If you read the 59th footnote to Heidegger’s 1929 essay “On the Essence of Ground” you will encounter the following remarkable statement:

If…one identifies the ontic contexture of items of utility, or equipment, with world and interprets being-in-the-world as dealing with items of utility, then there is certainly no prospect of any understanding of transcendence as being-in-the-world in the sense of a “fundamental constitution of Dasein”.

The ontological structure of beings in our “environing world”—insofar as they are discovered as equipment—does, however, have the advantage, in terms of an initial characterization of the phenomenon of world, of leading over into an analysis and…preparing the transcendental problem of world. And this is also the sole intent—an intent indicated clearly enough in the structuring and layout of §§14–24 of Being and Time—of the analysis of the environing world, an analysis that as a whole, and considered with regard to the leading goal, remains of subordinate significance.1

Here Heidegger, only two years after the publication of Being and Time, appears to be repudiating, or at least minimising the importance of, the celebrated and groundbreaking
analysis of Dasein’s everydayness found in the first division of this text. The discussion of
the environing world, the contexture of equipment, is now said to be only an initial
caracterisation of the phenomenon of world that was intended to ‘lead over’ into world
considered as a transcendental problem.

What are we to make of this footnote? How can such a passage be reconciled with the
contents of Being and Time? One strategy might be to understand it not as a diminishment of
the account of everydayness but as an objection to interpretations of Heidegger’s discussion
of world that reduce world to an ontic context, to a mere collection of items of equipment,
and that overlook the the way that it is structured by references and involvements—by the
‘toward-which’ and ‘in-order-to’, the network of significance relations. This interpretation is
supported by Heidegger’s comment in his 1928 Leibniz course, the course that is the source
of much of the material found in “On the Essence of Ground”, where he states that world
cannot be understood as an “ontical context of useful items” as these items are only intra-
worldly beings not the world itself.2

Yet Heidegger’s comment indicating that the analysis of the ontological structure of
equipment is only advantageous ‘in terms of an initial characterisation of the phenomenon of
world’ indicates that that it is precisely the idea of the world as constituted by network of
significance relations that he wishes to surpass. The Being of the ready-to-hand is explicitly
said in Being and Time to be constituted by involvements.3 Thus it is in fact the world of

3. See, for example, Heidegger, Being and Time, H83–4: “To say that the Being of the ready-to-hand
has the structure of assignment or reference means that it has in itself the character of having been assigned or
referred [Verwiesenheit]. An entity is discovered when it has been assigned or referred to something, and,
referred as that entity which it is. With any such entity there is an involvement which it has in some-thing.
The character of Being which belongs to the ready-to-hand is just such an involvement…When an entity
within-the-world has already been proximally freed for its Being, that Being is its “involvement”. With any
such entity as entity, there is some involvement. The fact that it has such an involvement is ontologically
significance relations that is conferred preliminary status in the footnote to “On the Essence of Ground”. Additionally, if this footnote were to be criticising those who have overlooked the network of significance relations it would be expected that the account of world in “On the Essence of Ground” would emphasise this aspect of the world and it does not. Heidegger does not discuss significance at all in this text. World is rather said to be that which Dasein lets occur so that it might give itself an “original view ([or] image [Bild in German])…that is not explicitly grasped yet [that] functions precisely as a ‘Vor-Bild’ [(a pre-image)] for all manifest beings”.

Similarly, the world is not said to be significance in the Leibniz course but the originary nothing, and the self-temporalising of temporality. These are definitions of world that bear little similarity to the definition found in Being and Time.

