Umwelt in Husserl and Heidegger

Thomas Nenon

The conception of the Umwelt, commonly translated as “surrounding world” or “environing world,” was first introduced as a key term in a major philosophical work in Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time* in 1927. Husserl’s conception of the Lebenswelt (life-world) that he presented to a wider public for the first time in his final work, *The Crisis of European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology*, in 1936 shares much in common with Heidegger’s conception of the Umwelt, so it is understandable how it could appear that Husserl’s conception of the life-world in the Crisis could be traced back to his appropriation of Heidegger’s notion of the Umwelt from *Being and Time*. At the latest, however, the appearance of Husserl’s *Ideas II* should have dispelled that notion, but due to the fact that *Ideas II* attracted much less attention than the works published during Husserl’s lifetime and was not translated into English until the end of the 1980s, that mistaken view persisted much longer than it should have. With the publication of Heidegger’s early lecture courses from Freiburg and Marburg prior to the appearance of *Being and Time* in 1927 over the last couple of decades, and the extensive research manuscripts on the life-world that recently appeared as Volume 39 of Husserliana, we now have a much richer set of sources to document how, for each of them, the conception of an Umwelt comes to play a key role in the period between the appearance of Husserl’s *Ideas I* in 1913 and Heidegger’s landmark work in 1927. We now can see very clearly (1) how Husserl’s conception of the Umwelt was developed in the period immediately following *Ideas I* as part of his positive appropriation of insights from Dilthey (among others) into the structure of the geistige Welt (spiritual or intellectual world) in which we lead our daily lives and which is the subject of the Geisteswissenschaften (humanities); (2) that Husserl’s work at this time was the basis not only for his conception of the Umwelt in the *Ideas II*, but that it also served as a starting point for what was later to be thematized as the Lebenswelt in his final work, and (3) that Husserl’s work from this period also served as the source for Heidegger’s own unique appropriation of the concept as well.

Rochus Sowa traces the concept further back to Husserl’s appropriation of the term from Richard Avenarius’s *Der menschliche Weltbegriff (The Human Concept of the World)* from 1891. Certainly Husserl did read this work and the basic contrast between the Umwelt as the everyday world in which we live versus the non-intuitive, artificial world of science that is one of Avenarius’s topics is reflected in Husserl’s use of the term and, by extension, in Heidegger’s as well. However, Husserl clearly takes it in a new direction, as we shall see, and there are some significant differences between the approach Husserl takes and that of Heidegger. This chapter will be devoted to the comparison of the latter two figures and the question about the philosophical issues at stake in those areas where their conceptions do part from one another.

The Conception of the Umwelt in Husserl’s *Ideas II*

In *Ideas II*, Husserl introduces the Umwelt as the realm populated by all kinds of things that present themselves to us in our everyday experience not just in terms of their perceptible properties, but also in terms of their values and uses to us. It is the world as it shows itself not in the naturalistic attitude (for instance, that of modern natural science) but in what he calls the “personalistic” attitude in which we actually conduct our daily lives. It is the world in which a person is not primarily interested in theoretical knowledge for its own sake but rather “conducts himself as an acting human being in practical life, makes use of the objects of his Umwelt, shapes them to his purposes, and thereby evaluates them according to aesthetic, ethical, utilitarian viewpoints, or in which he engages in a communicative relationship to his fellow human beings, talks to them, writes letters to them, reads about them in the newspaper, associates with them in common acts, makes promises to them, etc.” It contains “not mere things (Dinge), but use-objects (clothes, household utensils, weapons, tools), works of art, literary products, items used in religious or legal actions (seals, official necklaces, coronation insignia, ecclesiastic symbols, etc.); and it contains not only individual persons: the persons are rather members of communities, of higher-order personal unities that lead their lives as a whole, maintain themselves as individuals continually enter or leave the communities across time, which have their own communal characteristics, ethical and legal orders, their own ways
of functioning, their dependencies on circumstances, orderly patterns of change, their ways of developing or remaining constant over time depending on the circumstances.\(^4\)

