

The Authenticity of The Ordinary

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I. Introduction

One of the most salient and original features of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is the appeal it makes to ordinary language: "What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (*PI* §116). This appeal situates our language and concepts within the broader forms of life in which we use them so as to dispel certain idealizations that creep into our thinking. For instance, Wittgenstein links our use of the word "understanding" to the broader patterns of behaviour into which it fits—the circumstances in which we say we or someone else has understood, when we withhold ascribing understanding, what sorts of sufficiently bizarre outcomes could upset our normal use of the word, and so on—to clarify the criteria for using the word. One result of his investigation is that "understanding" cannot denote a distinct inner state or process because the criteria for using the word connect essentially with outward behaviour (see *PI* §§138–55). Wittgenstein insists that his investigation does not rely on explanations or discoveries, but simply on describing what we already know: "All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place" (*PI* §109).¹ Wittgenstein aims to dissolve philosophical confusion not by telling us anything new but by drawing our attention to features of our ordinary use of words that we have overlooked or forgotten. This appeal to ordinary language is innovative precisely in its recognition that such reminders can be philosophically fruitful at

¹ Cf. also *PI* §§89–90 and 126.

all, and that what is open to view may still elude us. We miss certain simple but crucial facts precisely because they are so obvious.²

Avrum Stroll (2002, 104) claims that Wittgenstein is the first philosopher to recognize that reminders of ordinary and obvious facts can have powerful and less-than-obvious philosophical consequences. However, Stroll seems to have forgotten about Heidegger. Heidegger's phenomenology, much like Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language, finds insight in drawing our attention to things we have passed over because they are already so familiar. For Heidegger, the entities that are most familiar to us are the ones whose significance is the most difficult to assess: "That which is ontically closest and well known, is ontologically the farthest and not known at all; and its ontological signification is constantly overlooked" (*BT* 43/69). Stroll's oversight is at least somewhat understandable. Not only does Heidegger write in a tradition that is remote from and opaque to many of the scholars interested in Wittgenstein, but both his style and ambitions seem impossibly remote from anything we might recognize as "ordinary language." Nevertheless, the similarities between Heidegger and Wittgenstein are striking, the more so for the lack of contact or shared influence between them.

Within Heidegger scholarship, comparisons with Wittgenstein have found a certain currency in developing the normative and socially constituted aspects of Heidegger's

² Gordon Baker (2004b, 263) offers a "Provisional Typology of Remarks in the *Philosophical Investigations*," which identifies three different kinds of remarks: (1) remarks on grammar (e.g. *PI* §199: "It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which only one person followed a rule"), (2) extremely general facts of nature (e.g. *PI* §142: "The procedure of putting a lump of cheese on a balance and fixing the price by the turn of the scale would lose its point if it frequently happened that such lumps suddenly grew or shrank with no obvious cause"), and (3) pictures (e.g. *PI* §194: "The possibility of a movement is supposed, rather, to be like a shadow of the movement itself"). When I talk about "simple but crucial facts," I mean facts in the broader sense in which (1) and (3) as well as (2) constitute observations about fundamental but unnoticed-because-obvious features of our existence.

analytic of Dasein.³ My aim here is to extend that comparison in the opposite direction. Rather than ask how Wittgenstein informs our reading of Heidegger, I will investigate how Heidegger informs our reading of Wittgenstein. In particular, I will claim that extending the parallels between Heidegger and Wittgenstein allows us to unearth something like a Heideggerian appeal to authenticity in Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language.

Such an exercise amounts to more than adding to the list of similarities other authors have found between Wittgenstein and Heidegger. Rather, it constitutes a step toward clarifying what might be described as the moral fervor of Wittgenstein's work. On one hand, Wittgenstein has little to say about ethics and is dismissive of saying anything of much use about it. On the other hand, his writing carries a rare moral intensity, which only occasionally comes to the surface.⁴ Drawing out the quasi-ethical import of Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language through its connection to Heideggerian authenticity clarifies the nature of this moral intensity.

I begin by sketching Heidegger's conception of the shared world of Being-with and *das Man* in *Being and Time* (section 2) before exploring how Wittgenstein helps us flesh out that shared world (section 3). Heidegger finds a too-ready absorption in this shared world to be a signal feature of inauthenticity, raising the question of whether Wittgenstein's emphasis on the ordinary betrays a flight into inauthenticity. But far from insisting on the unshakeability of our ordinary practices, I claim, Wittgenstein emphasizes their ungroundedness (section 4). This emphasis on ungroundedness allows me to trace the moments in Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language that parallel Heidegger's description of anxiety, the uncanniness that it discloses, and the authenticity of owning up to this uncanniness (section 5).