Furthermore, Heidegger makes a number of comments in his 1936 ‘running notes’ to Being and Time, found in the recently published 82nd volume of the Gesamtausgabe, that are unambiguously critical of the conception of world as a network of references and involvement relations. In a passage commenting on section 18 of Being and Time, the section that characterises the worldhood of the world in terms of involvement and significance, Heidegger remarks that this section became too quickly and one-sidedly distracted in these concepts. He also later writes that deriving the world as a totality of significance from the ready-to-hand is disastrous. And he states that his account of the ontology of the ready-to-hand in its relation to the present-at-hand is not only insufficient but absurd, especially with

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5. See GA 82, 68: “§17. steht im Dienst von §18. – Verweisungsganzheit. Mit dieser Verweisung ist nur etwas am Welten erspürt - jenes nicht nur an wesende, sondern das Her und Hin (vgl. unten S. 50), aber zu rasch und einseitig abgelenkt in Bewandtnis und Bedeutsamkeit! und dieses zurück auf das erste Wozu – das Worumwillen”.
6. See GA 82, 87: “Denn das Verstehen als Entwurf braucht nicht besorgende Auslegung zu sein! Hier das »Fatale« von Welt als Bedeutsamkeitsganzen von Zuhandenheit her”.

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regard to the insight it was supposed to provide into the phenomenon of world. This approach is described as the ‘principal delusion’ of *Being and Time*.

It therefore cannot be doubted that Heidegger is critical in footnote 59 to “On the Essence of Ground” not of ontic interpretations of his discussion of the everyday world but of those who have failed to see that this discussion was merely the groundwork for a deeper concept of world—world as a transcendental problem. But what warrant does Heidegger have for such a criticism? The answer to this question can only be: very little. In *Being and Time* Heidegger explicitly states that the relational totality of signifying is what “makes up the structure of the world”.

Indeed, Heidegger himself later came to see that his earlier criticism was unwarranted. In the 1973 seminar in Zähringen he concedes that “to read paragraphs 14 to 24 of *Being and Time* for themselves…could well [lead to] a fundamental misunderstanding”.

Yet this concession does not relieve us of the task of understanding Heidegger’s 1928 turn to the transcendental problem of world. The comment from the 1973 seminar confirms that the world of everydayness is not primary for Heidegger. Thus we are led to ask: ‘why does Heidegger provide such a detailed account of the everyday world if it is only of preliminary interest?’ And ‘what is the transcendental concept of world?’. If Heidegger’s philosophy is to be coherent it is necessary to answer these questions. Otherwise the apparent true concern of his thinking is shrouded in mystery and his most obvious interest is apparently insignificant.

To answer these questions I will provide an account of the emergence of world as a

7. See GA 82, 65: “Die Ontologie der Zuhandenheit und ihres Verhältnisses zur Vorhandenheit nicht nur in sich unzureichend, sondern abwegig! Erst recht das angestrebte »ontologische Verständnis des Weltphänomens«. Hier kommen die leitenden Täuschungen wieder an den Tag”.


transcendental problem in Heidegger’s philosophy by considering the development of his thought from 1916 to 1926—the year of his breakthrough to the transcendental concept of world. By showing that the motivations that led Heidegger to develop an account of the world in its meaningfulness also led him to the transcendental concept of world, it can be seen that Heidegger does not repudiate the world of everydayness so much as proceed through it to a deeper sense of world. This suggests that it is the transcendental concept of world that must be investigated if we are to understand Heidegger’s thinking.

In the aforementioned 1973 seminar Heidegger writes that the reason that he pursued the account of world as it stands in *Being and Time* is that it establishes Being-in-the-world as “the primary and irreducible fact, [that is] always already given, and thus radically ‘prior’ to any conception of consciousness”.\(^\text{10}\) It is against the primacy of consciousness in philosophy that Heidegger develops his account of the world of everydayness as he understands consciousness to be too theoretical a concept to describe human beings and therefore one that leads philosophy into error.

Heidegger held this view very early on. In the supplementary ‘conclusion’ to his qualifying dissertation that he wrote for its publication in 1916, Heidegger claims that “logic and its problems”, that is, the neo-Kantian theory of knowledge and the problems it faced, could not be seen in their true light if they were not approached from a “translogical perspective”.\(^\text{11}\) For research in logic to proceed fruitfully, for Heidegger, it must be recognised that that “among the wealth of formative directions of the living spirit, the theoretical attitude is but one of them”\(^\text{12}\) and that the conception of the human as an “epistemological subject does not explain the metaphysically most significant sense of spirit,

\(^{10}\) Heidegger, *Four Seminars*, 64.

