

# Error, Hallucination and the Concept of 'Ontology' in the Early Work of Heidegger

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Recently the attempt has been made to demonstrate Heidegger's relevance to the concerns of analytic philosophers. A focus for this effort has been the criticism in his early work of Cartesian ontology. While a number of important works have mapped out this area of Heidegger's thought,<sup>1</sup> a crucial task has not been carried out, namely that of assessing how Heidegger can accommodate those phenomena which motivate the Cartesian to adopt his highly counter-intuitive ontology. As long as we fail to examine how Heidegger's early ontology copes with the possibilities of error and of hallucination, the suspicion will remain that Heidegger is simply insensitive to those phenomena on which the Cartesian focuses. Neither Heidegger nor the Cartesian have been done any favours by commentators showing little inclination to bring the opponents into closer combat. This paper attempts to correct that omission.

Rather than accepting the Cartesian epistemological challenge at face value, and attempting to meet it by demonstrating that some of our beliefs *are* certain, Heidegger criticizes the ontology on which this challenge is based. My concern is that, in sidestepping the epistemological problems which error and hallucination supposedly generate, Heidegger overlooks ontological problems that they raise. The question is: what account can Heidegger give of the nature of error and hallucination? Heidegger's ontology may help us to understand what it is to be a creature with intentional characteristics such as we have, but can he help us to understand what it is to be a creature which makes errors and experiences hallucinations? The motivating worry is that, in undermining scepticism, Heidegger has rendered false perceptual belief inconceivable.

In order to marshal the resources available to Heidegger in dealing with error and hallucination, the first section of the paper will briefly examine Heidegger's claim that the Cartesian

<sup>1</sup> Cf., e.g., C. B. Guignon *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Hackett, 1983), J. Richardson, *Existential Epistemology* (Oxford, 1986), F. A. Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind* (Yale, 1987) and H. L. Dreyfus *Being-in-the-World* (M.I.T., 1991).

epistemological problematic is the result of certain erroneous ontological presuppositions regarding the Subject and its world.<sup>2</sup> He argues that the entity which each of us is, what he calls *Dasein*, is 'essentially *in* the world' and that knowing is a 'founded mode' of this 'Being-in-the-world'. His concern with the phenomenon of subjectivity leads him to affirm the fundamentality of a description of our acquaintance with the world which the Cartesian tradition has striven to ground in an ontology based on the Subject-Object relation. According to Heidegger, such a move actually makes it impossible to understand subjectivity. For this reason our knowing cannot be conceived as forging a connection between a Subject and the world, the domain of Objects.

In the second section of the paper, I will discuss whether Heidegger can account for the possibility of error. I will argue that his rejection of Cartesian ontology and its account of perception as representationally-mediated must not be seen as an endorsement of a view which postulates some form of 'pure beholding' as our mode of access to entities and I will offer an account according to which our understanding of our perception of objects contains within it an understanding of the occurrence of error.

However, in the third section, I will argue that it is far from clear that hallucination can be accommodated within Heidegger's ontology. Several strategies that one might adopt in attempting to achieve such an accommodation will be explored but I will argue that none of these are adequate. Attempts to understand hallucination as some kind of localized interruption of *Dasein's* acquaintance with entities seem incompatible with Heidegger's talk of this acquaintance as essential. A more promising approach is to attack the conception of hallucination with which Cartesian and other philosophers typically operate. However, this generates some profound worries about the ontological project itself, about our understanding of what that project is to achieve and about how it relates to scientific inquiries into phenomena such as hallucination. Consequently, this attempt to *defend* Heidegger's ontology serves only to raise more profound doubts about its intelligibility.

<sup>2</sup> The views to be discussed are those Heidegger expresses in *Sein und Zeit* and in the lectures he presented in the two years prior to the original publication of that book. All page references are to the following English translations: *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Blackwell, 1962) (referred to in the text as BT, followed by a page number), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. by A. Hofstadter (Indiana, 1982) (BPP), *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. M. Heim (Indiana, 1984) (MFL), *History of the Concept of Time*, trans. T. Kisiel (Indiana, 1985) (HCT).

I

In his *Existential Analytic*, Heidegger is examining the Being of *Dasein*. The approach he adopts is one of describing and then interpreting *Dasein* in what he calls its 'everydayness'. His reason for doing this is his desire to avoid any preconceptions, philosophical or scientific, about what *Dasein* is. He wants to look at *Dasein* as it is 'prior to, outside of and despite all theory' (MFL 198).<sup>3</sup>

Looking at our everyday existence, we find ourselves in a world populated by objects. But it would be wrong to see our immediate acquaintance with them as 'acquaintance with material objects'. We encounter chairs, tables, cups, record-players, books, tennis-rackets etc. *as opposed to* 'extended things with causal properties'. We may subsequently decide that this is what cups and tennis-rackets 'fundamentally are', but it is as functionally- and instrumentally-defined entities that they first present themselves. These Heidegger terms *Zuhanden*, or ready-to-hand, contrasting with *Vorhanden*, objects conceived of as present-to-hand, as 'things in themselves'.

Corresponding to his rejection of the assumption that our most basic experience of the entities around is experience of them as 'material objects' is Heidegger's rejection of the assumption that our basic relation to the world is one of observation;

The kind of dealing which is closest to us is ... not a bare perceptual cognition, but rather that kind of concern which manipulates things and puts them to use.

BT 95

The world is our environment and the multitude of ways in which we can be 'in' this world correspond to the multitude of different ways in which we can interact with the entities which populate that world. Examples he gives are:

<sup>3</sup> That everydayness is not to be taken as an unambiguous clue to *Dasein's* true nature emerges in Heidegger's discussion of his concept of authenticity. But the phenomena which Heidegger seems to be trying to capture with his authentic-inauthentic dimension are not obviously concerned with anything like perceptual error or hallucination, the concerns of this paper. One might argue that since Heidegger's *Existential Analytic* is an analysis of *Dasein* in its everydayness, it can only be expected to yield an analysis of *Dasein* in its *normality* and thus cannot be expected to accommodate hallucination. But, to anticipate a point to be made in Section 3, if Heidegger's ontology is not expected to accommodate the phenomena that Descartes' ontology was designed specifically to accommodate, we will have lost our conception of a single task which these two 'rival ontologies' are to perform.