The transition from the one world, the realm of nature, to the realm of the Umwelt is correlated to a change in one’s Einstellung, one’s attitude. In the naturalistic attitude, even living things are seen as physo-psychic units and the mental life of animals and other human beings is considered as a causal factor which we use to explain their behavior. It is the world made up strictly of spatiotemporally located, causally determined individuals. By contrast, in the personalistic attitude we see ourselves as “persons,” as individuals who each are “the subject of an Umwelt.”\(^5\) In fact, Husserl says, “The concepts I and Umwelt are inseparably related to each other;”\(^6\) and further, “To each person thereby belongs his Umwelt, whereas at the same time several people communicating with each other have a common Umwelt.”\(^7\) The person relates to objects not just in terms of perceiving and knowing, but rather the person is a “representing, feeling, evaluating, striving, acting person”\(^8\) who views the objects she encounters above all in terms of the aesthetic and practical predicates that constitute them as the objects they are: as painful or pleasant, beautiful or repugnant, suitable for certain purposes or unsuitable, good or bad. To say that persons have a common Umwelt is not just to say that they are surrounded by the same spatiotemporally located objects, but also to say that they share some common understandings of these things’ values and uses, that they relate to commonly understood higher-order personalities as members of the same communities, and that they communicate with each other, understand and partake in common projects, and share some common understandings of the aesthetic and practical implications of those projects and the objects they employ to pursue them.

Husserl describes how the objects we encounter within the Umwelt possess multiple “strata,” or kinds of predicates. At the “lowest” or simplest level, these include the predicates presented in “simple” intuitive experiences in which objects are given and grasped as actually present—perceptual experiences that register color and feel, for instance. At the next, higher level, these include the predicates given to us “for instance, in evaluative acts, in acts of being pleased or displeased,”\(^9\) Wertnehmungen or “value perceptions” he calls them,\(^10\) in which the value characteristics they possess are originally and intuitively given, for instance, when one hears the pleasing tone of a violin, whose beauty is “originarily given when the tone originally moves one’s spirit [Gesinnung] and the beauty as such is originally given in the medium of this pleasure.”\(^11\) Similarly, and at a yet higher level, he describes how we perceive the practical predicates of the objects that surround us in our daily lives. The perceived positive or negative values (Husserl’s examples here are all examples of positive values, though) serve as stimuli, and evoke desires that lead to actions: “The experienced objects as objects with this experiential sense stimulate my desires, or they fulfill needs in relation to certain circumstances that are constituted in consciousness, for example the often recurring need for nourishment. They then become apprehensible as consistent with the satisfaction of such needs or as suitable for that purpose.”\(^12\)

This conception of the way we encounter “higher-order” objectivities not just in terms of their directly perceptible “physical” properties, but also in terms of the value-predicates and practical predicates that constitute them as the things they are very much as immediately as their “physical” properties, depends upon the notion of “foundation” and Husserl’s broad conception of “intuition” that were originally presented in the Logical Investigations and extended in Ideas I to the practical and evaluative spheres. In the Logical Investigations, Husserl defined “foundation” as a one-sided dependency relationship, first with regard to “meanings,” then by extension to the objects presented in terms of those meanings and finally to the acts of confirmation that fulfill (or disappoint and refute) the intentions related to those meanings and objects. A meaning, an object, or an intuition that is founded upon another depends on the latter, relatively simpler, and thus lower-order meaning, object, or intuition without being reducible to it. So, for example, the beautiful tone of the violin presupposes a stratum of physical properties (volume, pitch, etc., which we can describe in more or less physicalistic terms), but is not reducible to any of those properties or the sum of them. This relationship is similar to the famous example from the “Sixth Logical Investigation” where a categorical intuition of a state of affairs depends upon, but is not reducible to, the sense intuitions upon which it is founded.\(^13\) Husserl’s expanded notion of intuition, then, includes not just sense intuitions, but also more complex, higher-order intuitions that may be founded upon them such as categorical intuitions.

