “What Is Conceptually Articulated Understanding?” in Joseph Shear, ed., *Mind, Reason, and Being-in-the-World: The McDowell-Dreyfus Debate* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 250–71.
- 6 Rouse, “Science and the Theoretical ‘Discovery’ of the Present-at-Hand”; William Blattner, “Decontextualization, Standardization, and Deweyan Science,” *Man and World* 28 (1995): 321–39.
- 7 Joseph Rouse, “Heidegger’s Later Philosophy of Science,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23 (1985): 75–92.
- 8 Haugeland, *Dasein Disclosed*, 173.
- 9 Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).
- 10 McManus crucially misses the point of recognizing the local character of scientific disclosure, e.g., the role of specific material practices and experimental or other regulated systems, when he (rightly) dismisses attempts to treat scientific disclosure as “merely local” (152), or as bound up with “local interests” (150). There are certainly science studies scholars (especially prominent in sociology of science in McManus’s vicinity) who would endorse the slide from “local” to “merely local,” but for most work in science studies, as in Heidegger, that inference is mistaken.
- 11 McManus (159n37) approvingly cites Hasok Chang’s “problem of nomic measurement” (*Inventing Temperature* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004]), without recognizing that Chang’s point is directly at odds with his own insistence that measurement

practices are not open to correction. The “problem” is *how* to determine the proper “measure” of truth in a scientific field when there can be no direct “con-formity,” not a rejection of the intelligibility of any assessment of “measure.”

- 12 The scare quotes mark my recognition that McManus informatively exposes how spatial metaphors can distort Heidegger’s concerns, although in this respect, McManus should be read in juxtaposition with Jeff Malpas’s reading of Heidegger on spatiality and place in *Heidegger’s Topology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006) and *Heidegger and the Thinking of Place* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).
- 13 These reflections are expanded and defended in Denis McManus, “Ontological Pluralism and the *Being and Time* Project,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51 (2013): 651–73.
- 14 Andrew Blitzer and Mark Lance, “Phenomenology Without Ontology: Heidegger on How to Talk About Being,” invited symposium paper, American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division, Atlanta, GA, 2012.