³ Heidegger scholars who make reference to Wittgenstein include Hubert Dreyfus (1991), Charles Guignon (1983), John Haugeland (1982), and Taylor Carman (2003). An early proponent of the Wittgenstein-Heidegger comparison is Karl-Otto Apel, a number of whose essays on the topic are collected in English in Apel (1980).

⁴ The foreword to the *Philosophical Remarks* is one of the most striking of such instances.

2. Dasein as Being-with

Of all Heidegger's coinages, the best known—*Dasein*—is not in fact a neologism. It is also one of the most likely to go untranslated in discussions of Heidegger. Literally rendered as “being there,” it is most commonly translated in non-Heideggerian contexts as “existence,” though here it differs from *Existenz* in referring not so much to the bare fact of being, but rather to the mode or quality in which something or someone exists. I might assert the *Existenz* of a paternal aunt, but then talk about the misery of her *Dasein* and how I might alleviate it.

Heidegger picks up on this qualitative aspect of *Dasein* in yoking it to his phenomenological project, which places the lived quality of existence before abstract theorizing. Heidegger first introduces the term, saying that he will use it to describe “[t]his being which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being” (*BT* 7/27). *Dasein* is different from other entities in that its being can be an issue for it: rocks simply are, whereas *Dasein* always takes a stance on who it is, what it has been, and what it will become—even if it never formulates this stance explicitly—and it can inquire about its own being. *Dasein* is not simply just another entity to be encountered in the world, but is rather the being to whom all these entities are intelligible and matter. Heidegger calls *Dasein* a “clearing” (*BT* 133/171) because entities become intelligible as entities only within the space opened up by *Dasein*.

Heidegger's starting point, which constitutes the first division of *Being and Time*, is the analytic of *Dasein* in its average everydayness: he seeks to grasp *Dasein*'s ordinary self-understanding.⁵ The self-understanding that interests Heidegger is not the thematic self-

⁵ Dreyfus (1991, 28) cites three reasons that Heidegger gives for taking *Dasein* as a starting point—that *Dasein* relates to its being as a question, that *Dasein* understands itself in terms of its average understanding, and that *Dasein*'s understanding of its being implies an understanding of all modes of being—while remarking that

understanding of human existence that we find in the work of philosophers, but the pre-theoretical understanding with which Dasein engages in the world proximally and for the most part.⁶ Before giving any explicit answer as to how it understands itself and its world, Dasein already gives an implicit answer in its practical engagement with the world. Heidegger characterizes Dasein as Being-in-the-world: he begins, that is, by considering Dasein as embedded in and engaged with its world rather than considering it from a position of detached contemplation. “Sciences are ways of Being in which Dasein comports itself towards entities which it need not be itself. But to Dasein, Being in a world is something that belongs essentially” (BT 13/32). Our everyday comportment already presupposes the intelligibility of the world we engage in, and Heidegger investigates this basic intelligibility by examining Dasein in its “average everydayness” (BT 43/69). In other words, like Wittgenstein, Heidegger begins with the ordinary.

To understand how this everydayness can be “average”—and to consider the possibility of a non-average everydayness—we must come to grips with a crucial feature of Heidegger’s analytic of Dasein: the fact that we are not Dasein alone, but exist essentially in this world *with* others. We encounter other people proximally and for the most part as Dasein, and not as the sealed-off enigmas that the problematic of other minds skepticism presents to us. The engaged world of everydayness finds us acting with and upon tools that were equally made for, and could equally be used by, other people like ourselves. And, more

none of these reasons is fully convincing. I am not sure they are meant to be, or could be. Heidegger conceives of his project as a hermeneutic circle: no matter where we start, we must provisionally take some things for granted, but can then circle back to question those assumptions and reconfigure our project in light of this further questioning. If there were rock-solid reasons for taking just this starting point, there would be no reason to circle back and reinterpret it. And indeed, Division II of *Being and Time* can be read as just such a reinterpretation.

⁶ This frequent Heideggerism is Macquarrie and Robinson’s translation of *zunächst und zumeist*. Stambaugh has it as “initially and for the most part.” *Zunächst* can mean either “initially” or “proximally,” depending on context. As it is used in *Being and Time*, both translations are appropriate: Heidegger emphasizes that we are ensconced in the world in an engaged manner *before* we can contemplate it in a disengaged manner, and we encounter the world in this way because the equipment and others in it are ontically *closest* to us (*das ontisch Nächste*) (BT 43/69).

importantly, our own sense of who and what we are is shaped by our engaging with others whom we deem to be our fellows.

Heidegger finds the traditional conception of the self as an isolated consciousness inadequate because Dasein comes into its Dasein-hood as Being-with-one-another: the “who” of everyday Dasein is not the isolated individual, but the individual constituted by social norms. Being-with is a necessary and structural feature of Dasein—an existentials in Heidegger’s jargon—because it is a condition for the possibility Dasein’s articulated, intelligible world. Each of us makes sense of the world in our own way, but the very notion of making sense of the world in the first place, as well as the concepts with which we make sense of the world, are things we articulate together.

