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BEYOND THE TOOLS OF THE TRADE: HEIDEGGER AND THE INTELLIGIBILITY OF EVERYDAY THINGS

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ABSTRACT: In everyday life, we constantly encounter and deal with useful things without pausing to inquire about the sources of their intelligibility. In Div. I of *Being and Time*, Heidegger undertakes just such an inquiry. According to a common reading of Heidegger's analysis, the intelligibility of our everyday encounters and dealings with useful things is ultimately constituted by practical self-understandings (such as being a gardener, shoemaker, teacher, mother, musician, or philosopher). In this paper, I argue that while such practical self-understandings may be sufficient to constitute the intelligibility of the tools and equipment specific to many practices, these "tools of the trade" are only a small portion of the things we encounter, use, and deal with on a daily basis. Practical self-understandings cannot similarly account for the intelligibility of the more mundane things—like toothbrushes and sidewalks—used in everyday life. I consider whether an anonymous self-understanding as "one," "anyone," or "no one in particular" —*das Man*— might play this intelligibility-constituting role. In examining this possibility, another type of self-understanding comes to light: cultural identities. I show that the cultural identities into which we are "thrown," rather than practical identities or *das Man*, constitute the intelligibility of the abundance of mundane things that fill our everyday lives. Finally, I spell out how this finding bears on our understanding of Heidegger's notion of authenticity.

1. INTRODUCTION

We are all constantly using things, no matter who we are or how we live.[1] Carpenters, for example, do their work using their "tools of the trade," as

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[1] In this paper, I use the colloquial "things" in the sense Heidegger uses "*Zeug*" in *Being and Time*. "*Zeug*" is usually translated as "equipment," but this translation is far too narrow given what counts as *Zeug*. The same is true of even broader terms, such as "instruments" or "paraphernalia." The sidewalk, for instance, counts as *Zeug*, but it does not easily fit under any

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do gardeners, shoemakers, teachers, fathers, musicians, and philosophers. In our everyday lives, we do not typically stop to ask ourselves how useful things are intelligible to us as the useful things they are. Instead, common items, such as pen and paper, simply show themselves as useful as we go about our daily business, taking the intelligibility of the things we use for granted. Division I of *Being and Time* is, among other things, a close look at our everyday dealings with useful things in order to identify the sources of their intelligibility.

In this paper, I offer an amendment to the interpretation of Heidegger that holds that the intelligibility of our everyday encounters and dealings with useful things is constituted by practical self-understandings (such as being a gardener, shoemaker, teacher, mother, or philosopher). I do not wish to deny the role that such practical self-understandings do in fact play in constituting the intelligibility of the tools and equipment used in many practices. Instead, I want to draw attention to the fact that these "tools of the trade" make up only a very small portion of the things we encounter, use, and deal with on a daily basis. No matter our practical self-understanding, we all make use of a multitude of things: personal hygiene products, clothing and footwear, furniture, personal or familial dwellings, public buildings, various mechanisms of personal or public transportation, eating utensils, and so much more.

The secondary literature on *Being and Time*, however, fails to discuss such items in the context of the self-understandings that constitute their intelligibility. While practical self-understandings are helpful when it comes to understanding the intelligibility of "tools of the trade," I argue that they cannot similarly account for the intelligibility of the more mundane things used in everyday life. Self-understandings such as being a gardener, for example, may account for the intelligibility of the gardener's use of spades, hoes, shovels, kneelers, gloves, and wheelbarrows, but they cannot do the same for the gardener's use of a toothbrush. I next consider whether an anonymous self-understanding as "one," "anyone," or "no one in particular" —*das Man*— might play this intelligibility-constituting role. In examining this possibility, another type of self-understanding comes to light: cultural identities. I show that the cultural identities into which we are "thrown," rather than practical identities or *das Man*, constitute the intelligibility of the abundance of mundane things that fill our everyday lives. Cultural identities are thus aspects of

of the narrower labels. Even the sun counts as *Zeug*, Heidegger tells us, since it is used in order to mark time (Heidegger 1967, 71, 103–4, 412–13). I will speak of useful "things," and sometimes "tools" or "equipment" when appropriate.

Citations of *Being and Time* include page numbers from the German edition, which are provided in both English translations. My translations follow the translation of Macquarrie and Robinson's *Being and Time*, with some modifications.

ourselves that authenticity requires us to appropriate or own up to. To do so would be to own up to being the ground of the intelligibility of the world—and the mundane things in it.

2. PRACTICAL IDENTITIES

Heidegger argues that everyday useful things show up to us as they do because, in our practical engagements with them, we act for the sake of ourselves as an end or purpose in virtue of which such things are understood. While our everyday engagement with things is undertaken in order to accomplish various tasks, accomplishing these tasks is ultimately "for the sake of being a kind of agent, realizing a possible way of being" human (Okrent 2007, 165). Such an end amounts to "some self-conception or self-interpretation, some particular way" in which we understand who we are. This self-understanding is supposed to ground or anchor the intelligibility of the everyday things we encounter and deal with in the world (Okrent 2000, 47).[2]

What sorts of self-understandings serve as the ends or purposes, which Heidegger labels "for-the-sakes-of-which," that ground the intelligibility of useful things? Most interpreters take the relevant self-understandings to track explicit and determinate social roles—in using gardening, shoemaking, teaching, coaching, music, and philosophy tools, for example, we act for the sake of being gardeners, shoemakers, teachers, coaches, musicians, and philosophers, respectively. Mark Okrent and Steven Crowell have appealed to Christine Korsgaard's concept of "practical identity" to help articulate and communicate this idea.[3] A practical identity is "a description under which you value yourself and in terms of which you find life worth living" (Korsgaard 1996, 101). For most of us, "a jumble of such conceptions" are in play (101). For example, someone might be characterized as a father, a teacher, and a professional philosopher. Despite Korsgaard's characterization, such practical

[2] According to Heidegger, relations of intelligibility are holistic such that particular items of equipment are only intelligible in virtue of holistic constellations of intelligibility. Useful things such as a gardening shovel are not intelligible in isolation, but rather as part of a constellation of related equipment appropriately used in order to accomplish various gardening tasks. Heidegger calls such holistic constellations of intelligibility "worlds." More specialized worlds, such as the world of gardening, are subsumed in a broader, public world. Worlds, according to Heidegger, are grounded or anchored in human self-understandings, the for-the-sakes-of-which under discussion in this paper. Due to considerations of space and presentation, and because it does not compromise my argument, Heidegger's notion of worlds and the holistic nature of intelligibility do not play much of a role in this paper.