[H]aving to do with something, producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating, considering, discussing, determining.  
BT 83

Turning to the problem of knowledge, Heidegger claims that we only have knowledge of objects around us on the basis of our 'Being-in-the-world'. We manipulate and use entities and do so without there being any need for knowledge to 'put us in touch' with them. Heidegger argues that to believe that knowledge does have this role is to have succumbed to uncritical presuppositions about the Subject, about objects and about knowledge itself:

Knowing is nothing but a mode of being-in-the-world; specifically, it is *not even a primary* but a *founded way of being-in-the-world*, a way which is always possible only on the basis of a non-cognitive comportment.  
HCT 164

So what is it for someone to know that there is a chair in the room? It is, among other things, for them to sit on it. When someone comes looking for a chair, they point in its direction or say 'There's one here', as opposed to going to look for it in other parts of the house. What unites these types of behaviour, according to the Cartesian, is the person's having a representation of the chair as in the room, which is 'appropriately linked' to the real state of affairs. What 'unites' them according to Heidegger is the person's Being-toward the chair, which is an element of his Being-in-the-world:

[T]he preserving retention of what is known is itself nothing but a new mode of in-being, that is, of the relationship of being to the entity which is known.  
HCT 163

Let us bear in mind here the kinds of things that Heidegger includes under the heading of 'in-being' (see BT 83 quoted above). The change that acquiring knowledge brings about will show up in some way in the myriad forms of action in which Dasein involves itself.<sup>4</sup>

Heidegger's description of how we relate to entities would not

<sup>4</sup> Natural scientific knowledge is also subject to this kind of analysis. '[T]heoretical research is not without a *praxis* of its own' (BT 409) and thus the *Vorhanden* objects of natural science are fundamentally *Zuhanden*.

be objectionable to the Cartesian were it not for Heidegger's claim that his account captures the *fundamental* form our acquaintance with things takes. The Cartesian clearly recognizes the kinds of activity Heidegger describes but goes on to explain these 'behavioural manifestations' of knowledge as underpinned by a Subject's representation and the connection of that representation with the state of affairs known. According to the Cartesian, it is this that is the essence of knowing and this which makes possible the patterns of activity which Heidegger picks out as Being-in-the-World.

This kind of explanation Heidegger wishes to reject on the grounds that it obscures 'the central question ... for the problem of being', namely, 'the subjectivity of the subject' (MFL 153). For Heidegger, the Cartesian Subject-Object relation is a hopeless starting-point to adopt:

[I]n this subject-object relation and in the appeal to it, something essential is omitted and something crucial has been missed. The characteristics of this 'relation between' are omitted, the very thing to be explained. The genuine concept of subjectivity is lacking, in so far as it goes unnoticed that the 'relationship to' belongs to the essence of subjectivity.

MFL 129

It seems that the kind of relationship in question could not arise between two *Vorhanden* objects and this difficulty is not eliminated by adopting the Cartesian 'solution' of deeming one of these entities to be 'spiritual' or 'mental', 'the word "mental" indicating that we mustn't expect to understand how these things work'.<sup>5</sup> This move still leaves the Subject very much a thing (BT 72) and Heidegger feels a far more radical revision is needed. What corresponds to our Subject must be essentially 'involved with' our Object entities:

Being-in is not a 'property' which *Dasein* sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and *without* which it could *be* just as well as it could with it. It is not the case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world'.

BT 84

The Cartesian 'explanation' of intentionality misleads us by obscuring the fact that *Dasein* is essentially involved with the entities around it. Rather than explaining our Being-in-the-World as a relation between a Subject and its Objects, Heidegger suggests we

<sup>5</sup> L. Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books*, ed. R. Rhees (Blackwell, 1969), p. 39.

must look at Being-in-the-World as fundamental and see that it is on this basis that *Dasein* exists (HCT 257) and reality is encountered (BT 246):

The in-being of *Dasein* is not to be explained but before all else has to be seen as an inherent kind of being and accepted as such.  
HCT 165

Heidegger's concern here is one shared by much recent analytic philosophy of mind, namely, that of making sense of intentionality. Heidegger criticizes the Cartesian conception of the Subject and its states for disguising their essential connectedness with the entities which they are 'about', thereby making their relation to these entities a mystery. Similarly, John McDowell points out that by presenting intentional states as inner facts possessed of an 'intrinsic nature ... knowable through and through without advert-ing to what is regarded', it becomes 'quite unclear that the fully Cartesian picture is entitled to characterize its inner facts in content-involving terms—in terms of its seeming to one that things are thus and so—at all'.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the familiar, epistemological problem of how it is that they can constitute *reliable* guides to the state of objects in the external world, it is difficult to understand how these inner objects can be *representations* full stop.<sup>7</sup> If this problem is to be solved, it seems '[c]ognitive space [must] incorporate the relevant portions of the "external world"'<sup>8</sup> and one can view Heidegger's depiction of the states of *Dasein* as intrinsically interdependent with 'external objects' as an account of what this 'incorporation' would be like.

## II

Section I has argued that Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* and its Being-in-the-World is shaped by a desire to make sense of intentionality. By exposing *as* assumptions Cartesian assumptions about the nature of the Subject and the Objects it faces, we can reestablish a view of subjectivity which acknowledges that 'the "relationship to" belongs to the essence of subjectivity' (MFL 129 quoted

<sup>6</sup> J. McDowell 'Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space' in P. Pettit and J. McDowell (eds) *Subject, Thought and Context* (Oxford, 1986), pp. 151–152.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also Hilary Putnam's struggles with 'the problem of how pure mental states of intending, believing, etc., can ... constitute or cause reference' (*Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 43).