If Being-with is a constitutive feature of Dasein’s existence, then Dasein’s existence is largely constituted by features that are not uniquely its own. One feature of tools’ readiness-to-hand is that they are ready-to-hand for others as well. A shoe is only a shoe if anyone with the same sized foot can wear it. My shoes are available to me *as* shoes only insofar as they are available as shoes to others as well. This promiscuous availability is part of what makes a shoe a shoe: it is available to many people indiscriminately because there is a way that *one wears shoes* that applies across the board. As Being-with, Dasein is constituted by a wide range of norms that dictate what *one* does, which Heidegger calls *das Man*.⁷ *Das Man* does not simply articulate the norms according to which one wears shoes, but renders shoes intelligible as shoes in the first place: without these norms, shoes would not show up to us as shoes but as unintelligible assemblages of leather, canvas, and rubber. *Das Man* is not an individual, nor a group, but it “Articulates the referential context of significance” (*BT*

⁷ Both English translations of *Being and Time* render this term as “the ‘They,’” which is an unsatisfactory translation of a term for which there is no good English equivalent. *Man* is the German impersonal third person singular, the same as “one” in English, but translating *das Man* literally as “the one,” as Dreyfus and Carman do, carries confusingly Messianic connotations. I will leave *das Man* untranslated in this paper, but will aim to bring out the implications of Heidegger’s usage as often as possible by using verbs with either the impersonal third person singular or the passive voice: *das Man* speaks to what “one does” or what “is done.”

129/167). By highlighting the existential role of Being-with and *das Man*, Heidegger emphasizes that the intelligibility of Dasein's world involves sharing and shaping this intelligibility in concert with others. This claim is stronger than simply saying that I am inevitably a creature of my times. I am not simply *of* my times, but in an important sense, I *am* my times: the social norms of my milieu are a constitutive feature of who I am, even if I react against them. We might say that Heidegger has an externalist conception of the self.⁸

3. Wittgenstein's attunement and *das Man*

Hubert Dreyfus and others have found in Wittgenstein a valuable resource for fleshing out the nature of *das Man*, a concept about which Heidegger makes unclear and sometimes conflicting remarks. Just as Heidegger finds the shared nature of intelligibility a crucial and overlooked aspect of our everyday engagement with the world, Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language draws on the overlooked significance of our sharing our language and forms of life with others. In drawing out the shared practices of our common world, Heidegger focuses primarily on the readiness-to-hand of tools, but much of what he says about tools applies to language as well.⁹ First, language operates as part of a holistic network in which words take on significance in the way that they relate to and play off other words, and the various roles that they serve in human practices. Second, we usually use language unreflectively and transparently, thinking about what we want to say and not about the (upon reflection, quite mysterious) fact that these sounds or symbols manage to express anything at all. Third, the workings of language come to our attention only when we are not operating smoothly within language: we are far more conscious of the grammar of a language we speak poorly, for instance, because expressing ourselves in that language requires

⁸ Carman (2003, 137) describes Heidegger as a "social externalist."

⁹ In *Being and Time*, Heidegger treats language as ready-to-hand (see *BT* 161/204), and Wittgenstein also draws a number of analogies between language and tools (see *PI* §§11, 14, 15, 17, 23, 41, 42, 360). Stephen Mulhall (1994, 144–48) defends and explores the comparison of language to tools as a similarity between Wittgenstein and Heidegger.

deliberation that draws our attention from what we want to say to the language itself. And last, we relate to language differently when we step back from it to examine it rather than use it transparently as a tool.

Communication essentially involves agreement in how we use words. For Wittgenstein, however, the agreement goes far deeper than simply the definitions of words. “It is not only agreement in definitions, but also (odd as it may sound) agreement in judgements that is required for communication by means of language,” he writes (*PI* §242). We are only able to communicate because we already agree on a vast raft of matters that underwrite that communication. The “agreement” Wittgenstein speaks of here is *Übereinstimmung*, in contrast with *Einverständnis*: not agreement in the sense of a negotiated settlement, but agreement in the sense of a pre-reflective accord. We do not sit down over a negotiating table and choose what judgments we will reach agreement on, but rather, we are able to sit down at a negotiating table at all because we already find ourselves in sufficient agreement that we are able to make sense to one another. In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein discusses propositions like “The earth has existed for a long time,” which have the form of empirical propositions, but play a role more akin to logical propositions: they are not themselves subject to doubt, but are the basis of agreement upon which other matters can be doubted, discussed, investigated, and so on. “We know, with the same certainty with which we believe *any* mathematical proposition, how the letters A and B are pronounced, what the colour of human blood is called, that other human beings have blood and call it ‘blood’” (*OC* §340). Wittgenstein famously likens such propositions to hinges, writing: “If I want the door to turn, the hinges must stay put” (*OC* §343).