In Logical Investigations, Husserl concentrated primarily upon intentions and objects related to theoretical knowledge. In Ideas I, however, Husserl makes explicit that practical and evaluative strata may be just as essential constitutive elements of various kinds or regions of higher-order objects. Moreover, each of these regions will also have its own specific forms of intuition as well that serve to confirm or disconfirm the practical and evaluative predicates that constitute these objectivities: “To every region and category of alleged objects there corresponds phenomenologically not only a fundamental sort of sense, or of positing, but also a fundamental type of originarily presentative consciousness of such senses and, belonging to it, a fundamental type of originary evidence.
which is essentially motivated by originary givenness of such a character. Through the introduction of the notion of regions, each with its own appropriate kind of intention, its own kind of objectivities, and its own kind of evidence—all of which are essentially correlated to each other—he has opened up the possibility of a whole range of distinctions that go far beyond the difference between sense objects (things) and categorial objects. Of course, already in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl had made many more distinctions than just these between objects, but in *Ideas I* he is very explicit about how many and different these may be (consider, for example, the differences between the region of nature from the region of spiritual objects, and within this latter realm, the difference between use-objects and persons, and the difference between these kinds of objects, all of which are physically instantiated, from the regions of numbers or of logical principles).

In §199 of *Ideas I*, Husserl then continues by explicitly expanding this notion of evidence and, correspondingly, of reason as the rightness of posting an object or a specific predicate of an object, beyond the theoretical sphere into what he terms the “axiological” or aesthetic sphere and the practical sphere as well. In each of them, the character of reason is said to be the “character of rightness” whereby the intention of something is directed towards the fulfillment of that intention (even if only as an ideal) in the appropriate kind of experience that confirms that this object is indeed beautiful, pleasant, or admirable instead of the opposite, or that this action is indeed a good rather than a bad action: “Evidence is by no means merely a title for these kinds of rational processes in the sphere of beliefs (and certainly not just in predicative judgments), but rather for all thetic spheres and in particular for the significant relationships of reason that obtain between them.” Each of these spheres is unique and will have its own specific forms of justification that share some general structural similarities with those of other spheres but will also manifest significant differences as well. *Ideas II*, in particular the “Third Section” on “The Constitution of the Spiritual World,” provides concrete examples of the kinds of regions Husserl has in mind in the more formal and methodological statements he made in *Ideas I*.

The fact that all of forms of reason that are constitutive of these regions and that the objects that appear within them all aim at the givenness of “evidence,” which only experience in the broadest sense can provide, makes it clear that “constitution” means something other than “production.” Constitution involves an openness to certain kinds of experiences in light of which things can show themselves as the things they are. Looking at things in terms of their utility is not what makes them useful. It is the condition for the possibility for things to show themselves as useful or useless for a certain purpose, but it is their usefulness itself that makes them useful, just as Husserl believes that it is the value of a good thing that makes it preferable, and not the other way around.

The *Umwelt*, then, is the all-encompassing region that corresponds to the general attitude Husserl calls the “personalistic” attitude, in which we are directed towards objects whose predicates essentially involve evaluative and practical as well as theoretical traits of those objects. These include things like use-objects as well as even more complex objects such as artworks, persons, and things like communities, families, and states that he calls “higher-order personalities.” The broad range of the kinds or regions of objects that populate the *Umwelt* is the reason for calling it an all-encompassing region as opposed to the more specific regions such as the regions of persons, mathematical items, or use-objects. We do not just hear sounds, we hear the beauty of a violin’s tone; we do not see bodies into which we introject a “spirit” (*Geist*), in the personalistic attitude, but rather, the subject sees them “as persons who are active in their *Umwelt*, being determined by its objects and always able to be determined anew by them” (Ideas II, 4:190).

Several other points about the basic structure of the *Umwelt* deserve mention here. The first is that it contains not only higher-order personalities, communities, but also that the *Umwelt* is essentially social or communal in nature. Even though it may indeed make sense to speak of an individual *Umwelt*, this is still always only against the background of a commonly understood *Umwelt* that is in principle accessible to any member of the community of which the individual is a member: “The *Umwelt* that is constituted in the experience of others, in mutual understanding and agreement with them, we characterize as the *communicative Umwelt*. It is by its very nature relative to persons who find themselves within it and find it as what confronts them. That applies to it as well as to the ‘egositic *Umwelt*’ of the person thought of as singular, i.e., of the person thought of abstractly in its relationship to its *Umwelt* so that it does not include any relations of agreement with other persons (no social groups).” Note that Husserl recognizes something like an individual or egoistic *Umwelt*, but that he also makes clear that this notion involves “abstructive processes” from the social world in which we actually live.