[3] Many interpreters who do not explicitly invoke "practical identity" discuss for-the-sakes-of-which in a manner which is consistent with Korsgaard's idea: for example, "being a homemaker," "*being* a father," "*being* a professor" (Dreyfus 1991, 95), "being a doctoral student in German, being a simultaneous interpreter, being a commercial translator" (Blattner 1999, 40). I intend for the arguments in this paper to cover these views as well.

identities are not merely jumbled—they can be hierarchically ordered. For example, I may be a baseball coach for the sake of being a father, or a teacher for the sake of being a professional philosopher.

How are practical identities supposed to ground the intelligibility of everyday things? Everyday things, on this interpretation of Heidegger, are constituted as what they are, and understood to be so, on the basis of the actions they are appropriately used in order to carry out. A gardening shovel is something it is appropriate to use in order to dig small holes in a garden, while a baseball pitching machine is something it is appropriate to use to facilitate batting practice. The appropriate use of something can only be determined if the action being carried out is specified. If I intend to dig holes in order to plant hydrangeas in a client's front yard, it is appropriate to use a garden shovel—in conjunction with a constellation of other instruments such as gloves and a kneeler—in order to do so. If it is unclear what action I intend to carry out, one cannot say what would be appropriate to use in order to do so.[4] Specifying the action being carried out, however, requires that there be an end for the sake of which it is being carried out. My action is understood as planting hydrangeas only if it is understood as carried out for the sake of, say, creating or maintaining a garden. Heidegger conceives of such for-the-sakes-of-which as possible understandings of *myself* as an end. So, instead of understanding the for-the-sake-of-which just mentioned as creating a garden, Heidegger would articulate it as being a gardener.[5] On this view, the intelligibility of the shovel as a shovel is

[4] It could be that it is clear I intend to carry out one of a range of actions (some gardening action), and so a range of equipment might be identified as appropriate (some sort of gardening equipment). Though with less specificity, this still links the appropriateness of useful things to the specification of actions.

There is a question as to how actions should be individuated in such specifications. The gardener's action could be variously individuated as digging holes in order to plant hydrangeas in a client's front yard, beautifying a client's garden, gardening, etc. Are such specifications arbitrary? Though I do not want to spend too much time addressing this question, which is relevant to *any* interpretation of Heidegger's position, it seems that the individuation of the action must be specific enough to yield the appropriateness of the particular items of equipment that are being used. A gardening shovel is indeed appropriate to use in the activity of beautifying a client's garden, but so are a number of other gardening implements that would not be appropriate for digging holes to plant hydrangeas. This suggests that there is a principled response to the question of how to individuate actions on this view.

[5] In this paper, I am assuming that "for-the-sakes-of-which" are properly understood and formulated in terms that are familiar as possible self-understandings, such as being a gardener rather than maintaining a garden. While we are familiar with the fact that people understand themselves as gardeners, it is perhaps harder to see how people might understand *themselves*, rather than their actions, as maintaining a garden. The latter, unlike the former, does not strike us as a possible answer to a question about *who* one is; nonetheless, it is the sort of answer Heidegger seems to give in *Being and Time*. The following is one of the few examples in which Heidegger specifies a for-the-sake-of-which: "With the towards-which of

ultimately constituted in virtue of some particular way in which I understand myself—a practical identity such as being a gardener—as that for the sake of which actions are appropriately carried out with it.

Practical identities, however, are not suited to constitute the intelligibility of most everyday things, beyond the tools of the trade. Imagine that the gardener in the previous example is also a father. He often goes to the local supermarket, let's say, in order to buy food to cook dinner for his children. He does this for the sake of being a (good) father, a practical identity. Now let us ask how this father gets to the grocery store. If he lives in a suburb of Los Angeles, he likely drives to the grocery store. If he lives in New York City, however, it is more likely he walks, takes a cab, or rides the subway. Each of these possibilities involves encountering and dealing with different constellations of useful things. The Los Angeles father encounters and deals with garages, car keys, car doors, bucket seats, seat belts, garage doors, garage door openers, driveways, an outmoded tape deck or FM radio, turn signals, city roads, highways, exit ramps, traffic signals, parking lots, etc. The New York City father encounters and deals with elevators, elevator buttons, apartment lobbies, crowded city streets, sidewalks, pedestrian walk signals, crosswalks, Metrocards, turnstiles, subway cars, his iPhone or Kindle, etc. Facts about these cities may explain why each father encounters different constellations of useful things. But how do we account for the intelligibility of these different constellations of useful things? If for-the-sakes-of-which ultimately constitute the intelligibility of useful things, what for-the-sakes-of-which account for the intelligibility of these different constellations of useful things? Can the practical identity of being a father play this role in both cases?