Wittgenstein recognizes that this emphasis on agreement can be mistaken for a dogmatic refusal to consider certain questions: “So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?”—What is true or false is what human beings *say*; and it is in their *language* that human beings agree. This is agreement not in opinions, but rather

in form of life” (*PI* §241). Agreeing in forms of life means sharing at least enough common ground that our lives are intelligible to one another, such that communication, understanding, and learning are so much as possible between us. That we can exchange opinions at all, whether to agree or disagree, means we already share enough in common that we recognize each other’s opinions as opinions, and share a sense of what it means to have an opinion, to form one, to shift one, and so on.

Stanley Cavell calls this kind of agreement “attunement”:¹⁰ what I say not only reaches you, but resonates in you. In an oft-cited passage, Cavell elaborates on this attunement as

a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humour and of significance and of fulfilment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls “forms of life.” (Cavell 1976, 52)

This Wittgensteinian conception of attunement helps to flesh out the nature of the shared intelligibility of Heidegger’s Being-with. Wittgenstein provides a detailed exploration of Heidegger’s insight that sharing a world with others involves not just sharing a common language and tools, but attunement on a deeper level of overall orientation and comportment. We share language and tools because we also share a sense of what is worth saying, what sorts of projects are worth pursuing, and how one goes about pursuing them.

Wittgenstein articulates the conformity of our general comportment, but Heidegger finds in *das Man* something more insidious than attunement.¹¹ Heidegger notes our

¹⁰ See Cavell 1979, 32. The word “attunement” is also used to translate Heidegger’s *Befindlichkeit*. Despite some similarities, the two uses of “attunement” are not the same, and the discussion of attunement in this paper is not meant to cover *Befindlichkeit*. Cavell’s Wittgensteinian conception of attunement is a relation between two or more people whereas Heidegger’s attunement is a relation between Dasein and its world.

tendency to conform with what *one does*, not because one has decided to do things this way, but simply because this is how things *are done*. The passive voice is revealing here: we accord ourselves with *das Man* passively, rather than actively choosing our own course. In our average everydayness, Heidegger suggests, we accord ourselves with *das Man* unthinkingly, allowing our actions and opinions to be dictated to us by what *one* does or thinks, stifling our own agency in the matter. This accord with *das Man* enables a great cover-up whereby we present our forms of life to ourselves as binding and necessary. In according ourselves with what *one does*, we do not simply choose not to find our own way of doing things, but we avoid acknowledging that there is even a choice there to be made. This cover-up is the keystone of what Heidegger characterizes as inauthentic existence.

Dreyfus suggests that Heidegger's discussion of *das Man* fails to distinguish between conformity and conformism (see Dreyfus 1991, 154). Talking about the "dictatorship" of *das Man*, Heidegger describes the conformism it induces: "We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *one* takes pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *one* sees and judges; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as *one* shrinks back; we find 'shocking' what *one* finds shocking" (BT 126–27/164; translation modified). The sorts of judgments that involve conforming to the popular views on literature and art are a far cry from the sorts of judgments on whose agreement Wittgenstein takes us to conform. The latter kinds of agreement are what make discourse possible at all; the former are the sorts of matters over

¹¹ As a matter of fact, Heidegger disavows making any value judgments here or elsewhere about what he calls "deficient" forms of Being. I find this supposed neutrality very difficult to square with the language that he uses. As if "inauthentic" were itself not a term laden with negative value judgment, he also refers to inauthentic Dasein as "deficient," "lost," and "fallen," among other things, in language that ranges in its associations from psychoanalytic notions of repression and self-denial to theological notions of sin. The initial discussion of *das Man* in §27 of *Being and Time* uses particularly strong language. Heidegger refers to the "averageness" of *das Man*, saying it "keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore. Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force. This care of averageness reveals in turn an essential tendency of Dasein which we will call the 'levelling down' of all possibilities of being" (BT 127/165). If Heidegger truly seeks to present the notion of *das Man* free from any condemnatory language, he does a spectacularly bad job of it.

which we can debate, agree, and disagree because of the fundamental agreements of the latter kind. To use Wittgensteinian language, we might wonder whether Heidegger has confused the agreement of *Einverständnis* with the agreement of *Übereinstimmung*.