*Ideas II* also emphasizes in several different places that the idea of “nature” that emerges in the naturalistic attitude is also an abstraction from the world in which we normally and naturally live. To come up with an idea of something like “nature” as it shows up in the naturalistic attitude, several levels of abstractive acts are required. The first and most basic is the abstractive move away from the elements constitutive of the everyday experience of objects in terms of our *Gesichtserlebnisse* (feeling-
attitude is rather the personalistic attitude, the one in which we actually live our lives, and the attitude on the basis of which certain abstractions and constructions can be undertaken that result in the naturalistic attitude and the idea of nature as its correlate. Hence, the world in which we live our daily lives is not nature in this sense, but rather the Umwelt.

The description just provided of the modifications necessary for the construction of nature in the sense of modern natural science included the notion of its intersubjective sameness. As we have seen, however, intersubjectivity is a feature of the Umwelt as well. Sociality and communication also presuppose modes of intersubjectivity in the personalistic attitude. Moreover, the descriptions of social interactions in the Umwelt makes clear that we presuppose not only common access, but to a certain extent even shared evaluations and practical understandings of these objects as well. The primary difference between the Umwelt and nature, however, is that we do not assume that the shared assessments in the Umwelt are universal. Rather, as Husserl describes in more detail in later developments of his thinking on this issue, part of what constitutes a community as this instead of that one is that these assessments and practical understandings are shared by the other members of the community, but not necessarily by members of other communities. (This point will be later drawn out much more clearly in the further development of the concept of the Umwelt into the Lebenswelt as the difference between home worlds [Heimwelt] and alien worlds [Freidwelt].) In fact, as Husserl’s continuing work on the Lebenswelt makes very clear, part of the motivation for bracketing out the evaluative and practical considerations in the project of the development of modern natural science and the scientific attitude is the desire to transcend the differences between communities and individuals that necessarily result from the fact that even shared values and practical priorities are nonetheless relative to specific communities and historical circumstances and therefore by definition cannot be universal.

In Ideas II, the notion of an intersubjective nature in the sense of the “objective” things in themselves is centered less around the question of overcoming these “relativities” than on the “relativity” of the embodied perceptual subject. In the famous description of the role that our kinesthetic awareness of our own bodily condition plays in the perception of the objects of knowledge, Husserl describes how our background awareness of the very specific condition and location of our own body is essential for our ability to figure out what changes in the perceptual field can be traced back to changes in one’s own bodily condition and location and which ones are best attributed to changes in the object. Even at this very basic level, it is clear that part of what it means to perceive an
object accurately is the ability to track and abstract from changes in one’s own bodily condition. Hence it is not only with the advent of the modern scientific project that something like a distinction between subjectivity and objectivity emerges, but rather Husserl’s analyses of kinesis show how we make this distinction all the time and at a very basic level in our everyday experience. The scientific enterprise builds upon this project and radicalizes it by attempting to achieve an ideal of objectivity that would hold for any knower, which is why it abstracts not only from inherently culturally and historically variant elements such as values and practical projects, but increasingly also from the specific dependencies in perception upon varying human bodily capacities and circumstances by reference to things like “primary properties” that are supposed to be objective properties of the things themselves versus “secondary properties” that have as much to do with the nature of subjective human perceptual capacities as with the properties of the perceived objects. Husserl’s own analyses in the third chapter of “Part One” of Ideas II explain and validate that project, but also show its limits by making clear that gains come at the cost of increasing abstraction and that the notion of objectivity that does not involve subjectivity and that completely transcends the essential role of embodied perception is an illusion. All perceptions presuppose some form of embodied subject located somewhere in time and space so that the point of departure for any construction of reality must always implicitly involve “subjective” elements of perception. Moreover, the point is not made nearly as clearly in Ideas II as in later writings such as the Crisis, but the analyses in “Section One” of Ideas II still show how the modern scientific project itself emerges historically and how certain values and aims undergird the project, so that it is still fair to say that even here Husserl has demonstrated how science itself is a historical and cultural project—to use contemporary language, “a social construction”—that is nonetheless legitimate and powerful even if it does not achieve its goal of attaining a kind of objectivity that does not essentially involve a whole range of “subjective” elements in the constitution of science and the objects it investigates.