<sup>8</sup> McDowell, *op. cit.* p. 167.

above). Moreover, if I am *Dasein*, rather than a Cartesian ego, I have no need of a *proof* that I am genuinely acquainted with the world because I am *essentially* in it already. Thus Heidegger's account of intentionality also circumvents the traditional epistemological problem of scepticism. If we understood more clearly what *Dasein* and its world are, we would see that they cannot 'fall apart' in the way the sceptics' Subject and Object can.

Heidegger comments that:

When we reproduce the phenomenal findings in this form: *Knowing is a mode of being of in-being*, someone oriented to the traditional horizon of epistemological questions is inclined to reply that such an interpretation of knowing actually nullifies the problem of knowledge. But what authority decides *whether* and *in what sense* there is supposed to be a problem of knowledge, outside of the subject matter itself?

HCT 161

The problem I wish to address in the remainder of this paper is that the sceptic can reply 'Well, I've *proved* that there is a problem of knowledge.' Clearly, a *prima facie* reason for rejecting the Cartesian ontology is that it brings in its wake the problem of scepticism. But *if* such an ontology were the *only* ontology which could accommodate certain features of our experience that we feel *must* be accommodated, we would have no option other than to embrace that ontology and then seek remedies for the new headache of scepticism.

Although Heidegger is right to point out flaws in the Cartesian ontology, he cannot be allowed to forget that, for its advocates, this ontology is *necessary* if we are to accommodate certain facts. The facts upon which I shall be focusing are that our contact with the world is not sufficient to prevent, firstly, our making errors in our judgments about the objects in it and, secondly, our experiencing hallucinations. The Cartesian response to these facts is surely confused.<sup>9</sup> But that is not to say that Heidegger's ontology *can* accommodate these facts. It is one thing to argue that Descartes' ontology is inadequate. It is quite another to argue that

<sup>9</sup> There is an interesting parallel between the problem I raise here for Heidegger and that which faces Descartes in the fourth and sixth *Meditations*, namely, that Descartes' *answer* to the sceptic appears to be *too potent*. If knowledge is secured by the existence of a non-deceiving god, it becomes difficult to understand how such a god could ever allow us to make errors or have hallucinations in the first place. Descartes' attempt to explain error, by citing the impetuosity of the human will, also has parallels with that which I will offer below on Heidegger's behalf.

his concern to formulate an ontology which can accommodate hallucination is ill-founded and neither Heidegger nor commentators such as Richardson and Guignon (who claim to be assessing Heidegger's relevance to Descartes' ontology and the challenge of scepticism) presents any such argument. Consequently, it is unfair of Heidegger to present the sceptic as embracing the Subject-Object relationship 'as if it fell from heaven' (MFL 153), doubly so if it should turn out that Heidegger's own ontology cannot accommodate the very facts which drive the sceptic to adopt his admittedly flawed ontology.<sup>10</sup>

The present section focuses on the possibility of error. I will argue that although Heidegger's picture of *Dasein* seems ill-suited to dealing with the very real fact that we make mistakes, there *are* resources available within his account of knowledge that can save him from this potential objection. The key is that along with a reconstrual of knowing, the errors of *Dasein* must also be reinterpreted. They cannot be taken as *disagreements* between representations and reality if knowledge is not to be taken as *agreement*.

Before exploring what Heidegger thinks can be said about the making of false judgments we will need to examine his distinctive views of truth and falsity. In *Being and Time*, his comments on truth start with a discussion of its traditional conception as correspondence, as agreement between the judgment and its object. This he sees as, in one sense, correct but as capturing only part of what we understand by truth. The relation of agreement between judgment and object is problematic because it is unclear how a judgment and its object can be *alike*. In his attempt to substantiate what this agreement can be, he examines the way in which we demonstrate the truth of a judgment. Those of us who are licking our lips in anticipation of a theory of truth are going to be disappointed by what Heidegger goes on to offer:

Let us suppose that someone with his back turned to the wall makes the true assertion that 'the picture on the wall is hanging askew.' This assertion demonstrates itself when the man who makes it, turns round and perceives the picture hanging askew on the wall.

BT 260

<sup>10</sup> Heidegger's own comments on the possibility of error and delusion are scant and rather unhelpful, primarily because in such contexts his main concern is to show that this possibility does not call into question the essential intentionality of *Dasein's* perceiving (cf., e.g., BPP 60 and HCT 164). Such remarks address some erroneous (Cartesian) conclusions that one might draw from the fact that error is possible. But they do not help us to understand how it is possible that errors come about.



According to this profoundly mundane 'account', we verify the truth of a judgment when we look at the thing which the judgment is about and see that it is as the judgment presented it as being:

[W]hat is to be confirmed is *that* such Being *uncovers* the entity towards which it is. What gets demonstrated is the Being-uncovering of the assertion.

BT 261

Thus a judgment's being true is a matter of its 'uncovering' the entity or state of affairs it is about. Consequently, Heidegger defines *knowing* as a Being-towards 'that *uncovers*' (BT 261).

This 'account' may appear mundane but it is certainly not without its problems. Among others, the phenomenon of error seems to show that sometimes *Dasein* uncovers things and makes judgments on the basis of that uncovering which are *false*. One feels that when one has made an error one was aware of *something* but it seems *this* awareness cannot be equated with uncovering.

Let us look a little closer at uncovering. In Section 36 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger identifies, as 'the foundation of western philosophy', the thesis that '[p]rimordial and genuine truth lies in pure beholding' (BT 215). Heidegger sees such a homogeneous account of discourse as misleading:

The kind of truth ... varies with the way entities differ, and accords with the guiding tendency and extent of the disclosure.