How best to make sense of Heidegger on *das Man* is a fraught issue, and one not helped by inconsistencies in Heidegger's text, and I will not pursue this issue here.¹² Instead, I want to turn the spotlight on Wittgenstein and ask whether Heidegger notices an important aspect of our attunement that Wittgenstein misses. In his discussion of *das Man*, Heidegger identifies in our conformity to public norms an existential tendency towards conformism. We accord ourselves unthinkingly with public norms, and although this tendency might be a lifesaver when it comes to driving conventions, it shades over into the sort of groupthink that suppresses the possibility of an authentic existence. In emphasizing our attunement without remarking on the coercive nature of this attunement, a Heideggerian might suggest, Wittgenstein does not acknowledge the possibility of authenticity. Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language, it may seem, amounts to an appeal to inauthentic absorption in *das Man*. Indeed, Wittgensteinian comparisons with Heidegger tend to focus on Division I of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger analyzes Dasein only in its average everydayness. Only in Division II does Heidegger fully explore the possibility of authentic existence, and comparisons with Wittgenstein seem to run dry at this point.

Answering this challenge requires that we extend the comparison between Wittgenstein and Heidegger to include Heidegger's account of authenticity. Doing so uncovers an important aspect of Wittgenstein's later philosophy that might go unnoticed in the absence of this challenge. Wittgenstein not only emphasizes our attunement; he also emphasizes the ungroundedness of this attunement. I will develop this point in the next section, and connect it to Heidegger's conception of authenticity in the one that follows.

¹² I consider *das Man* in more detail in Egan 2012.

4. The ungroundedness of attunement

The importance of shared practices and forms of life features prominently in the secondary literature on Wittgenstein, but the importance of there being nothing to guarantee these shared practices and forms of life receives less attention. For the most part, commentators on Wittgenstein take our attunement as a given, and explore the consequences of this given being a necessary condition for the possibility of communication, or as constitutive of a community. The most notable exception to this rule is Stanley Cavell, whose reading of Wittgenstein informs much of what follows.

Wittgenstein encourages us to examine language in the context of the broader life of which it is a part: “[T]o imagine a language means to imagine a form of life” (*PI* §19). Wittgenstein often uses the metaphor of a mechanism to show how our words and concepts are interconnected:¹³ we understand a part of a larger whole by considering how it connects to other parts, and what these parts accomplish in moving together. Grasping the use of a word involves understanding the forms of life in which it finds application. This point may be clearer in the case of “judgment” or “understanding” than in the case of “cat” or “tree,” but it applies generally. Examples involving chairs recur throughout the *Investigations*,¹⁴ with Wittgenstein showing how this mundane concept relates to various other concepts—like sameness, simple/composite, belief, and so on—such that its use is embedded in our broader life with words.

If understanding a word also means understanding the forms of life in which it finds application, learning language is also a process of acculturation, where we are inducted into the forms of life that involve language. Wittgenstein shows a deep interest in what Cavell

¹³ E.g. *PI* §§6, 12, 193–94, 270–71, 559. However, we have to be careful in reading Wittgenstein’s use of the machine metaphor, as he also frequently uses it to exemplify a kind of thinking he wishes to criticize.

¹⁴ See *PI* §§1, 35, 47, 60, 80, 253, 356, 361, 368, 486, 575.

calls “the scene of instruction,” where an act of teaching or learning takes place.¹⁵ The *Investigations* open with St. Augustine’s account of how he learned language, which treats language learning as primarily an activity of attaching names to things. Wittgenstein finds this account inadequate because it assumes that language learning is simply a matter of finding the right words to give voice to a thinking that is already in place (*PI* §32). Augustine’s scenario imagines the pre-linguistic child as already sharing its elders’ forms of life, so that all it must learn are the names attached to various things and practices, all the while presupposing a ready familiarity with these things and practices. By contrast, Wittgenstein emphasizes that we learn language together with the forms of life of which language is a part: in learning language, children do not simply learn to attach labels to things, but learn the things along with the labels. Cavell elaborates on this point in discussing Wittgenstein’s vision of language:

In “learning language” you learn not merely what the names of things are, but what a name is; not merely what the form of expression is for expressing a wish, but what expressing a wish is; not merely what the word for “father” is, but what a father is; not merely what the word for “love” is, but what love is. In learning language, you do not merely learn the pronunciation of sounds, and their grammatical orders, but the “forms of life” which make those sounds the words they are, do what they do—e.g., name, call, point, express a wish or affection, indicate a choice or an aversion, etc. (Cavell 1979, 177–78)

In Wittgenstein’s view, learning what a thing is called also involves learning what that thing *is*.

¹⁵ See Cavell 1991. Besides the opening sections of the *Investigations*, which consider Augustine’s child and the tribe of builders, see also *PI* §§27, 31, 32, 35, 49, 53, 54, 77, 85, 86, 143, 144, 145, 156, 157, 159, 162, 179, 185, 189, 197, 198, 206, 207, 208, 223, 224, 232, 233, 237, 244, 249, 250, 257, 282, 308, 320, 328, 340, 361, 362, 375, 376, 378, 384, 385, 386, 441, 495, 535, 590, 630, 636, and 693. Cf. also Cavell 1989, 75: “In the culture depicted in the *Investigations* we are all teachers and all students—talkers, hearers, overhearers, hearsayers, believers, explainers; we learn and teach incessantly, indiscriminately; we are all elders and all justices.”