While it is true that the only section in Ideas II where Husserl explicitly and extensively treats embodiment and its role in the constitution of objects is “Section One” in his analyses of kinesis and the role it plays in perception, embodiment is nonetheless noted as an essential element of valuing and action in the spiritual world in sections two and three as well. For instance, in §§27 Husserl notes how the body is involved in the constitution of tactile abilities and tactile impressions such as warmth and pain that are later included as examples of very basic positive and negative values in §§39. In §§8, he adds that the body is not only the field where impressions are located, but that it also has the unique distinction of being the “organ of the will” through which reactions and actions become actual. Of course, it is also clear from the outset that persons are a subspecies of entities that exist in space and time and can be perceived by others. Intersubjectivity presupposes embodiment. We have to sense, that is, to see, hear, or feel some perceptible qualities of persons to know something about them—whether it is about their physical states in the narrower sense or about their mental states. However, to see them as persons is to “comprehend” their movements as actions, as expressing mental states. Moreover, they not only have a physical stratum, but the kind of bodies they have will have much to do with determining the positive or negative values of certain experiences and the possibilities or impossibilities of actions—even if we see the actions of persons as guided not by merely physical causality, but by motivation.

Not only the sensations which exercise a constitutive function as regards the constitution of sense-things, appearing spatial objects, not only these sensations have a localization given in intuition along with the relation to a body, but that is also true of sensations belonging to totally different groups, e.g., the “sensuous” feelings, the sensations of pleasure and pain, the sense of well-being that permeates and fills the whole body, the general malaise of “corporeal indisposition,” etc. Thus here belong groups of sensations which, for the acts of valuing, i.e., for intentional lived experiences in the sphere of feeling, or for the constitution of values as their intentional correlates, play a role, as matter, analogous to that played by the primary sensation for what is intentionally lived in the sphere of experience, or for the constitution of objects as spatial objects.

The same holds for practical possibilities as well: “I have power over my body, and I have power in the physical world only on account of my power over my body. If I represent to myself the movement of my hand in the form, ‘I move my hand,’ then I am representing an ‘I do’ and not merely mechanical motion. But such a representation is not yet an ‘I can.’ In the ‘I can’ there obviously resides not merely a representation but, beyond that, a thesis, one which thereby concerns not only myself but also the ‘doing,’ not the actual doing but precisely the being able to do.” It is the actions of embodied persons, not disembodied spirits, that we explain in terms of these motivations.

Finally, it is important to note that we attribute to persons in their actions a “style”—whether it be in their mental states as such or in their actions. According to Husserl, mental states are not just an aggregate of
individual experiences, but rather constitute a unity. Not just persons, but even animals with "souls" have a kind of mental history according to which past experiences create dispositions to think or act in a certain way in the future as well: "Each experience leaves behind itself a wake of dispositions and creates something new with regard to psychic reality. Hence this reality is always transforming itself [. . .]. The individual lived experiences singled out are, in this respect, 'states' of the soul in its fullness only insofar as they fit within the total consciousness and are, in their total nexus, transitional points for particular avenues of manifestation." As the dispositions of persons, these dispositions are not only the result of our experiences, but also our decisions that can establish new dispositions. Even at the level of the soul, though, there is a history: "To the essence of the soul pertains a continuous new formation or re-formation of dispositions under the well-known titles of association, habit, memory, but also motivated change in sense, motivated change of convictions, of orientations of feeling (dispositions toward taking positions as regards feelings or towards the corresponding abstaining), and of orientations of will, which certainly, in accord with the orientations of apprehension, are not reducible to mere association." What persons passively experience and what they actively decide, establish patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that make the person who he or she is. Hence: "Every human being has his or her character, we can say, his or her style of life in affection and action, with regard to the way he has of being motivated by such and such circumstances. And it is not that he or she merely had this up to now; this style is rather something permanent, at least relatively so in the various stages of life, and then, when it changes, it does so again, in general in a characteristic way, such that, consequent upon these changes, a unitary style manifests itself once more." Some things will be typical of all humans based on similarities of human embodiment and of the basic structures of mental life, but the differences in experience will also lead to individual differences and different characters as well. It is also important to note that personal histories always involve both passive and active moments, primary passivities as things that I simply find myself confronted with—be they things I encounter in the world or bodily or mental inclinations that are there before I ever choose them or perhaps even ever really know about—and secondary passivities that result from things that I did perhaps consciously choose or do but have now become habitual, and activities in the strongest sense of things that I as a person freely choose based on reflection, my own self-understanding, and decisions about the beliefs, values, and actions that I form on the basis of my awareness of the well-foundedness of those different kinds of otherwise passive and merely habitual position-takings or of the lack of them.