BT 300

To understand why truth should be seen in this way, we must examine Heidegger's concept of 'understanding'.<sup>11</sup> Heidegger's analysis of our understanding of objects emphasizes the importance of practical competencies (BT 183), of 'know-how' (BPP 276), over a mere theoretical grasping (BT 385). Taking his favourite example of the hammer, 'the less we just stare at the hammer-Thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become' (BT 98). To be acquainted with a hammer, I need to be able to understand hammering and to be able to distinguish a hammer from a spanner, for example. I need to understand the different forms of action appropriate to each.

<sup>11</sup> It should be noted that not only am I presenting an examination of only a very small number of the themes of Heidegger's early work but also that space precludes the kind of analysis of Heidegger's concepts of 'understanding', 'interpretation' and 'state-of-mind' (a poor translation of '*Befindlichkeit*') which a full account of his concept of knowledge would require.

Grounded in understanding is 'interpretation' (BT 188). Our understanding of a hammer may be constituted by nothing more than our ability to use it, but in interpreting, 'we take apart' the hammer 'in its "in-order-to"' (BT 189) and we then grasp it explicitly *as* a hammer. This vision of interpretation has a bearing on the problem of the character of knowledge because, for Heidegger, '[i]nterpretation is the basic form of all knowing' (HCT 260). If interpretation is a 'working-out of possibilities projected in understanding' (BT 189), interpretation will only make sense in the context of given projects or activities (understanding being an aspect of our 'non-cognitive comportment' towards entities). If so, knowing something also cannot be seen as a free-floating quality but instead must be understood as something one acquires in the process of pursuing one or other of one's projects.

If knowledge rests upon interpretation, which, in turn, rests upon understanding, which must itself be understood in terms of our projects, our 'uncovering', our 'disclosure', is dependent on our projects and, consequently, so is truth. The definition of truth as uncovering thus turns out to be very much a formal one. 'The kind of truth ... varies with the way entities differ' (BT 300 quoted above) and 'the way entities differ' is a matter of our Being-involved with them differently. With regard to different projects of ours and the entities with which those projects involve us, there are correspondingly different kinds of truth. Thus the 'uncovering of truths' is best seen as an aspect of particular practical activities.

This affects how we must understand error. Since a hammer is 'defined ontologically-categorially' (BT 101) by its 'in-order-to' (its usefulness for hammering), when I take a hammer thinking it is a spanner, I think that what I have in my hand is useful for hammering. My judgment is only *wrong* because I *can* encounter spanners as different from hammers. If I couldn't, then it would not be the case that I would never have *known* about my error because I would not have *made* an error. If it is impossible for me to distinguish between a hammer and a spanner it must be because I use hammers and spanners in the same way.

We are now getting a clearer picture of what falsity can be. It is not a straightforward matter of losing all connection with entities (or the world). It is a matter of taking what is an X as a Y. Error arises not at the level of some sort of 'bare perception' but at that of interpretation:

When something no longer takes the form of just letting something be seen, but is always harking back to something else to which it points, so that it lets something be seen *as* something, it

thus acquires a synthesis-structure, and with this it takes over the possibility of covering up. The 'truth of judgments', however, is merely the opposite of this covering-up.

BT 57

The mistakes I can make in judging of an entity are limited by the other kinds of entities I *can* encounter. Only because of the disclosure that I am is not a seamless homogeneity can I make errors. My disclosure is constituted by the *multitude* of things that I can do. If I can encounter a thing it must fit into my projects somehow, even as 'completely useless to me', as it then constitutes an impediment. But having encountered a thing, it can fit into any one or more of my projects. My ability to hammer implies that I can encounter a hammer but it does not follow that what I am faced with now is a hammer.

Thus it appears that although Heidegger's account of acquaintance with entities restricts the kinds of errors one can make, it leaves room for the *possibility* of error. Moreover, I wish to move on now to argue that one can use his account as the basis for an explanation of how it is that errors do indeed occur. Having attacked the idea of perception as 'pure beholding', a new perspective on perception can be developed.

If one's arriving at knowledge-claims is an aspect of our practical activities, it would make sense that this process of coming to know is subject to much the same kind of disruption as those activities within which it is nested. If so, observation is something for which there can be said to be *methods*. For instance, there is a difference between glancing at something and 'having a good look' at it. Perceiving what an entity is can be a matter of expending a lot of *time* and *energy* and different kinds of perception can be seen as different forms of *action*. For example:

[L]istening to one another ... can be done in several possible ways: following, going along with, and the privative modes of non-hearing, resisting, defying, and turning away.

BT 206–207

Once we acknowledge that our acquaintance with entities is not 'a bare perceptual cognition' (BT 95 quoted above) but is instead an aspect of our having projects, we can acknowledge the part played in perception by, for example, *carelessness*. Carelessness is possible because I am an entity which is engaged in more than one project. We *glance* at the head-lines of a newspaper because we have to go and catch a train. In this light, error becomes a matter of our not following the proper procedure of observation that we understand

as the many ways in which one can 'have a good look'. In encountering entities around us, there are a myriad of pressures on us and *correct* perception rests on our 'going through the motions' of perception.

One question immediately presents itself. If, on returning from the deserted railway station, I find that the newspaper's head-line said 'rail-strike', what was it that happened when I read it as 'mail strike'? What caused me to believe that there was a postal dispute and act on that belief? This is the familiar problem of the common factor in correct and incorrect perception. The Cartesian immediately volunteers an 'experience' or a 'representation', but Heidegger would obviously reject that kind of move.

One response to this demand is that in as much as this representation is a cause of our acting, it is superfluous. As *Dasein*, we essentially always *do* act. Whether we read the head-line successfully or not we *will* act. No cause 'gets *Dasein* moving' because it is essentially always 'in motion'. An obvious objection here is that one thing for which we *do* need a cause is our acting as if there were a mail strike *as opposed to* our acting as if there was a rail strike. A Heideggerian response would be that just as there are methods of truth-getting corresponding to perception, there are also corresponding types of error. An element of our understanding of 'having a good look' is the fact that taking 'rail strike' as 'mail strike' is easily imaginable, whereas taking it as 'war declared' is very perplexing. We can understand error because we know that *glancing* at head-lines can lead to one's acting as if one saw something other than what actually is on the page.