Instruction depends crucially on attunement between the teacher and the learner. Most learning takes place within a framework that the learner already shares with the teacher. High school mathematics, for instance, follows a linear progression because topics build on one another successively. Students need a foundation in coordinate geometry before they learn trigonometry, and a teacher inducts students into the principles of trigonometry by drawing on that shared framework of coordinate geometry. The shared framework need not be so academically oriented: to teach someone to give and obey orders, the teacher and learner need to share a language, a sense of what a task is and why it is worth accomplishing, of teamwork, and so on (or we might manage to teach someone *this* set of commands because we already share a sense of what a command in general is, how it is taught, obeyed, and so on).

As the example of mathematics illustrates, what we learn can become the shared framework for further learning: trigonometry builds on the framework supplied by coordinate geometry, which in turn builds upon the framework supplied by Euclidean geometry, algebra, and the Cartesian coordinate system, and these frameworks in turn build upon more elementary frameworks, and so on down. But how far down? How, for instance, can we speak of learning the activity of learning without circularity? Eventually our ability to learn from or with one another reaches bedrock. Ultimately, our ability to learn from one another is a manifestation of our basic attunement, which is not itself something we can teach, and without which no teaching or learning would take place. The importance of attunement to understanding—and the fact that this attunement is not grounded in anything deeper than itself—is the central lesson of the parable of the wayward pupil, which motivates much of Wittgenstein’s discussion of rule following:

Then we get the pupil to continue one series (say “+ 2”) beyond 1000—and he writes 1000, 1004, 1008, 1012.

We say to him, “Look what you’re doing!”—He doesn’t understand. We say, “You should have added *two*: look how you began the series!”—He answers, “Yes, isn’t it right? I thought that was how I *had* to do it.” —Or suppose he pointed to the series and said, “But I did go on in the same way.”—It would now be no use to say, “But can’t you see. . . ?”—and go over the old explanations and examples for him again. (*PI* §185)

The scenario of trying to teach the wayward pupil reveals how quickly our explanations come to an end with a practice like basic arithmetic, and hence reveals the nature of the agreement that our mathematical practices presuppose. If you don’t understand this, there is no deeper level of agreement I can appeal to in order to bring you back onside; if you don’t understand this, I have no idea where I stand with you, I have no sense of what you might agree to. You are an enigma to me.

Wittgenstein’s later work is peppered with bizarre parables like that of the wayward pupil, where things take a turn for the unexpected: we encounter a disappearing chair (*PI* §80), a growing and shrinking lump of cheese (*PI* §142), a talking lion (*PPF* xi §327), and many, many more. Each parable serves its own particular purpose, of course, but a common thread is that each challenges our assumption that the forms of life that we inhabit are in some way fixed or absolute. Wittgenstein claims that his interest in the scene of instruction is not based in hypothetical speculations about the psychology of concept formation—he is not making an anti-Chomskian point against the innateness of our conceptual categories—but rather in revealing the logical relation between our concepts and our forms of life:

I am not saying: if such-and-such facts of nature were different, people would have different concepts (in the sense of a hypothesis). Rather: if anyone believes that certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones, and that having different ones would mean not realizing something that we realize—then let him imagine certain very general facts of nature to be different from what we are used to, and

the formation of concepts different from the usual ones will become intelligible to him. (*PPF* xii §366)

By exploring worlds where the facts are different than what they are, and where our common understanding fails us, Wittgenstein repeatedly emphasizes the ungroundedness of our attunement.

Wittgenstein wants us to recognize the importance of attunement, but he also wants us to be struck by just how remarkable it is that we are indeed mutually attuned. Enigmas like the wayward pupil bring this reminder into sharp relief. We could be enigmas to one another—we sometimes are—and if this were the rule rather than the painful exception, we would not share the forms of life that we do. If we could never be certain that others add as we do, we would not use addition in the ways that we do. The process of acculturation by which we come in to language and shared forms of life presupposes a basic attunement that is not itself taught or learned; indeed, our ability to teach and learn is one manifestation of this attunement. That for the most part we are sufficiently attuned that we make sense to others and they to us is essential to our being able to share a language and forms of life, but nothing guarantees this attunement. Throughout the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein seeks to undermine precisely the mindset that assumes or insists that our attunement is justified by independent standards of correctness. On the contrary, the very practice of justification is one manifestation of our attunement. For me to be able to justify anything to you, we must already share enough common ground that you have a similar sense of what a justification is, how it works, and what sorts of things stand in need of what kinds of justification.