We should be clear that this question concerns not only the intelligibility of things *used*, but also the intelligibility of things *encountered* but not used. It

subservience it can have its involvement; for example, *with* this at-hand entity, which we therefore call a hammer, it has involvement amidst hammering; with this it has its involvement amidst fastening; with this amidst shelter against storm; and this 'is' for the sake of the accommodation [*Unterkommens*] of Dasein, that is to say, for the sake of a possibility of its being" (1967, 84). Heidegger specifies the for-the-sake-of-which in this example as "*des Unterkommens des Daseins*," which means "seeking shelter" or "accommodation" (84). Dreyfus discusses this example below: "In Heidegger's famous example one exercises the skill of hammering in order to fasten pieces of wood together towards building a house, but ultimately for the sake of being a carpenter" (1996b, n. 3). Dreyfus, as is the norm among interpreters, specifies the for-the-sake-of-which as being a carpenter, which does not strike me as a possible interpretation of "*des Unterkommens des Daseins*" (84). In the following passage, Heidegger again gives us reason to doubt the common understanding of for-the-sakes-of-which: "The for-the-sakes-of seeking shelter, sustenance, and livelihood [*Das Umwillen des Unterkommens, des Unterhalts, des Fortkommens*] are Dasein's nearest and constant possibilities..." (298). In this paper, I adopt the standard interpretation of for-the-sakes-of-which and leave the questions raised by these passages for another investigation.

might seem that Heidegger claims that we understand ourselves only in virtue of some for-the-sake-of-which when we *use* such everyday things, but his claim is in fact much stronger. Heidegger claims that we understand ourselves in virtue of some for-the-sake-of-which in simply *encountering* useful things *as intelligible*. We do not have to use or engage with things in order to find them intelligible as useful things. When I encounter a hammer, it is not simply the case that a hunk of wood and metal is present in my vicinity. Rather, I encounter the hammer as a hammer if it shows up to me as appropriately used in order to accomplish various tasks, regardless of whether I actually use the hammer to accomplish these tasks. To encounter something useful is for it to show up to me as intelligible as the useful thing that it is. And this intelligibility is supposed to be grounded in a for-the-sake-of-which, some particular way in which I understand myself.

In thinking about how useful things show up to us as they do, we must also remember that the issue is their *intelligibility*, not the *reasons* that motivate our use of them. In *Being and Time*, the for-the-sake-of relation grounds a hierarchy of *intelligible-in-virtue-of* relations. This is easy to lose sight of for two reasons. First, our ordinary understanding of "acting for the sake of" suggests that the actor is motivated by the end, or reason, for the sake of which she acts. I might temper criticism of a friend's journal article for the sake of our friendship, or work an eighty-hour week in order to finish a project for the sake of my career. In such cases, the for-the-sake-of relation clearly expresses reasons that motivate my actions. This will not always be the case on Heidegger's view. The second reason it is difficult to maintain our focus on the question of intelligibility is that relations of intelligibility do often express reasons that motivate action. A hammer is *intelligible as* appropriately used in order to nail two pieces of wood together, among other tasks, and nailing two pieces of wood together is a *reason* for using a hammer. But there are cases in which relations of intelligibility and reasons come apart—and these are precisely the cases in which we are interested here.

The practical identity of being a father does render the task of feeding one's children intelligible, but it seems to have very little bearing on the intelligibility of the useful things one encounters and deals with in the process. It is because fathers act for the sake of the practical identity of being a father that the act of grocery shopping is intelligible as procuring food to feed their children rather than, say, stockpiling for the apocalypse. Such a practical identity may have a bearing on the reasons fathers have for taking one or another mode of transportation to the grocery store: a father should not leave his children unsupervised, and so this may give him a reason to take particular modes of transportation that will accommodate them. Being a

father may also give him a reason to take a reasonably safe mode of transportation, so as not to leave his children unsupervised in a more permanent sense. Though such a practical identity may articulate reasons that factor into a father's choices in these ways, this does not mean it serves to constitute the intelligibility of the various constellations of useful things encountered and dealt with themselves.

It is neither this practical identity nor the act of feeding one's children that constitutes the intelligibility of garages, car keys, driveways, turn signals, city roads, highways, exit ramps, sidewalks, crosswalks, Metrocards, turnstiles, subway cars, and Kindles. These useful things are what they are as appropriately used in order to carry out various activities that go well beyond those made intelligible by the for-the-sake-of-which of being a father. The fifteen-year-old grocery store cashier might appropriately make use of the same sidewalk as our New York City father, but she uses it in order to get back and forth between her school and job. It seems that she traverses this sidewalk, say, for the sake of being a student or being a grocery store cashier. Many others use this busy sidewalk every day, and most of them seem to act for the sake of something other than the for-the-sakes-of-which identified so far. Indeed, the intelligibility of such mundane stuff seems to swing free of the sorts of practical identities discussed by interpreters. Teachers, homemakers, fathers, professors, graduate students, simultaneous interpreters, commercial translators, gardeners, shoemakers, and philosophers will appropriately get to the grocery store in a range of intelligible ways if they live in New York City and in another range of intelligible ways if they live in the suburbs of Los Angeles. The intelligibility of the things they use and encounter along the way seems to have very little to do with their practical identities.

The insufficiency of practical identities as for-the-sakes-of-which becomes even more apparent when we note that the list of things encountered and made use of by the fathers in our example hardly scratches the surface of the useful things we encounter and deal with every day. At the moment I open my eyes to start my day, for example, I see the ceiling and ceiling fan illuminated by sunlight peeking through curtains, feel the pillow beneath my head and the sheets and bed beneath my body, hear and then slam my hand against the alarm clock sitting on the bedside table, hear the rattle of the knick-knacks stored in the bedside table drawer, place my feet on the rug next to the bed, walk along the hardwood floors, trip over a book, turn a doorknob, and walk through a doorway into the bathroom. I then use a toothbrush and toothpaste, mouthwash, floss (sometimes), a waste basket, a mirror, faucets and sink, toilet, shower curtain, various cleansers, a towel and bathmat, and open a dresser drawer to select particular types of clothing to

put on. Even this list does not come close to covering the abundance of intelligible stuff encountered and used in this 15 to 20 minute period of my day, but it should suffice to suggest the enormous role such stuff plays in our everyday existence.