What our account stresses is that I *will* act whether I expend enough time and energy discerning the truth or not. Moreover, it is part of our understanding of reading that if I read something and do not come away with the truth, I come away with an error. I do not come away with *nothing*. I do not cease to act and my acting on the 'erroneous perception' does not require that I possess a representation of 'mail strike'. The 'causal factors' are *all there*, in my reading the page, my reading it carelessly and its having 'rail strike' printed on it. As perceivers, we understand that if one is not careful in reading something like 'rail strike' one will think that what was printed there was something else, probably something very similar to 'rail strike'.

The account I have been offering is one in which the explanation of the occurrence of error is internal to our understanding of perception. While denying that perception is representationally-mediated, Heidegger also denies that it is a process of 'pure beholding'. We perceive things because of our non-cognitive

comportment towards them and contained within our dealings with entities is the possibility of error, as truth is not something instantaneously given but rather something which can be revealed through our actions. Correct perception rests on our taking appropriate measures and errors result from our failing to do so, from our reading the paper in inadequate light, from our reading it while cooking breakfast etc. It might be argued that such factors are simply those which must be removed for us to be able to 'purely behold' the printed page, but we can see that here 'purely behold' is simply being used as *synonymous for* 'perceive correctly', and restates the explanandum rather than explaining it.

### III

But what then of the pink elephant that I find reclining in my sitting-room? The lighting is fine, I haven't touched a drop all day and yet I see it there. I have checked and discounted all those factors which tend to cause perceptual errors but I can still see it whilst none of my friends can. In the case of hallucination, we are faced with a radical break-down of our ordinary understanding of perception. When I say 'There's a pink elephant sitting on the sofa' what I say is false but it seems inappropriate to say that I've made a straight-forward *mistake*. Errors are correctable but my friend cannot clear up my confusion by saying 'No, you've got it wrong, there's actually nothing there at all.' It would appear that we cannot show how hallucination is possible on the basis of Heidegger's ontology in the same way as we did with error because hallucinations can occur even when every provision for error has been made. We are faced with a person for whom our 'methods' of perception haven't worked. This seems to reflect a *qualitative* difference between error and hallucination.

One option would be to understand hallucination as some kind of disruption of Being-in-the-World. Medard Boss, a psychiatrist who worked in close association with Heidegger for twenty-five years, adopts such an approach. Charles Scott characterizes Boss' view as follows:

[T]he schizophrenic ... is a person who is *open* in the world in a way that denies significant aspects of his world-openness. He lives a denial of how immediacy, in part, occurs, a denial of his perceptive world-openness ... Mental illness *happens* in the immediate presence of beings, in the way beings come forth such as one can have designs involving them. Human being is found to be composed of nonintentional ways of being open, *not*

for contents that come to it, but *in* the immediate happening of beings.<sup>12</sup>

But if *Dasein* is 'essentially acquainted with entities', it becomes unclear how such a 'denial' of 'world-openness' can occur. Boss suggests that:

[T]he schizophrenic stands revealed as a human who is essentially and characteristically, in a specific way, no longer able to ek-sist, i.e., to bear and maintain this being-open according to the norms [that are the human being's way of standing in the openness with what comes forth]. They are less able than all other existing people to maintain a free, open stance to what encounters them, to what, together with them, is manifest to all waking fellow humans in their surroundings.<sup>13</sup>

Clearly Boss is not suggesting that a schizophrenic's hallucination involves a complete collapse of Being-in-the-World (or of *Dasein*'s 'existence'<sup>14</sup>). In hallucination, the perceptual break-down is very specific. I see a pink elephant when there is no such thing there but I still see the sofa on which I think it is sitting. The very fact that I say the elephant is 'over there' shows that I am still acquainted with space and these forms of perception depend, according to Heidegger, on the phenomenon of Being-in-the-World. Boss appears to endorse this and thus suggests instead that the break-down in 'world-openness' and in 'existence' only occurs 'in specific ways'.

But these qualifications are not obviously compatible with the Heideggerian claims that they are to qualify. It seems that although *Dasein* is essentially acquainted with entities, it sometimes loses that acquaintance in certain specific ways. So what kind of essential acquaintance are we talking about here? Similarly, while Heidegger asserts that '[t]he essence of *Dasein* lies in its existence' (BT 67), Boss suggests that the schizophrenic is, 'in a specific way, no longer able to ek-sist'. But what kind of essential feature is this 'existence' supposed then to be? It is anything but clear how the qualifications that Boss offers are to be integrated

<sup>12</sup> C. E. Scott 'Heidegger, Madness and Well-being' in R. W. Shahan and J. N. Mohanty (eds) *Thinking about Being* (Oklahoma, 1984), p. 148.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted by Scott (ibid. p. 149) from an unpublished translation by Brian Kenny of M. Boss *Grundriss der Medizin* (Hans Huber, 1971) Part III, Ch. 2, Section d.

<sup>14</sup> Heidegger's understanding of 'existence' is complex and highly idiosyncratic. In broadest outline, it is a term he uses to denote the way in which *Dasein* stands out from its reality so as to be able to reflect upon it. Thus, *Dasein* 'ex-sists'.

into the Heideggerian picture he hopes to adapt. Heidegger offers us certain *essential* characteristics of *Dasein's* Being, which Boss then says it sometimes *loses*. Adding 'in a specific way' does not help either. Clearly, he must disavow a complete collapse of these essential conditions. But Boss' 'nuances' end up sounding too similar to the proposal that '2+2 is necessarily 4, but not always'. There may be more that can be said in defence of Boss' approach but I wish to move on now to other kinds of account that might accommodate hallucination within a Heideggerian framework.