Wittgenstein explores the regularity of our attunement by considering how we teach, learn, and apply rules. Considering a rule on analogy with a signpost, he asks how the signpost tells us which way to go, considering the possibility that we could interpret an arrow like “—>” as pointing left (say, the part on the right is not the point of an arrow, but the opening of an aperture with the line flowing leftward out of it signifying the direction

one is meant to go; see *PI* §85). A second arrow, which tells us how to interpret the first, is no help here, since “every interpretation hangs in the air together with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support” (*PI* §198). The point here is not that the signpost is inescapably ambiguous, but that neither the signpost itself nor further instruction or interpretation can irresistibly dictate how we use it. We do indeed follow signposts and engage in a wide variety of rule-governed practices without a second thought—and if we did not, we would not share the common life that we do—but this regularity manifests an attunement that is itself ungrounded.

5. Anxiety and authenticity

At the end of section 3, I asked whether Wittgenstein’s emphasis on attunement constituted an inauthentic absorption in *das Man*. In the previous section, I tried to show that, far from taking our attunement for granted, Wittgenstein draws our attention to how remarkable it is that we make sense to one another at all. Wittgenstein acknowledges the importance of attunement, but also wants us to see this attunement as ungrounded. There is nothing insidious about following a rule in the way that everyone else follows that rule, but we get ourselves into trouble when we make the further step of assuming or theorizing that some independent standard of correctness compels our and everyone else’s conformity to the rule. Conforming to what *one* does, then, is not so much the problem, but rather the problem lies with taking this conformity as grounded in a source more stable and absolute than our mutual attunement. Here Wittgenstein and Heidegger are agreed. For the most part, we tend to accept both our conformity to norms and the conformism of received opinion with an air of necessity and inevitability. Because this is the way things are done, surely they could not be done in any other way. Because just *this* is how we live, we want the security of seeing our forms of life as grounded on the most solid bedrock.

Of course, even the most solid bedrock is afloat upon a sea of magma. Even the firmest foundations are unstable. Recognizing this fact is, for Wittgenstein, a key measure in releasing us from the feeling of compulsion certain philosophical pictures force on us. For Heidegger, it is a requirement of authenticity. In Division I of *Being and Time*, Heidegger explores anxiety as a crucial mood that signals to us the ungroundedness of our forms of life. We find a similar mood of anxiety pervading Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language. Contrary to readings of Wittgenstein that emphasize the shared norms of an established community,¹⁶ I have highlighted the ubiquity in Wittgenstein's work of scenes of instruction: Wittgenstein is interested not in established communities, but in the probing by which we explore and discover whether and how we can establish common ground with others. Throughout these investigations, Wittgenstein rehearses the anxiety that things might not turn out as we expect or hope. In these passages, Wittgenstein enacts the anxiety that Heidegger describes. Investigating the scene of instruction induces the vertiginous discovery that our lives literally depend upon an attunement that comes with no guarantees.¹⁷ For both Wittgenstein and Heidegger, the importance of attunement comes not just with the recognition that this attunement is ungrounded, but also with the recognition of the anxiety this ungroundedness induces.

Heidegger describes two ways we might respond to this existential anxiety. One is the inauthentic flight into the *Man-selbst*, or one-self. Inauthentic Dasein flees from its anxiety by absorbing itself in its everyday activities without reflecting deeply upon them: Dasein flees toward "entities alongside which our concern, lost in *das Man*, can dwell in tranquillized familiarity" (BT 189/233–34; I have left *das Man* untranslated). Inauthentic Dasein engages in everyday practices while turning a blind eye to their ungroundedness. It accepts social norms as fixed and absolute, not the result of human attunement, but simply "the way things are."

¹⁶ I am thinking primarily of Wright (1980) and Kripke (1982).

¹⁷ McDowell (2000, 43f) also discusses this experience in terms of vertigo.

By contrast, authentic Dasein confronts this anxiety as disclosing the fundamental uncanniness (*Unheimlichkeit*) of Being-in-the-world: “Uncanniness is the basic kind of Being-in-the-world, even though in an everyday way it has been covered up” (BT 277/322). The German *Unheimlichkeit* suggests homelessness, which captures precisely the sense of disorientation that comes with discovering the ungroundedness of our ordinary practices, and contrasts suggestively with the connotation of home (*Wohnung*) in the German word for “ordinary,” *gewöhnlich*. On one hand, the ordinariness of our language and forms of life stems from our being at home with them. On the other hand, our shared attunement is itself ungrounded, and reflecting on this fact both undermines certain philosophical prejudices but also leaves us with the uncanny feeling of not being at home in our practices in the way we had comfortably assumed.