As already noted, these sorts of mundane, everyday things, however, are rarely discussed in the literature.[6] Instead, things like gardening equipment, shoemaking equipment, and the trappings of scholarly existence are discussed:

> . . . one acts so as to produce fruit and flowers only if one is a gardener, that is, only if one intends oneself as a gardener and intends the world as gardeners do. My dog acts as dogs act, but humans act as gardeners act, or shoemakers, or professors. So every act of gardening is, Heidegger believes, an implicit affirmation of oneself as a certain type of person, a gardener . . . I engage in gardening acts for the sake of my being a gardener. (Okrent 2007, 164)

Such discussions leave us with a gap. If I engage in gardening acts for the sake of being a gardener, for the sake of being who or what do I engage in the act of, say, brushing my teeth? Perhaps for the sake of being a gardener, shoemaker, professor, or the like—bad breath and unsightly teeth are at least somewhat of an impediment to enacting these practical identities, as is the intense pain and missed work that can result from lack of dental care. If I indeed brush my teeth for-the-sake-of one of these practical identities, would that make it an "act of gardening, shoemaking, or professing," an implicit affirmation of myself as a gardener, shoemaker, or professor? Manifestly not. Brushing my teeth is an act of personal hygiene. Furthermore, given that we all have multiple practical identities (for example, one could be a father,

[6] Though these sorts of mundane things, beyond the tools of the trade, are sometimes discussed, I have not seen them discussed in the context of the for-the-sakes-of-which that constitute their intelligibility. In the following passage, for example, David Cerbone discusses cars, stores, computers, tables, forks, knives, and the like: "Though the college professor and the business mogul may not feel an especially great affinity for each other, they can both make themselves understood to one another with respect to their particular pursuits and find a great deal of commonality and overlap in their overall ways of life (both may drive cars, shop in stores, have computers, speak English, eat at a table, use a fork and knife and so on)" (Cerbone 2008, 42). These everyday things come up in the context of a discussion about how different worlds are related and accessible to each other. Cerbone's point is that the world of the professor and the world of the business mogul must be "parts of a larger public space of familiarity and intelligibility," the public world in which cars, stores, and the like are accessible to anyone (42). I am concerned with asking the question of what grounds this public intelligibility. At this point in Cerbone's discussion, his focus is on worlds, not the for-the-sakes-of-which that can play this intelligibility-grounding role. Later, Cerbone grounds this public intelligibility in *das Man*: "Useful things, along with the rest of the everyday world, are thus constituted by a kind of anonymous understanding, available to anyone and everyone whose world it is" (50). In §4, I argue that cultural identities, instead of *das Man*, play this intelligibility-grounding role.

baseball coach, shoemaker, husband, friend, activist, etc.), how would we determine which practical identity is that for-the-sake-of-which we brush our teeth? It could be that my aim of offering the most pleasant customer interactions of any shoemaker around gives me a reason that motivates me to brush my teeth more often than I otherwise would, but that does not mean being a shoemaker is the for-the-sake-of-which that constitutes the intelligibility of the act of brushing my teeth and of the dental paraphernalia with which I do so. If not for the sake of being a gardener, shoemaker, or professor, perhaps I regularly tend to my own dental hygiene for the sake of being a dentist or dental hygienist? This would be absurd, except in those cases where being a dentist or being a dental hygienist corresponds with my practical identity. Even in these cases, however, it would be false. Such dental paraphernalia, it seems, is intelligible as appropriate for people of any practical identity to use, regardless of how practical identities correspond to the reasons we have for using it.

As a further reason to doubt that practical identities constitute the intelligibility of all mundane things, note that if I were living in another time, or in certain other places, I would encounter quite different stuff as useful, or at least different varieties of the stuff I encounter now. The variances in the constellations of useful things encountered in another time and/or place would not necessarily correspond to variances in practical identities. Twenty-first century philosophers find themselves in the midst of different dental paraphernalia than Ancient Greek philosophers, yet both identify with the practical identity of being a philosopher. Of course, this practical identity has developed and changed over the centuries. Today, for instance, being a (professional) philosopher involves certain administrative responsibilities that were foreign to the identity in earlier times. Thus, the identity of being a (professional) philosopher involves an administrative component. At the same time, a range of paraphernalia has been used to clean teeth over the course of history, and prehistory, including chew sticks, tree twigs, bird feathers, animal bones, and porcupine quills. Yet, while the practical identity of being a philosopher has changed over time, it would be a stretch to think it has changed in ways corresponding to dental practices, rendering these developments in dental paraphernalia intelligible. Seeing things this way requires us to think this of *all* other practical identities, which borders on the absurd. Some changes, such as the administrative component of being a modern philosopher, are internal to such a practical identity. Other changes, such as the developments and innovation in dental hygiene and paraphernalia, are external to practically identifying as a philosopher. How should we understand such developments in the intelligibility of mundane useful things?

3. FOR THE SAKE OF *DAS MAN*

One might think Heidegger gives us the resources to account for the intelligibility of mundane things like toothbrushes and sidewalks without having to appeal to practical identities. Indeed, Heidegger tells us that "in an everyday manner," we are "for the sake of *das Man*" (129). So perhaps *das Man*—an anonymous self-understanding that "determines the typical correct ways of behaving, use of instruments, and ends to be achieved"—is the for-the-sake-of-which in virtue of which mundane useful things are understood (Okrent 1988, 50). Perhaps in using such mundane stuff, we understand ourselves not according to any particular practical identity, but as "one," "anyone," or "no one in particular." *Everyone* brushes their teeth (well, everyone should), but only gardeners use kneelers. While using a kneeler is intelligible as an act of gardening, perhaps brushing one's teeth is not intelligible as an act specific to any practical identity, but as what it is appropriate for "anyone" or "everyone" to do. If I take the subway to the grocery store, perhaps the fact that this is simply what "one" does renders this intelligible. While we understand ourselves according to practical identities in dealing with various "tools of the trade," perhaps dealing with more mundane things only requires us to understand ourselves as "someone."