In my reflections up to this point, I have relied upon an assumption which informs a certain conception of what hallucination is. The assumption is:

The task of explaining the possibility of hallucination includes the task of explaining the possibility of someone seeing a pink elephant in their well-lit sitting room when there is nothing there.

The conception of hallucination which this assumption informs I will refer to as the Precritical Conception of Hallucination (PCH). It takes hallucination to be some sort of phenomenon which can occur in any circumstances which happen to include a waking human observer. It places no other restrictions on where and when hallucination occurs. I do not wish to suggest Heidegger adopted this PCH. Indeed I suspect that he never properly thought through most of the issues I have raised in this paper. But it seems to me that this conception shapes most philosophical discussion of hallucination, and for a good reason to which we will come later. This good reason points us to an investment that anyone who believes in the integrity of a distinct ontological enterprise has in the PCH and this applies to Heidegger also, whether he recognized it or not.

What I wish to examine is the possibility that, by rejecting the PCH, one might conceivably extend the account of error that I have given in Section 2 to take in hallucination. That account explained how one might mistake certain objects for others. If one adopts the PCH, the prospects of extending such an account to take in hallucination seem poor because the kind of 'errors' one must now explain include mistaking empty space for a pink elephant. Our ordinary understanding of perception may explain taking 'rail strike' for 'mail strike' but taking thin air for the largest land mammal seems to pose a radically different kind of problem.

But might not the PCH be distorting our view of hallucination and of the relationship between hallucination and error? For example, when hallucination occurs perhaps there *is* something there. This seems a plausible claim about the nature of

hallucination. One imagines that a typical hallucination involves something like someone hearing the sound of a road-drill as screams or someone seeing a branch of a tree being blown about by the wind as someone waving. These cases may be more representative of what hallucinations are really like and clearly the problem in extending the error account to these cannot be that there is *nothing there*, because *there is*.<sup>15</sup>

Two further reflections bolster the idea that an extended error account could explain hallucination. Firstly, bordering on the previous paragraph's unusual cases are cases such as our seeing a stranger who is about to sneeze as sneering at us or an over-tired official who cannot be bothered to answer our inquiries properly as deliberately setting out to hinder us. These, in turn, overlap with the kinds of paranoid suspicions to which any 'normal' person succumbs from time to time, suspicions which may correspond to the facts! If the account of Section 2 could explain these intermediate cases of misperception (assuming for the sake of argument that they *are* misperceptions), might it not extend to the more obviously odd cases mentioned?

Secondly, one might attack the PCH on a second front by asking whether we have over-stated the significance of the difference between mistaking an X for a Y and mistaking nothing at all for a Y. Where does the major difference lie between the cases mentioned above (hearing the sound of a drill as a scream, etc.) and seeing a shadow as an animal or an oasis in heat-haze? If the Section 2 account could explain these familiar cases where we have taken as a something what could be said to be a nothing, have we not *manufactured* a qualitative gulf between error and hallucination? Even if there *is* 'nothing there', that may not make a hallucination qualitatively different from some more familiar kinds of sensory error.

If the PCH has skewed our thinking about hallucination by focusing on cases like pink elephants in well-lit rooms, cases which also encourage the thought that hallucinations differ from more homely errors by virtue of there being 'nothing there', rather than discounting the possibility of extending Section 2's error account to take in hallucination, we should perhaps reject the PCH. How exactly one would go about filling in the details of such an extension is not something about which I am very clear

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly enough, there have been a number of theories within clinical psychology which suggest that hallucinations result from peripheral elements in our perceptual input, that we normally filter out, being misinterpreted as arising from real sensory stimuli. Cf., e.g., C. D. Frith, 'Consciousness, Information Processing and Schizophrenia', *British Journal of Psychiatry* **134** (1979).



but the newly-recognized continuities between errors and hallucinations at least make this an avenue not to be ignored.

However, even if this type of extension can be made good, an ambiguity in the argument as presented suggests that, on metaphilosophical grounds, rejecting the PCH is no simple solution to the Heideggerian ontologist's problems. (This will lead us to the 'good reason' to which I referred earlier why philosophers may be inclined to assume the PCH.) In rejecting the PCH, it would appear that, despite what we initially thought, we did not know exactly what we meant when we said that an adequate ontology must accommodate hallucination, because we did not recognize what 'hallucination' referred to here. But what kind of claim is being made when one rejects the PCH? Is a *conceptual* confusion being pointing out? If the claim were that what we *mean* by a hallucination is not something illustrated by a 'pink elephant ...', the rejectionist claim would be highly implausible. Why isn't it conceivable that a hallucination should occur in circumstances outside of those which the rejectionists have stressed? If it *is* conceivable, the rejection of the PCH becomes something like an empirical claim: hallucinations aren't, *as a matter of fact*, like that. As an empirical claim, the rejection of the PCH *is* much more plausible.

But if, by asserting certain empirical facts, we render an *ontology* defensible, we must acknowledge that we were unclear at the outset which conditions an adequate ontology must meet. It appears now that certain empirical facts are breaking into the tribunal of reason, deciding on the success and failure of philosophical theories.<sup>16</sup> This would not worry a Quinean 'philosopher'. But it most certainly should worry a Heideggerian ontologist or anyone else who thinks that ontology is an enterprise distinct from those which explore 'ontic', or 'non-philosophical', fact.

The Heideggerian ontologist appears to face an awkward dilemma. If he accepts the PCH, it is unclear that he can accommodate hallucination within his ontology. But if he attacks the PCH, he endangers the 'ontic-ontological distinction' upon which the construction of that ontology is premised. Exactly how one should understand Heidegger's ontic-ontological distinction is a tricky question.<sup>17</sup> But the aspect of its character which concerns us here is

<sup>16</sup> One natural option that I may appear to have ignored is the claim that a rejection of the PCH is an *ontological* proposal. But the difficulties I am about to discuss raise the question of whether we know what kind of claim an ontological claim is.