\(^{11}\) *Becoming Heidegger*, 87.

\(^{12}\) Ibid.
to say nothing of its full content”. Consciousness is rather to be reinterpreted as a “vital doing [lebendige Tat] that is full of meaning and itself actualizes meaning [sinnverwirklichende]”. Philosophy must begin in the vital and meaningful activity of life. It is only in this way that ‘logic’ may proceed without becoming mired in aporia.

This concern for the activity of life and disdain for theoretical leads Heidegger, in his 1919 war emergency lecture course, to endorse the notion that the world is given to us as primarily meaningful. Rejecting interpretations of experience that rely on the oppositions of ‘inner’ and ‘outer’, ‘physical and psychical’, and ‘subject and object’, Heidegger asks his students to bring a “new experience to givenness” and declares that upon coming into the lecture-room, he (and the students) simply see the lectern that stands at the front. The lectern said not to be not composed of “brown surfaces at right angles to one another”, that is, of sense-data, nor is it “a largish box with another smaller one set upon it”. Certainly, Heidegger emphasises, in an apparent critique of Husserl, “lectern-hood” is not attached to a bare object “like a label”. What is seen, rather, is the lectern as that which Heidegger will stand behind to speak, and for the students that from which they are to be addressed. The lectern is seen as “adjusted a bit too high [for Heidegger]”, and a book, annoyingly lying upon it. We do not form reality from disparate sensations, for Heidegger, nor are the use-values of things attached to bare extended entities, rather, things are given as a whole in relation to their practical use.

Heidegger elaborates on this notion on a number of occasions in subsequent years. In his 1923 course *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity* he discusses the way that the beings
we encounter in the world are primarily useful for something we want to do. Entities are said to be encountered as references, as a “means to…” do something, “used to…” do something, or “no longer really suitable for…” a particular task. And Heidegger’s understanding of entities as references and involvements soon deepens. By 1925 in his course *History of the Concept of Time* he has developed an account of the referential totality of the ready-to-hand.

But in order to overcome consciousness as the place from which philosophy can begin, it is not enough, for Heidegger, to provide a phenomenologically constructive account of the meaningful experience of life, this approach must be accompanied by a destructive engagement with the history of philosophy. One of Heidegger’s chief criticisms of Husserl at this time is that his assumption that philosophy can be a rigorous science outside of history (as Heidegger understands Husserl to have argued for in his 1911 *Logos* essay) leads philosophy into error. Heidegger writes in his 1920 course *Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression* that philosophy cannot “start again from scratch”, but must “destroy” its own history through an analysis that considers not only the ideas of the tradition but their origin in experience. Without this approach, philosophy, on Heidegger’s view, does not unearth universal truths but merely “retreat[s]” into present-day “common sense”.

The identification of the human being as consciousness is the leading example of this occurrence and on this basis Heidegger also concludes in 1920 that he must determine what the human being properly is. Heidegger therefore seeks to determine, through the phenomenological destruction, the nature of “the self in the actual enactment of life

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22. Ibid., 21
experience”, of “the self in the experiencing of itself”.  

The constructive account of experience and the destructive engagements with the history of philosophy are directed at determining the true Being of the self. It is then in pursuit of the Being of the self through the phenomenological destruction that Heidegger undertakes his 1920–21 lecture course Introduction to the Phenomenology of Religion. But he also takes this course as an occasion to delineate a position he did not address in his course Phenomenology of Intuition and Expression, namely, that the sense of time with which his phenomenology operates needs to be clarified. As the phenomenological destruction is a historical investigation it is a temporal investigation, but the nature of the temporal is as yet undetermined within his philosophy. It is not enough, for Heidegger, to understand time as that which accompanies phenomena, this is a theoretical notion of time, it is necessary to determine what time is in genuine factical experience.