To account for the intelligibility of mundane things in this manner, we must be clear about the role *das Man* plays in self-understanding. *Das Man*-ish self-understanding is often localized to practical identities. For example, Steven Crowell tells us that practical identities are:

> . . . roles and socially recognized practices into which I have been born and according to the norms of which I must act if I am to be recognized as acting at all. So deeply do these socially recognized practices inhere in my everyday way of being that Heidegger can say that ordinarily the actor is not "I myself" but "the one" (*das Man*): in being for the sake of a given possibility (for instance, a carpenter), I do so as "one" does. (Crowell 2007, 319–20)

A practical identity such as being a carpenter should strike us as a strange example of the *das Man*-ish phenomenon characterized by Crowell. Is carpentry a socially recognized practice into which we are born? Does carpentry inhere in my everyday way of being so deeply as to take over my being, to act for me? This might be the case if I come from a long line of carpenters and was raised, from the cradle, to be a master carpenter. But for most of us, this is far from the case. In my everyday way of being, I very rarely act according to the norms of carpentry and, luckily for me, I do not need to do so to be recognized as acting at all. Instead, I am born into the practice of, and must act in light of the norms of, among other things, *using the products*

created by carpenters. Using chairs, tables, doors, and houses—not building them—inheres deeply in my everyday way of being. The most relevant and interesting ways in which we do as "one" does, that is, have little to do with acting for the sake of being a carpenter or any other practical identity.[7] Other than in very limited circles, it is not the case that "one" is a carpenter or that "one" does as a carpenter does. But it does seem to be the case that "one" sits in chairs, works and eats at tables, dwells in houses, etc.—as "one" does. It is in *using* the things created by carpenters (in addition to other mundane, useful things) that I act as "one" does. Indeed, with the exception of products of highly limited or esoteric uses, the products of carpentry are made for "one." The desk and chair at which I now sit were not made specifically for me; they were made for "no one in particular," for "anyone."[8]

Given this understanding of the role *das Man* plays in self-understanding, how should we make sense of Heidegger's claim that, "in an everyday manner," we are "for the sake of *das Man*" (129)? According to this way of thinking, when I go about my everyday business, encountering and dealing with more or less the same mundane, useful stuff that anyone encounters and deals with, it is not my practical identity that makes this stuff intelligible—I do not act for the sake of being a carpenter, gardener, shoemaker, professor, or philosopher in such dealings. I move about in a public constellation of useful things that are intelligible for "anyone," a constellation of things that *seems* to require no particular self-understanding, practical or otherwise, to ground its public intelligibility. In doing so, I understand myself as *das Man*—"one," "anyone," or "no one in particular." Thus, while I may act for the sake of being a gardener once I begin wielding the tools of gardening, in

[7] This is not to say that *das Man* is not at play in practical identities. I am simply claiming that we miss an important aspect of *das Man* if we overlook this broader role.

[8] This "anyone" is not to be taken literally. Products such as desks and chairs are indeed typically designed to be suitable for some particular group or type of people. In various cases: yuppies, right-handed people, people of a certain range of height and weight, etc. In the case of the most mundane everyday things, however, the target for such products is often taken to be something like the "average" or "typical" person or consumer—not "anyone" or "everyone" in the sense of every particular consumer, but "anyone" or "everyone" in the sense of some normative conception of a person or consumer. As I will soon argue, this understanding covers over the cultural self-understandings at play in the intelligibility of such mundane things.

Note that this means the norms of carpentry must take into account the norms of "being someone." How should a carpenter build a house? Well, how do the people for whom the house is being built live their lives? Since most houses are not designed with the specific future home owners in mind, houses tend to be built for an anonymous "one," some normative conception of a person or consumer. Ultimately, along the lines that I will soon argue, they are built for someone who lives life according to a particular cultural identity, and so the norms of carpentry must take the norms of such a cultural identity into account. This is to say that cultural identities are explanatorily prior to practical identities when it comes to accounting for the intelligibility of everyday things.

encountering and dealing with mundane things that fall outside the scope of any practical identity, I act for the sake of *das Man.*

4. *DAS MAN* AS BEDROCK AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

When *das Man* is appealed to in this manner, it is often understood as the sort of bedrock discussed by Wittgenstein, a for-the-sake-of-which beyond which we simply cannot push: "If I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: 'This is simply what I do'" (Wittgenstein 2010, §217). Dreyfus, for example, claims that distance-standing practices "are simply something that we do" (1991, 19).[9] Dreyfus and White identify this as an important aspect of human finitude: "the practices on the basis of which entities are understood cannot themselves be justified or grounded. Once a practice has been explained by appealing to what one does, no more basic justification is possible" (2005, xiii).

This may or may not be true. In either case, it leads us away from Heidegger's concerns in *Being and Time.* For Heidegger, as I discussed earlier, for-the-sakes-of-which are not primarily reasons that motivate or justify our actions. Instead, they are self-understandings that ground the *intelligibility* of our everyday encounters and dealings with useful things. They do not so much explain why we, say, use a certain type of toothbrush,[10] but rather account for how such a use is intelligible. This speaks to the second aspect of finitude that Dreyfus and White identify: that we cannot *completely* spell out or give an account which grasps such intelligibility (xiii). In light of this concern with intelligibility, we should ask the following questions: Are our everyday dealings with mundane things ultimately intelligible as "simply something that we do," simply something "one" does? Or is any more fundamental account of intelligibility, any more fundamental account of for-the-sakes-of-which, possible?

It is true that now, in contemporary times and in certain geographic areas, it is appropriate for "one" to live in subdivisions and drive to the grocery store. This is only true, however, within a very limited temporal, geographic, and cultural scope. It is appropriate for twenty-first century city-dwellers to use the sidewalk to get to and fro, but not for most rural people throughout time. The same is the case for people who continue to live in undeveloped parts of the world. In going about their everyday business appropriately using different implements, different peoples have appropriately carried out

[9] Keller and Weberman discuss similar "Wittgensteinian" views (1998).
[10] Though, as discussed, they will often be intimately connected with such matters.

different tasks and thus lived for the sake of different ways of being human—not completely or entirely different ways of being human, of course, but different nonetheless. We cannot understand all their mundane activity with useful things as for the sake of the same anonymous way of being human, *das Man*. In the end, *das Man* is not a bedrock, because it is in fact not the case that "one" or "anyone" appropriately does as we do today.