<sup>17</sup> One might compare it with established philosophical distinctions such as essence/existence and a Kantian transcendental/empirical but Heidegger specifically rejects such comparisons for reasons I will not go into here.

that, roughly speaking, it distinguishes the domain within which the philosopher does her work from that in which the non-philosopher does his.<sup>18</sup> It should be clear now why I suggested earlier that the philosopher may have good reason to retain the PCH. If the only plausible way of rejecting the PCH is to treat one's critical charge as an empirical one, and if this form of rejection raises doubts about what an ontology is meant to achieve, the philosopher who retains the PCH rejects a threat to the integrity of one of his principal offices, that of ontologist.

We may have arrived at doubts about the Heideggerian concept of ontology by an unexpected route. But that hallucination raises such doubts perhaps should come as no surprise. We have seen some of the problems which are faced by the effort to extend Heidegger's ontology to take in the possibility of hallucination. But also, approached from the other direction, as it were, it is very unclear how *other* types of inquiry which we take, *prima facie*, to shed light on the nature of hallucination can be understood within the framework provided by Heidegger's ontology. In particular, psychological inquiry into the aetiology of hallucination finds no obvious place within that framework.

Although hallucination is an aspect of perception which attracts the interest of philosophers and psychologists, Heidegger, through his ontic-ontological distinction, has sought to maintain a profound distinction between the sciences and his ontological inquiries. To Quineans, Heidegger's insistence on an ontic-ontological distinction will appear a confused, retrogressive move. It extracts him from a direct confrontation with scientific psychological insight, a confrontation which ontologists like Descartes were spared by the simple fact that scientific psychology, in anything like the form we know it, is a post-Cartesian development. An ontic-ontological distinction would allow Heidegger to reattain this state of blissful indifference but, from a Quinean point of view, would do so only through a hopeless denial of three centuries of scientific progress.

The Quinean is, of course, only one perspective and Heidegger *has* reasons for 'bracketing' the achievements of psychology. He

<sup>18</sup> Attempts to rationalize such a distinction have been subject to much criticism during this century. Quine's attack on the analytic/synthetic distinction and Davidson's on form/content spring to mind. Heidegger himself may have had some influence on comparable criticisms that have emerged elsewhere and this may have something to do with his own subsequent move away from the relatively traditional-sounding ontological claims of *Being and Time*. A useful discussion of this possibility can be found in H. Dreyfus and J. Haugeland, 'Husserl and Heidegger: Philosophy's Last Stand', in M. Murray, *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy* (Yale, 1978).

wishes to look at *Dasein* 'prior to, outside of and despite all theory' (MFL 198 quoted above) and suspects that the human sciences, *as normally conceived of*, rest upon an uncritical naturalistic metaphysic.<sup>19</sup> However, if one is to avoid seeing Heidegger as some kind of anti-scientific sentimentalist, the achievements of the human sciences must somehow be *reintegrated* into the picture he offers, even if they must be substantially reinterpreted so as to free them of the taint of naturalism. Nevertheless, it is very unclear how that can be done.

Heidegger has a place set aside for the natural sciences. They and their discoveries are to be integrated into his general account of our active engagements with the entities we encounter.<sup>20</sup> But those sciences which attempt to analyse the basis of those engagements appear to trespass on ground set aside for ontology. Our present case illustrates this difficulty. Many people's best guess at our best hope of explaining hallucination would be that it lies in some kind of causal explanation of the nature of perception. However, Heidegger's argument that we must be thought of as *Dasein*, an entity essentially acquainted with other entities, in order to understand the existence of the phenomenon of subjectivity seems to exclude the possibility of the kind of deeper understanding which, for example, causal theories of perception seek.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, the incompatibility of Heidegger's perspective and a hazily-conceived scientific theory premised upon a naturalistic metaphysic is no refutation of Heidegger, especially as he offers specific reasons for thinking that metaphysical naturalism is flawed. But even if one were to accept Heidegger's perspective, the problem that would remain is that of giving a plausible reconstruction of what are, at least *prime facie*, the insights of scientific disciplines inspired by the metaphysic that we are rejecting.<sup>22</sup>

The bearing of Heidegger's thought on psychology has, of course, been examined and this has led to the development of several perspectives which may cast light on hallucination. However, for two reasons, these perspectives are of little assistance in

<sup>19</sup> In this paper, I will not worry about the different forms that naturalism can take.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. n. 4 above.

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger's own account, which emphasizes the role of our projects, does not *explain* subjectivity, as the possession of such projects is an aspect of our being *Dasein*. This account must be understood as a *descriptive* fleshing-out of what subjectivity amounts to.

<sup>22</sup> In a fascinating set of lectures given in 1929/30 (published as Part 2, Chs. 3–5 of M. Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, trans. W. McNeill and N. Walker (Indiana, 1995)), Heidegger examines

helping us to see how the relationship of Heideggerian ontology, naturalistically-minded psychological theory and the possibility of hallucination is to be understood. First, the approaches Heidegger has, in part, inspired have inherited his antipathy towards naturalism and consequently see naturalistic approaches as confused or as yielding results far less significant than their advocates suppose. The schools of thought in question do not feel the need to accommodate what I described as 'many people's best guess at our best hope of explaining hallucination' because their concern is to point out how misguided that guess is. This is, of course, an approach that one might take and I have attempted merely to show that there is an issue here to which some approach or other must be adopted. Secondly, these schools have been selective in what they have taken over from the early Heideggerian outlook. In particular, there is little evidence of a commitment to a distinct ontological enterprise of the sort Heidegger pursues or to a project of making sense of hallucination which would be in line with the PCH. If anything, the development that these approaches have offered of Heideggerian ideas points to a tension between those ideas and others in whose presence they were originally formulated.