Through his ‘destruction’ of first Thessalonians in his religion course Heidegger sees that life for Paul and the early Christians is “not a mere flow of events” and that the temporality of life is not defined by a succession of now-moments. The temporality of the life of Paul and the early Christians is rather determined by the question of the ‘when’ of the παρουσία, the return of Christ, and this question is not to be answered by reference to some determinate future time, the ‘when’ rather determines the present “how of the self-comportment”, the present “enactment of factical life experience in each of its moments”.

It is this experience of temporality, of a futural but uncertain event determining the

23. Ibid., 132.
24. Heidegger in fact already addressed the question of what kind of understanding of time is appropriate for historical investigations in the ‘test’ lecture he delivered to confirm his habilitation in 1915. Where for physics time is a measure and is quantitative, historical time is qualitative. Historical periods are “distinct as regards [their] structural content”. See Heidegger, “The Concept of Time in the Science of History”, 75.
26. Ibid., 73.
present that constitutes genuine temporality for Heidegger, but while he sees that the early Christians had an experience of genuine temporality, he is unsure of how to appropriate this experience for the present as the factic situation of awaiting the \( \pi\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha \) is no longer available to Dasein. The question as to how genuine temporality might become experienceable in contemporary Dasein on this basis becomes a central concern of his philosophy. In his 1921–22 Aristotle course Heidegger comments that to encounter “factual life and its ontological sense” it is the “genuine temporality of factual life” that is “necessarily and primarily” required to be determined.\(^{27}\) It is our non-genuine sense of temporality that, for Heidegger, blocks access to the self.

Soon, however, Heidegger comes to see death as the event that determines the genuine temporality of Dasein. Death, like the \( \pi\alpha\rho\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha \) for the early Christians, is a certain future event of an unknown time. On this basis Death becomes understood by Heidegger to reveal the genuine temporality of existence because as a certain yet indeterminate future event it reveals life as a specific ‘stretch’. Heidegger then determines that Dasein’s temporality can be said to be primarily anticipatory or futural. Yet it is futural in such a way that it also ‘takes care of its past’, that is, knows that it is determined by its past, and from these temporal moments Dasein’s present can be genuinely understood. Death reveals that the genuine temporality of Dasein is ahead-of-itself-already-in—it is a futurally directed engagement with the world that is always already involved in something. This view of temporality is seen to be so central to Dasein by Heidegger that Dasein is said, in 1924, to be time.\(^{28}\)

Heidegger has now determined the Being of the self as other than consciousness—the human being is not consciousness but temporality. But this determination causes a conflict,


\(^{28}\) See Heidegger, *The Concept of Time*, 51: “But running ahead makes up Dasein’s existence as genuine possibility; Dasein is constituted as possibility in its facticity. The genuine being \([\text{eigentliche Sein}]\) of Dasein is temporalness \([\text{Zeitlichsein}]\). After all Dasein is the ‘time’ that exists in the mode of temporalness
for Heidegger. In his 1924 lecture course *Basic Concepts of Aristotelian Philosophy*, while in the process of outlining Aristotle’s understanding of the being-there of life, Heidegger notices that the ‘meaning of Being’ for the Greeks is presence. He also notices in this course, and it is a discovery that is decisive for his eventual development of the transcendental concept of world, that Being is related to time. “Being-there”, writes Heidegger, “means being-there-now”. ‘Presence’ means both “spatial presence” and “now”. Heidegger sees that the ‘presence’ of whatever is ‘there’ before us is additionally ‘in the present’. He concludes that there is a connection at a fundamental level between Being and time. But Being as presence and its connection to time does not properly describe the Being of Dasein; Dasein is ‘more’ than presence—as primarily anticipatory its temporality extends beyond the present. Thus the “dominance of Greek ontology”, writes Heidegger in 1924, of the understanding of Being as present in the now, “blocks ontological access to Dasein”. It is for this reason that Heidegger, in his 1925 lectures on Dilthey, indicates that he believes that to understand the Being of Dasein it is necessary to undertake a phenomenological destruction of the history of the concept of Being. But in *History of the Concept of Time* in 1925, he indicates that to understand Being it is necessary to provide a history of the concept of time. As Being is connected to time on a fundamental level for Heidegger he hopes that an analysis of time, that takes the time of Dasein as its leading clue, will reveal a sense of Being hidden somewhere in the tradition that has not been reduced to mere presence and that can account for the Being of Dasein as a self. It is, however, not until the course of the following semester, *Logic: The Question of Truth* in 1925–26, that he enacts this investigation into the problem of Being (as presence) in its connection to Dasein as time and considers Kant’s discussion of time in the first *Critique*.