We might still try to make sense of this by appealing to *das Man*: perhaps there is a *das Man* unique to each cultural way of life. Perhaps there is a *das Man* of the suburbs and a *das Man* of the city. Perhaps there is a *das Man* of the twenty-first century for which both of these ways of life are appropriate and a *das Man* of Ancient Greece for which neither contemporary suburban nor urban life were appropriate. If this were the case, each instantiation of *das Man* would amount to a particular, distinguishable self-understanding for the sake of which mundane activities with useful things were carried out. We could say "this is simply what one does" within the scope of each self-understanding, but once we broaden the scope beyond a single instantiation of *das Man*, things would look different. Each self-understanding would amount to a way in which certain people have come to understand themselves and their way of life. Instead of practical identities, we might call such self-understandings "cultural identities."[11]

It would seem that cultural identities, rather than practical identities such as being a father, constitute the intelligibility of the particular ways our

[11] Though cultural identities have not been properly identified in the literature as for-the-sakes-of-which, a similar phenomenon has been discussed under the term "style." Hubert Dreyfus claims that "what counts as intelligibility depends upon the style of each particular cultural epoch" (2005, vii). Unfortunately, he does not locate "cultural style" in for-the-sakes-of-which. To fully appreciate our practical lives, we must locate "cultural style" in the for-the-sakes-of-which that constitute the intelligibility of our mundane dealings with useful things. I will be able to further explain and defend this claim in the conclusion of this paper. Okrent seems to suggest that such "styles of life" amount to for-the-sakes-of-which: "For Heidegger, it is only insofar as our interactions with things are implicitly organized in terms of a style of life embodied in such a 'for-the-sake-of' that we are capable of using concepts to make judgments concerning objects, or to cognize ourselves as the subject of experiences" (Okrent 2007, 151). Unfortunately, though "style of life" does seem to suggest the cultural identities I am discussing, Okrent only discusses practical identities and claims that our dealings with things are always made intelligible by some practical identity: "My dog acts as dogs act, but humans act as gardeners act, or shoemakers, or professors" (2007, 164). Crowell agrees: as humans, we are "never without some practical identity" (Crowell 2007, 321). At one point, he does seem to treat a "style of life" as a "practical identity": "So a twentieth-century German must see things as a twentieth-century German does, accepting the sorts of reasons that are characteristic of that era, and a fifth-century Christian Roman must see things as a fifth-century Christian does" (Okrent 2000, 73). Okrent appears to be discussing practical identities here, and so this passage suggests that cultural identities might count as practical identities. But all other aspects of his discussion suggest otherwise.

imaginary fathers head to the grocery store and the useful things each encounters and makes use of along the way. The father who lives in a suburb of Los Angeles exists for the sake of a certain way of being human we might provisionally articulate as being a modern suburbanite, while the New York City based father exists for the sake of another way of being human we might call being a modern city-dweller. The same goes for their children or anyone similarly located, regardless of practical identity. Cultural identities also appear to constitute the intelligibility of mundane things like dental paraphernalia. At bottom, it seems that the intelligibility of my use of a modern nylon toothbrush and some modern brand of toothpaste is constituted by a self-understanding shared by gardeners, shoemakers, professors, philosophers, and those who identify with almost any practical identity. A for-the-sake-of-which that spans most practical identities makes contemporary, Western dental paraphernalia intelligible to us contemporary Westerners. Articulating this for-the-sake-of-which is tricky business, and perhaps it can never be fully articulated. But the phrase "us contemporary Westerners" is a start. We might provisionally articulate it as something like "being a twenty-first century, Western, etc., person."

Contrary to the possibility of cultural identities, one might think it is a mistake to dislocate the cultural and practical aspects of self-understanding. For instance, we might think that the relevant for-the-sakes-of-which in the case of the fathers should be understood as being a modern suburban father and being a modern city-dwelling father. If we understand matters this way, however, we would have to understand *all* practical identities as similarly modified. Given that such modifications would have to be made across the board, and thus would have no more to do with one practical identity than another, I cannot think of a reason not to treat them as distinguishable for-the-sakes-of-which themselves. Additionally, one can understand oneself culturally as a modern city-dweller while undergoing a crisis regarding one's practical identity. It is such a cultural self-understanding that would allow one to continue to deal with useful, intelligible things despite the lack of a clear practical identity.

The claim that cultural identities are needed to account for the intelligibility of the multitude of everyday things not covered by practical identities is more than just a numerical claim, which would simply amount to the claim that *more* everyday things are explained by cultural identities than by practical identities. Though this numerical claim is true, the fact that cultural identities are *prior—explanatorily prior in the order of intelligibility*—to practical identities is much more important and interesting.[12] By showing that cultural

[12] In the conclusion of this paper, I will spell out one of the more important consequences of this priority, a consequence for our understanding of Heidegger's notion of authenticity.

identities provide a more fundamental account of intelligibility and its grounding in for-the-sakes-of-which than an appeal to *das Man* or what "one" does, I have concurrently shown them to provide a more fundamental account of intelligibility than practical identities. *Das Man* can only be taken to account for the intelligibility of mundane things that are appropriately used in ways that swing free of practical identities if it is taken to be a for-the-sake-of-which that functions at a more fundamental level—prior in the order of intelligibility—than practical identities. Showing that cultural identities give us an even more fundamental account of intelligibility than such a *das Man*-ish self-understanding thus shows that they stand in the same relation to practical identities.

One might think that the "order" of for-the-sakes-of-which should be reversed. This would involve, for example, seeing the LA based father's for-the-sake-of-which of being a modern suburbanite as itself for the sake of being a father. It is no doubt true that fatherhood often provides reasons that motivate a move to the suburbs, but that is precisely a matter of reasons and motivation, not intelligibility. Heidegger is concerned with intelligibility. Practical for-the-sakes-of-which such as being a father, gardener, shoemaker, or teacher are themselves only intelligible as ways of existing for the sake of some cultural identity, such as being a modern suburbanite. Being a father is a way of being a modern suburbanite, but not the other way around. The following discussion of thrownness will further develop this line of thinking.