*Ideen II* does not address the social dimension of this historicity, the way that one dimension of this historicity has to do with what I have appropriated from the community in which I grew up before I ever think about it, or the ways that different communities each develop their own styles and histories based on their own circumstances and experiences and the decisions made over time by the individuals that comprise them. Systematically, they would have their place here, and nothing he says in *Ideen II* is inconsistent with these insights that he will develop further in research manuscripts over the next two decades and articulate in the *Crisis*.

In sum, then, the *Umwelt* for Husserl is the comprehensive region that encompasses all of the different kinds of things that people experience in their daily lives, not only as potentially or actually real, but also as relevant for them in terms of their values (or disvalues) and uses (or lack of them). It includes physical as well as ideal objects, use-objects, artworks, animals, other persons, and social entities. It is the correlate of the concrete, in the sense of the full experience of ourselves and other persons and things that matter to us and with which we interact, and it is the point of departure out of which abstract sub-contexts like the world of science and nature as the correlate of natural science can emerge in the first place.

The Conception of the *Umwelt* in Heidegger's Early Lectures and in *Being and Time*

The concept of the *Umwelt* plays an important role in Heidegger's earliest Freiburg lectures, delivered in 1919–20 shortly after Edith Stein had collaborated with Husserl in arranging and transcribing research manuscripts organized around the topic of nature and spirit into a draft of what would be published several decades later as *Ideen II*, and at about the same time as Husserl had delivered a public lecture on "Nature and Spirit," and was also preparing lecture courses on that topic. In his lectures on Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Heidegger follows Husserl in two main respects by using the term *Umwelt* to describe the world that surrounds us in our daily lives and by contrasting this world, filled with significance, with the world of science and theoretical knowledge.
Here in Heidegger’s first lectures, though, the Umwelt in the narrower sense is the name for just one of three aspects of the everyday life-world that includes the Umwelt, “landscapes, regions, cities, and deserts,” and the with-world (Mitwelt) comprised of things like “parents, siblings, acquaintances, supervisors, teachers, students, civil servants, strangers, the man over there with the elegant hat, the little girl here with her doll,” and the self-world (Selbstwelt) that has to do with how I encounter things as a whole and “tends my life its personal rhythm.” A few lines later, though, he uses the term in a broader sense when he subsumes all three aspects under the heading of an “(allgemeinem Um-)Welt” (“general surrounding” world). He continues, “Our life is our world—and seldom so that we simply observe it, but rather always, even completely inconspicuously, in a hidden way, ‘are engaged in it’: ‘captivated,’ ‘repulsed,’ ‘enjoying,’ ‘abstaining.’ ‘We encounter it always in some way.’ Our life is the world, in which we live, into which and in each case within which the tendencies of life proceed. And our life is only as life in as far it lives in this world.”

The key character of the Umwelt, whether in the narrower or the broader sense, is that it matters to us because our lives and the things and the people that surround us, matter to us in one way or another.

The Umwelt in the narrow sense remains relatively underdeveloped in these lectures. Even the initial description is quite general—conveying the impression that the Umwelt is more like the geographical setting in which one finds oneself, certainly involving much more significance and content than just one’s physical location on a Cartesian grid, but not clearly related even to the kinds of objects one might encounter there. The determination of the we-world includes specific entities as its examples, namely other human beings seen in terms of their social and emotional relationship to us. The description of the self-world in the passage quoted above is the most underdetermined, but toward the end of the lecture course, Heidegger turns to the description of the self-world very explicitly and describes how differences in the self-world, how one views oneself and one’s own life as a whole, is the most important determining factor in how the world as a whole, the other two aspects of world, and the various entities that appear within the world will show up for us. Consistent with Heidegger’s claim that life and world are correlates and that what matters to us is our lives themselves—he calls this characteristic of life its “self-sufficiency”—namely that everything that matters can be traced back in one way or another to the experience of it and how this impacts our lives—his analyses are couched in terms of the way that various objects and experiences have significance for our lives and less in terms of the world itself. Based on this insight, he sees his investigations as taking a new kind of approach compared to modern philosophy’s emphasis on perception and theoretical knowledge that he intends to replace with a phenomenological hermeneutics that will show how things within the world as we actually experience them have to do directly or indirectly with our understanding of life itself.