Wittgenstein’s appeal to ordinary language does not represent an evasion or suppression of this uncanniness. Instead, he sees uncanniness inscribed in our inhabitation of the ordinary. The ordinary is our home in the sense that ordinary language is the language that speaks to and from the particular situation we find ourselves in. The concepts of ordinary language articulate the interests and needs of the people that use them, and they are useful to the extent that they are usable. We find it useful to price cheese according to its weight, but this practice would lose its point if the weight of cheese were constantly fluctuating. If everything were in a continual flux of rapid growth and shrinking, our concept of weight would lose its point, or would have radically different applications, whereas other concepts would become useful to us. Our concepts are not absolute precisely because they are responsive to our circumstances in their particularity. The appeal to ordinary language thus acknowledges the impossibility of a godlike perspective for which, as Wittgenstein puts it, “certain concepts are absolutely the correct ones.” Wittgenstein does not mean that, in our finitude, we fail to grasp the absolutely correct concepts, but rather that it is of the nature of concepts to belong to forms of life that are themselves not

absolute. Acknowledging our language and forms of life as ordinary means acknowledging the uncanny fact that our being at home in them gives them no absolute grounding.

In this reading, the question of whether *das Man* denotes conformity or conformism becomes a bit of a red herring. What constitutes lostness in the one-self is not a vaguely defined conformism, but rather the suppression of the uncanniness of Being-in-the-world. Rather than confront the uncanniness of existence, inauthentic Dasein takes comfort in affirming its stability. Inauthenticity does not stem primarily from conformism in judgment over the topic *du jour* but from suppressing the ungroundedness of all our agreement, whether in conformity or conformism. Such an attitude accepts the conformity of social norms no more than authentic Dasein, but relates to it differently, treating it as fixed and necessary. This attitude is also liable to fall into some sort of conformism. A Dasein that relates to itself and its world as fixed and unchanging has no need to develop opinions that differ from received wisdom. This sort of conformism is not so much a conformism to particular judgments, but rather an acceptance of the sorts of arguments that happen to be current on the topics that happen to be current.

If I am right in tracing these parallel trajectories through Division I of *Being and Time* and Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language, Heidegger's exhortation to authenticity that becomes the focus of Division II is no more a repudiation of the everydayness of Division I than Wittgenstein's reminders of the ordinary are repudiations of the ordinary. Indeed, Heidegger emphasizes that authenticity does not transfigure Dasein's world or its relation to others (BT 297–98/344), just as someone who is fully cognizant of the uncanniness of our ordinary practices need not engage with those practices any differently.¹⁸

¹⁸ Here we might see Heidegger's and Wittgenstein's shared influence from Kierkegaard, whose knight of faith could appear to all the world as a humble shopman. How exactly we should spell out Heidegger's conception of authenticity is obviously a topic of considerable debate in the secondary literature, where we find often radically conflicting interpretations. I want to remain as neutral as I can in this discussion while acknowledging the difficulty of interpreting Heidegger on authenticity. My main positive contribution to this debate lies in the suggestion that the comparison between Wittgenstein's appeal to ordinary language and

Stephen Mulhall emphasizes that Heidegger's analysis of inauthentic Dasein is an analysis of Dasein in its *average* everydayness, raising the question of whether there are other ways of inhabiting the everyday. Mulhall answers that authentic Dasein represents a repudiation of inauthentic Dasein's averageness—its subjecting of itself to the average—and not of its everydayness: "Authentic Being-in-the-world is not a transcendence of or escape from everydayness but a mode of everydayness; it is not an extraordinary mode of Being, but a mode of inhabiting the ordinary" (Mulhall 1994, 151). The contrast with average everydayness for Mulhall is authentic everydayness. Authentic Dasein does not move beyond the everyday, but accepts the everyday without becoming lost in it.

The moral fervor we find in Wittgenstein, which I remarked upon in my introduction, has much in common with what might inspire fervor in Heidegger's appeal to authenticity. In much the same way as Heidegger, Wittgenstein sees most of us—especially those who embrace traditional methods of doing philosophy—as lost and needing recovery. This recovery is not a matter of providing us with new ideas, new truths, new theories, but of helping us inhabit where we are without self-deception. Wittgenstein describes his appeal to ordinary language in terms of "bringing us back" to the everyday use of words. If we are to find an analogy in Heidegger, Wittgenstein's calling us back to the ordinary resembles nothing quite so much as the Heideggerian call of conscience. Not coincidentally, Heidegger also characterizes this call in terms of bringing back: in heeding the call of conscience, "Dasein specifically brings itself back to itself from its lostness in *das Man*" (BT 268/312; I have left *das Man* untranslated). Philosophy, for both Wittgenstein and Heidegger, is not a matter of moving forward to the new discovery that will ground our practices, but rather a matter of calling us back to the ungroundedness that we have always already known and always already forgotten.

Heidegger's appeal to authenticity can work both ways: this paper mainly uses the latter to draw attention to features of the former, but I believe this "authentic" reading of Wittgenstein could also inform our reading of Heideggerian authenticity.

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