5. THROWNNESS AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

I have just argued that *das Man* is not the bedrock Dreyfus and others take it to be. Our everyday dealings with mundane things are not ultimately intelligible as "simply something that we do," simply something "one" does. Cultural identities provide a more fundamental account of intelligibility, a more fundamental account of for-the-sakes-of-which, that is necessary to understand our dealings with mundane useful things. Seeing how our self-understandings are "thrown" offers more support for this view.

According to Heidegger, thrownness factors into our self-understandings by determining the for-the-sakes-of-which in virtue of which we understand our everyday dealings with things. We are "thrown into the way of being of projection," or understanding ourselves and our dealings with things in virtue of for-the-sakes-of-which (Heidegger 1967, 145). Theodore Schatzki explains this further:

> Projection [i.e., self-understanding in virtue of for-the-sakes-of-which] is thrown projection. . .. The possibilities [the human being] projects . . . are ones into which

> it is thrown. And the possibilities into which it is thrown are ones handed down in the past of its generation. . .. Life cum action has its past by way of projecting and realizing handed-down possibilities. (2003, 313)

According to this view, our self-understandings are thrown insofar as we understand ourselves in virtue of for-the-sakes-of-which that have been handed down from the past. If the self-understandings into which we have been thrown were merely practical identities, however, this would leave open the possibility that *das Man* functions as bedrock when it comes to our more mundane dealings with useful things. It may be that there is more to say, something historical to say, about gardening than that it is "simply something that we do," but this would give us nothing more to say, nothing historical to say, about mundane dealings such as brushing our teeth.

Thrownness, though, is a much more significant factor in our self-understandings in virtue of cultural identities such as being a modern suburbanite or being a modern city-dweller than practical identities like being a father or being a gardener. While the latter for-the-sakes-of-which surely do involve thrownness, self-understanding in virtue of these possibilities usually involves some degree of explicit grasp and recognition. Yet, it is typical that we at least start out understanding ourselves in virtue of the possibilities of being a modern suburbanite or being a modern city-dweller without any explicit grasp or recognition that we are doing so. If we are born into or raised in such ways of living, we will simply interpret the everyday dealings with things that make up such a way of life as "what one does." We did not choose to start projecting into this way of life, nor did we initially even recognize it as one possibility among others. We were thrown into it. It is simply how we live.[13] Yet even if we have no awareness that we are acting for the sake of the cultural self-understandings implicit in our everyday activities, such for-the-sakes-of-which are nonetheless implicit in our activities as the ground of their intelligibility. As Okrent puts it, the for-the-sake-of-which in virtue of which we understand ourselves is "implicit in the activities in which we are engaged," and the activities I carry out with useful things "betray an intentional pattern, regardless of whether or not I am explicitly conscious of

[13] This may seem only partially true, since, for instance, while I was thrown into being a suburbanite by virtue of choices made by my parents, my own choice, rather than my parents', placed me in New York City after graduating from college. Something similar is likely true of the imaginary fathers in our illustration. Yet such a view overlooks the significance of the fact that such choices can only be made from a self-understanding that makes these ways of being, rather than others, not only intelligible, but intelligible as something like default options among which to choose. Whatever we might call such a possibility—perhaps "being a modern, mobile person with the freedom to choose to dwell in either suburbs or cities"—such a choice is only intelligible and possible because I have been thrown into understanding myself from such a for-the-sake-of-which.

the end I am pursuing in those actions" (1988, 36–37). We can understand ourselves in virtue of cultural identities without doing so transparently.

These different ways of being human, cultural for-the-sakes-of-which such as being a modern suburbanite and being a modern city-dweller, are "inherited" self-understandings. Heidegger claims that they are part of a "heritage" from which we draw the for-the-sakes-of-which in virtue of which we understand ourselves and our everyday dealings with things (383). In other words, each of these cultural self-understandings has a history in virtue of which *it* is intelligible. As ways that we dwell together and organize our public and private affairs, cities have been around since well before the Common Era. Of course, they have changed significantly over time, and modern cities mostly bear the marks of the industrial revolution. Suburbs, on the other hand, first emerged on a large scale in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a result of improved railway and road transport, which led to an increase in the ability to commute. Improved transportation technology, however, only begins to hint at the factors tied up with the emergence of the suburbs. Dealing with the mundane, useful things encountered in suburban existence is ultimately made intelligible by a way of being, being a modern suburbanite, that developed historically in conjunction with various economic, material, social, political, and ideological factors that are not obvious to one thrown into this way of being.[14]

This look at thrownness reinforces the view that *das Man* does not have to function as bedrock in the way Dreyfus claims. It also explains why it might *seem* to function in this way. We can get along just fine in understanding our everyday dealings with useful things as for the sake of *das Man*; we can also push deeper into the sources of their intelligibility. If this is so, then there must be some sense in which, even in understanding our mundane dealings as for the sake of *das Man*, we ultimately and concurrently understand them as for the sake of some inherited, cultural self-understanding. To make sense of this concurrence, we must distinguish between two senses of "understand." The following passage gives us the tools to do so:

> The projecting of understanding [self-understanding in virtue of for-the-sakes-of-which] has its own possibility—that of developing itself. We call this development of understanding interpretation. In it the understanding understandingly appropriates that which is understood by it. In interpretation, understanding does not become something different. It becomes itself. (148)

Our mundane dealings with useful things are always intelligible on the basis of some cultural self-understanding. But such a self-understanding does not

[14] See Jackson 1985.

necessarily develop itself into a self-*interpretation* that appropriates what is already understood in it. Instead, this self-understanding tends to be *misinterpreted* as we go about our mundane dealings, failing to fully appropriate the cultural self-understanding for the sake of which we act and in virtue of which we already understand ourselves.