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It is here that the breakthrough to the transcendental concept of world occurs. Undertaking his phenomenological reading of the first Critique Heidegger sees that time is not, for Kant, ‘produced’ by the subject, but is that which is originally given to the subject. For Heidegger, the interpretation of Kant’s comment that time and space belong to the “subjective constitution of our mind” as indicating that time and space emanate from the subject is a Cartesianism.31 This ‘dogma’ that he has apparently read “over and over again in the standard Kant-literature” is held to be a fundamental misreading of Kant that has led to the confusion over the role of space and time in Kant’s thinking.32

As ‘primarily and originally intuited’ time and space are, in Heidegger’s reading of Kant, what is first given so that there may be any subsequent perception of objects. For there to be a sensory manifold given to the senses at all, for Heidegger, the “the manifold that encounters the senses has to encounter [us] on the basis of an antecedent view of something that makes it possible for a manifold (i.e., whatever is given as a manifold) to encounter the senses”.33 In Heidegger’s reading of Kant, “space and time as the simple manifoldness of next-to-each-other and one-after-another are that which [allow] a manifold to encounter outer and inner sense respectively”.34 Space and time are antecedently and unthematically given so that a sensory manifold of appearances may be given.

Yet time, Heidegger’s true concern here, has a priority over space in Kant’s first Critique. As there is nothing in the pure concepts of the understanding that could be homogenous with appearances Kant concludes that a third term is required to mediate the two, one that is “pure ([or non-empirical]) and yet intellectual on the one hand and sensible on the other.”35 It is time that Kant sees as this third term. Time, as universal and a priori is ‘pure’ and

31. Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, B38.
33. Ibid., 234.
34. Ibid., 238
intellectual, yet in its accompanying of every empirical representation of the sensible manifold of appearances it is homogenous with sensibility. Thus time, as homogenous to both sensibility and the understanding, is able to mediate between the categories and appearances. For Heidegger, this exposition on the crucial role of time for the understanding in Kant indicates for his own thinking that time is that which allows Being to be understood. He writes that time is “given so unthematically that, precisely so given, time is the condition of the possibility of relating to entities”. Time is said to be “the condition of possibility of the fact that there is Being”, time is that which allows Being to be understood at all.

Time allows Being to be understood, however, as it is an ‘unthematic prior view’. Time is a “prior, unthematic taking-a-look” or “pre-viewing” and is “unthematicallly pre-viewed in the pre-view that is antecedent in all intuiting”. This suggests that it is time that is the ‘original view’, pre-form, or pre-image discussed in “On the Essence of Ground” that characterised world understood in its transcendental sense. Indeed, it is because time is a “pure image”—a non-empirical schema-image—that it can be understood to be pre-viewed unthematically. It can therefore be said that it is time that is the transcendental concept of world. This notion is further supported by Heidegger’s definition of world in the Leibniz course as the self-temporalising of temporality and as ‘originary nothing’. World is explicitly said to be time here and as Kant defines pure time—as an empty intuition without an object, or as the mere form of intuition—as nothing in the first *Critique*, naming the world ‘nothing’ also signifies that the world is temporality as unthematic prior view.