Heidegger's influence was apparent in the emergence of existential psychotherapy and in the rise of a hermeneutic approach within psychology in the 1980s. Echoing Heidegger's insistence on the primacy of Being-in-the-world, a theme common to these schools of thought is that mental phenomena should be seen not as residing within the individual (as the Cartesian supposes) but rather as shaped, from the ground up, by group processes and broader social, cultural and historical factors. A further tenet of this kind of psycho-sociology of experience<sup>23</sup> is that reality is 'constructed',

<sup>23</sup> My presentation here of 'this approach' is unavoidably over-simplified and cannot hope to do justice to the heterogeneous views which I am lumping together.

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how we should understand animal behaviour. Since this is an area lying between, so to speak, the intentional and the straight-forwardly physiological, one might suppose that one would find here an account of how one could reconceptualize the findings of naturalistically-inspired approaches to the intentional within a Heideggerian framework. However, Heidegger's main concern here is, once again, to challenge the adequacy of 'the prevailing mechanistic and physicalist approach to nature' (p. 260). Although Heidegger discusses the work of several biologists whose work he sees as pointing towards a more adequate perspective, it is unclear to me at the moment how one might develop the ideas that these lectures present so as to reinterpret results arrived at through naturalistic approaches.

that what we see as real is not a matter of simple, observable fact but is instead a reflection of localized practices of inquiry and criticism, formally- and informally-instituted.<sup>24</sup> It is by reference to this rich background that we condemn certain beliefs as 'delusional' and endorse others as 'reflective of reality'.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, this approach may cast light on hallucinations considered as a source of delusional beliefs.

But the prospects of this new perspective shedding light on our understanding of hallucinations as positive perceptual experiences seem, *prima facie*, less promising. This is an aspect of our mental life in which we feel most immediately confronted by a determinate reality, an intimate confrontation beyond the reach of the seemingly distant influence of group processes, cultural milieu and the like. Having said that, there is a distinct ring of philosophical naivety about this attitude to perception. It appears to be informed by a vision of perception which breaks that process down into the 'acquisition of data' and its subsequent 'interpretation', a 'pure beholding' and its cognitive elaboration. Unacknowledged positivist prejudice, which sees the objects of perception as given, seems to be at work here.

Whether the development of a psycho-sociology of belief into a psycho-sociology of perception is viable is a question I cannot hope to resolve here. However, a feature I do wish to point out, a feature of the intellectual landscape in which we are now moving and which I can sketch only rather hazily, is that the 'positivist' vision of perception described above (which, if adopted, would block the projected development) also appears to underpin the PCH, with its rather one-dimensional depiction of hallucination as the dropping of anomalous material into the in-tray of perception. If 'perception' is the name not of a single, unified phenomenon but of a heterogeneous confluence of forces, varying from one socio-historical context to the next, we will be forced to adopt a conception of 'perceptual aberration' which is far richer than that which is illustrated by the minimalist PCH. Clearly, the PCH is a legitimate target but we have already noted the collateral damage that attacking the PCH can inflict on our concept of a Heideggerian ontology. It may seem odd that this psycho-sociological approach, which is inspired by Heidegger's work, should depend upon a conception of hallucination antithetical to his ontological project. But this ironic outcome could be seen as a legacy of

<sup>24</sup> This stance leads to the bracketing of the assumptions of the naturalistic, scientific world-picture as merely localized, cultural products.

<sup>25</sup> Something like this thought can also be found in Boss' work. Cf., e.g., *Psychoanalysis and Daseinanalysis* (Basic Books, 1963), pp. 226–229.

a tension within Heidegger's thought. If one adopts a constructivism so radical as to break even sensory perception up into an array of heterogeneous 'practices', it becomes unclear what content talk of 'immutable structures of human reality' can retain.

Heidegger argues that his Existential Analytic yields an ontology without which the phenomenon of subjectivity will never be understood. Only through his concept of *Dasein* can the essentially relating nature of the subject make sense. According to Heidegger, the non-cognitive comportment towards entities which we have by virtue of our being essentially active entities possessed of projects is what allows knowledge to be knowledge *of* anything and, with knowledge construed now as a *founded mode* of Being-in-the-world, the sceptical problem of how the Subject can reach out to Objects disappears.

Heidegger *is* surely right to criticize the Cartesian ontology. Whether Heidegger's ontology can accommodate the phenomena that inspired Descartes to adopt his flawed ontology is another question, the question this paper has addressed. Section 2 argued that the rejection of representational mediation does not imply the acceptance of an understanding of perception as 'pure beholding', an understanding which would rule out the possibility of error. A third possibility is an account according to which there are procedures one must follow in order to arrive at the truth. But while Heidegger can accommodate straight-forward error, the same is less clearly true of hallucination.

Section 3 examined a number of ways in which one might attempt such an accommodation. But, of the options discussed, none were both clearly intelligible and without problematic implications. Boss' account of hallucination requires us to make sense of essential features which lapse 'in specific ways' and it seems doubtful whether one can make sense of such features. Another strategy is to challenge the eminently-challengeable Precritical Conception of Hallucination, which appears to underpin most philosophical thought about hallucination. Nevertheless, it is unclear how one can challenge the PCH without raising doubts about the ontological project as a whole.

In the final section, we have seen the question, 'What is hallucination?' stray backwards and forwards across the distinction between philosophy and psychology, raising the suspicion that we do not know which facts, what 'evidence', an adequate ontology must accommodate. The fundamental reason why this suspicion cannot be allayed may be that there *is* no distinctive enterprise that we can call 'ontology'. Whether that is true or not, our inability to

specify conditions of adequacy for an ontology clearly raises doubts about the possibility of answering the question, 'What are the relative merits of Cartesian and Heideggerian ontologies?', because it seems that we do not know what merits and demerits an ontology should have. It seems that we do not know what hallucination *is*, in the sense, at least, that we do not know how philosophy is to address it.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> I would like to thank Tom Baldwin, Renford Bambrough, Michael Tanner and Anthony O'Hear for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.