Over the next few years, the concept of the Umwelt continues to play a central role, but it changes in important ways over time. Whereas in the 1919–20 lectures, the Umwelt seemed to be associated more with geographical or spatial settings, by 1923 it takes on a more comprehensive sense that is closer to Husserl’s description of the Umwelt primarily in terms of the way that things within it present themselves above all in terms of their value to us or their practical uses. In place of the description of human being primarily in terms of the concept of “life,” Heidegger now also speaks of a “Dasein” that has “Being-in-the-world” as one of its fundamental structures. Moreover, the world that Dasein is in is a world that matters to Dasein so that another name for its being is Sorge or “concern.” That is why the world in which we live is not just an aggregation of real objects, but rather the Umwelt in which the “um” connotes its practical relevance as a realm organized around “in-order-to” relationships (um-zu) just as much or more than the um (around) of spatial surroundings: “The ‘um’ is determined primarily and ontologically by no means just from things being situated next to and around each other, but rather is the um of the interaction (Umgang) that is concerned with worldly coping.” And in the 1925 lectures entitled Prolegomena to a History of the Concept of Time, Heidegger explicitly rejects the earlier tripartite division of the world into Umwelt, we-world, and self-world in favor of a description of the everyday world in which we live as one world, the Umwelt that has a public dimension and is indeed shaped decisively by the way we relate to ourselves and others, but he no longer sees them as occupying separate worlds or sub-worlds. “Being-with” is a characteristic of Dasein’s very being instead of a specific world. As he puts it: “the others, even though we encounter them in a worldly way, do not have the mode of being and never the kind of Being that the world has. . . . The ability that Dasein and co-Dasein [Mitdasein] have to encounter each other in a worldly way is indeed constitutive of the Being-in-the-world of Dasein and thus for each Other, but it never thereby becomes something worldly . . . The world itself by contrast is never with us, never something alongside Dasein, but is rather that within which Dasein exists as carrying out its concerns.” Over the next two years, Heidegger will make a sharper terminological distinction between the world itself and things that present themselves “within the world” (innerweltlich) so that he could put the matter even more clearly. Other persons may appear within the world, but never merely as inner-worldly entities; rather, they appear as entities...
that themselves also essentially have a relationship to world because their Being is Being-in-the-world and not merely within the world. For the most part, however, the outlines of worldhood and the Umwelt already in these lectures are quite consistent with the account of the Umwelt presented two years later in *Being and Time*.

Whereas Husserl's descriptions of various aspects of the Umwelt in *Ideas II* are quite expansive with just one major theme that unites them, namely the difference between the way that things show up for us in the Umwelt and the way that they appear in the naturalistic attitude, Heidegger's description of the Umwelt is very focused and includes for the most part only those descriptions of the Umwelt and the entities that appear within it that advance the main topic of *Being and Time*, namely showing the essential relationship between the meaning of Being and temporality in the sense that he develops in "Part Two" of that work. "Part One" shares with Husserl the emphasis on the priority of the practical in the life-world, the contrast with the model of theoretical knowing and reality modeled on the natural sciences that has predominated in modern philosophy, and the demonstration that this kind of knowledge and these kinds of objects are only conceivable not as the foundation for, but as abstractions from the broader acquaintance with the things we interact with in our daily lives in the Umwelt. In this regard, most of "Part One" is quite consistent with the main message of Husserl's *Ideas II* and Heidegger's narrower focus by itself is not a rejection of any of the other themes that Husserl discusses, but rather a way of concentrating on a different question that Husserl himself did not address adequately from Heidegger's perspective.