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37. Ibid., 338.
38. Ibid., 330.
39. Ibid., 310.
40. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A291, A292. Furthermore, that Heidegger names the world as nothing ‘*nihil originarium*’ is a clear allusion to Kant’s naming of pure time as nothing ‘*ens imaginarium*’.
We are now in a position to understand footnote 59 to “On the Essence of Ground”. It is intended to indicate that the discussion of everydayness is a position from which philosophy can avoid falling into the errors that come when the human being is assumed to be consciousness and also indicate that when philosophy begins in this position we can see that the world of everydayness is founded on world as ‘original view’. Behind the world of significance, and making it possible, is ‘world’ as temporal original view. It is because there is a prior temporal view that entities can then appear as ready-to-hand. It is Dasein’s openness to the pure, non-empirical schema-image of time that allows it to understand the Being of entities as ready-to-hand and constituted by a totality of involvements.

The precise nature of this ‘world’ is not made clear by Heidegger. Indeed, he writes that this sense of time cannot be comprehended by objective apprehension. But it is at least clear that world as a transcendental problem is not a repudiation of the world of everydayness; rather the commitments involved in developing the account of the everyday world led Heidegger to the transcendental concept of world.

There remains, however, one problem for this account to address. As Heidegger apparently discovers the transcendental concept of world at the beginning 1926 it would be expected that this concept of world would feature in Being and Time as this is precisely the time when Heidegger was writing this text. Why then is world as a transcendental problem not discussed in Being and Time? The answer to this question is that the transcendental concept of world was surely to feature in the planned third division of Being and Time, thus its appearance in texts composed immediately after Being and Time, and that there is in fact a reference to the transcendental concept of world in section 69b.

Heidegger writes in this section that

to become possible, Dasein must transcend the entities thematized. Transcendence does not consist in Objectifying, but is presupposed by it. If, however, the thematizing of the present-at-hand within-the-world is a change-over from the concern which discovers by circumspection, then one’s ‘practical’ Being alongside the ready-to-hand is something which a transcendence of Dasein must already underlie.

If, moreover, thematizing modifies and Articulates the understanding of Being, then, in so far as Dasein, the entity which thematizes, exists, it must already understand something like Being. Such understanding of Being can remain neutral. In that case readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand have not yet been distinguished; still less have they been conceived ontologically….And if Dasein’s Being is completely grounded in temporality, then temporality must make possible Being-in-the-world and therewith Dasein’s transcendence; this transcendence in turn provides the support for concernful Being alongside entities within-the-world, whether this Being is theoretical or practical.42

Here Dasein’s transcendence is said to underlie not only the scientific thematisation of ready-to-hand entities as present-at-hand but the being alongside the ready-to-hand at all. And it is also said that as thematising is a modification or articulation of the understanding of Being then there is a ‘neutral’ understanding of Being in which Dasein has not yet determined entities as either ready-to-hand or present-at-hand. The world that is projected in Dasein’s transcendence is therefore understood to be prior to the network of significance relations and although this is not an explicit discussion of the transcendental concept of world as temporal original view, this notion is at least connected to Dasein’s temporality here.

It may be objected that Heidegger later abandons time and that this transcendental

42. Heidegger, Being and Time, H363–4
concept of world is, in the end, inconsequential for our understanding of Heidegger. Heidegger himself, however, maintains that time remained a crucial aspect of his thinking. And there are discussions of time in a number of later texts. Most notably the 1962 lecture “Time and Being”, but also the lecture courses Logic, the Question Concerning the Essence of Language (1934), Hölderlin’s Hymns “Germania” and “The Rhine” (1934–35), and Parmenides (1942–43). Contributions to Philosophy (1936–38) also features an in-depth discussion of time.

For myself, all of this indicates that it is to the transcendental–temporal concept of world that our investigations should be directed in order to understand Heidegger’s thinking.

Thank you.

43. In a response to a question from Joan Stambaugh as to the fate of temporality in his thinking Heidegger replied (in 1970): “Temporality is ‘central’ in Being and Time because the question of Being as such in the sense of presence starts with an analytic of human being which keeps itself ecstatically open to Being. As a consequence of the turn, temporality is not given up but becomes the question of time and Being”. Time is there not abandoned it is only that the question of ‘Being and time’ has become the question of ‘time and Being’ as a consequence of the ‘turn’ [Kehre]. See Heidegger, The End of Philosophy, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), xi–xii.