We can, however, seek to grasp the inherited, cultural self-understandings in virtue of which such mundane dealings are intelligible, and we can seek to grasp the heritage from which such for-the-sakes-of-which themselves are drawn. We can, that is, seek to interpret ourselves in such a way that we more fully develop and appropriate the self-understandings already at play in our everyday existence. It may be that we cannot *completely* spell these out, that we cannot completely grasp or appropriate them, but this is not to say that we cannot spell them out or grasp them at all. Thrownness makes it the case that we do not begin with this grasp in our mundane dealings. We do not begin with a self-understanding that we interpret in light of a cultural identity, and ultimately in light of a heritage. Instead, we have "ever already blundered into," or been caught up in, "determinate possibilities" of self-understanding by being "thrown proximally right into the publicness of *das Man*" (144, 167). This involves being thrown into the midst of mundane things that we already find useful and interpret as intelligible for "anyone." Such an interpretation, however, fails to get to the bottom of things.[15]

6. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued that readings of *Being and Time* that understand or explain for-the-sakes-of-which solely in terms of practical identities cannot

[15] I do not intend for my discussion in this paper to suggest that different ways of being human—different cultural identities—are entirely unrelated and incommensurable. If the useful things of, say, Mesopotamian civilization are intelligible to me in any way whatsoever, this must be on the basis of some for-the-sake-of-which in virtue of which I understand myself. And, indeed, there must be some sense in which Mesopotamians shared this self-understanding. Such a self-understanding would be neither the cultural identity in virtue of which I understand myself, nor the cultural identity in virtue of which Mesopotamians understood themselves, but a broader, historical understanding of what it is to be human into which both are subsumed. In making sense of the useful things of Mesopotamian civilization, I understand myself in virtue of a cultural identity in the context of my heritage, as a sort of extension or development of the Mesopotamian cultural identity. Mesopotamians understood themselves in virtue of a cultural identity that would be handed down and developed in the future. On this way of seeing things, any cultural identity would be a way of working out an understanding of what it is to be human. Yet there is no generic understanding of what it is to be human that might function as *das Man.* Instead, the broader understanding of what it is to be human would be a historical understanding that is worked out and developed throughout history. To fully make sense of this, we must put it in the context of a more thorough analysis of Heidegger's discussions of historicality and temporality. I hope to do so in a future paper.

account for the intelligibility of the vast majority of useful things, beyond the "tools of the trade," that we encounter and deal with in our everyday lives. To make sense of the intelligibility of such mundane things, we must understand the role cultural identities play as for-the-sakes-of-which—at a prior order of intelligibility—in our self-understanding. In arguing for this claim, I showed how we are thrown into interpreting ourselves in virtue of the for-the-sake-of-which of *das Man*, a public, anonymous self-understanding which determines appropriate behavior and goals. At the same time, our dealings with mundane things are ultimately intelligible in virtue of inherited, cultural self-understandings that we have failed to interpretively appropriate.

This view sheds new light on issues concerning authenticity and inauthenticity. Authenticity, according to this view, would not primarily be a matter of taking ownership of a contingent practical identity rather than foisting responsibility on *das Man*; it would not be about moving with flexibility, rather than rigidity, in virtue of the public norms that apply to one's practical identity. Instead, authenticity would be a matter of interpretively appropriating the inherited, cultural for-the-sakes-of-which in virtue of which we already understand ourselves, no matter our practical identities. This would be to newly *take ownership of* or *own up to* some aspect of ourselves; it would be to own up to that which grounds the intelligibility of our world—to *be*, in the way of interpretive appropriation, the ground of the intelligibility of the world and the mundane things in it. Though I cannot further develop this interpretation of authenticity in this paper, I hope the way has been opened for further exploration.

What I can do at this point is make good on a claim I made in note 11. There, I mentioned that though cultural identities have not been properly identified in the literature as for-the-sakes-of-which, a similar phenomenon has been discussed—primarily by Hubert Dreyfus—under the term "style." I also claimed that to fully appreciate our practical lives, we must locate cultural "style" in the for-the-sakes-of-which that constitute the intelligibility of our mundane dealings with useful things. We have now seen enough to understand that though Dreyfus and I are discussing a similar phenomenon, the crucial difference is that Dreyfus does not explicitly ground the phenomenon in our self-understandings as for-the-sakes-of-which. To discuss the issue in terms of differences in "cultural style" or "understandings of being" is not wrong, per se, but it does not take the further step of grounding these differences in our *self*-understandings (1991, 18). Failing to ground these differences in self-understanding fails to clarify their relation to authenticity—to what it is that we have to take ownership of to be authentic. Dreyfus characterizes the practices in which these styles and understandings of being are embodied as groundless, "simply something that we do" (19). If these

practices are grounded in what I call cultural identities, then Dreyfus and others who hold similar views fail to show us an important aspect of ourselves that authenticity requires us to appropriate.

Lastly, I would like to point out that this view allows *Being and Time* to speak to issues concerning the stratification and reproduction of power.[16] Particular, inherited cultural self-understandings tend to appear to be "just the way things are," leading to the perpetuation of imbalances of power in which some are advantaged and others are disadvantaged. This gives the view, just suggested, of authenticity as self-ownership a potential political significance that we miss if we focus solely on practical identities: the interpretive appropriation of cultural for-the-sakes-of-which makes possible the sort of transparency required to attempt to address imbalances of power politically. Again, all I can hope to do here is open the way for further exploration.

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[16] Dreyfus has discussed these issues by relating Heidegger's later work to Foucault's positions on power. See Dreyfus 1996a and 1990. If my view is correct, then by overlooking cultural identities, Dreyfus misses how Heidegger's focus on things *is* a focus on selves: "The history of being gives Heidegger a perspective from which to understand how in our modern world *things* have been turned into *objects*. Foucault transforms Heidegger's focus on *things* to a focus on *selves* and how they became *subjects*" (1996a, 83).

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