Heidegger himself is quite explicit that his own analyses depend on many of the same methodological assumptions taken from Husserl's phenomenological approach that provided the foundation for the latter's analyses of the Umwelt—the notions of intentionality and constitution, the theory of higher-order objects and more complex forms of intuition that can confirm intentions about such objects, and upon specific insights such as the role of practical and evaluative predicates as guiding the way that we encounter the things that surround us in our daily lives. Heidegger's own analyses, however, avoid some of the misunderstandings that can result from the way that Husserl developed and presented some of these insights. For instance, he is emphatic that our original access to objects is not first of all in terms of the perceptual predicates describable simply in theoretical terms (lower-order objects) that at some point—either socially or individually—are subsequently endowed with additional practical predicates. What we immediately and normally encounter are things like tables and chairs, pens and pencils, that appear to us in light of their serviceability, use-objects, that only in a subsequent abstractive process, for instance when things break down or when we restrict ourselves to the approaches developed through modern natural science and mentalities oriented on them, come to appear as simply there or as "really" possessing only those predicates that are accessible to every normal perceiving human beings without regard to their culturally and individually variable uses. This is not inconsistent with Husserl's views, as the earlier mentioned example of immediately hearing the beautiful tone of the violin instead of sounds that are subsequently endowed with aesthetic predicates—but Heidegger's descriptions of the relationship between what Husserl calls lower-order and high-order predicates are much more consistent in stating that the very notion of lower-order predicates is an abstraction from our concrete experience of objects that is normally guided by the way that their higher-order predicates matter to us.

Heidegger introduces the notion of the Umwelt in *Being and Time* as part of his broader project of illuminating the worldhood of the world in terms of the everyday world in which we live, namely the Umwelt. Moreover, he begins these analyses first with a description of how the beings we encounter within the Umwelt usually and for the most part show themselves to us in our daily lives and then asking what must be presupposed as background conditions for them to show up that way for us. The answer will be that this presupposes an understanding of possible ways of dealing with them in order for us to grasp the relevance they have or do not have for us in our everyday encounters with them. The "world" then is not a set of objects, but rather a network of possibilities that have significance for us and make something like the relevance of beings within the world possible in the first place.

It is important to emphasize that Heidegger does not claim that the Umwelt as he introduces it in *Being and Time* is the only world, or even that the dichotomy between the Umwelt and the notion of nature that is derived from it by abstractive processes are the only worlds. He notes in an important footnote to the essay "Concerning the Essence of Grounds" ("Vom Wesen des Grundes") that "nature" in the sense of "nature in the original sense" does not fit either of these frameworks described there. Already in *Being and Time* he notes that, in the Umwelt, nature shows up as natural resources, and that one can also abstract from its usability or "ready-to-hand" character and be left with it as purely "present at hand" in the way that modern natural science sees it, but that neither of these ways of disclosing nature is open to "nature as that which 'stirs and strives,' overcomes us, captivates us as a landscape." Nor does it include, for instance, artworks or religious objects. In fact, he does not even include what Husserl would have called either "ideal objects" or "higher-order
personalities," social institutions, as examples in his analyses in *Being and Time* even though he had mentioned them as the kinds of things that we encounter in our everyday lives throughout the lecture courses that preceded the composition of *Being and Time*. This does not mean that a comprehensive ontology would not have to include such regions, but just that some of them are not subsumable to either the *Umwelt* as the realm of instrumental action or nature in the sense of natural science, and that the account of the genesis of others, for example, ideal objects such as numbers, or social institutions would involve a much more complex analysis than the very straightforward and focused description of worldhood in general and the *Umwelt* in particular that can be found in *Being and Time*. *Being and Time* does not purport to provide a complete answer to the question of the meaning of *Being* in general and all kinds of beings in particular, but to provide the horizon against which one would be able to address these more comprehensive questions.

For this reason, the analysis of the *Umwelt* presented in *Being and Time* is more focused than the comprehensive notion of the *Umwelt* that is at work in Husserl's *Ideas II*, where the latter attempts at least to indicate many of the various kinds of entities that are part of the world in which we live our daily lives—including not only use-objects, mathematical objects, and scientific objects, but also artworks and social institutions as well. Heidegger's analyses focus above all on things like tools not because he is attempting to reduce all these other kinds of things simply to tools or use-objects in general, but because the example of tools lends itself so clearly to his main issue, which is how Dasein's understanding of the world as a set of possibilities for Dasein itself is fundamental for the way objects within the world appear for us.

Heidegger's descriptions of the things we encounter in our daily lives and classify above all in terms of their uses for us, as *Zweck* as "equipment" or "instruments," emphasizes how our practical view of them, our *Umsicht*, is guided by our interest in how they can or cannot serve the ends of Dasein or not. We classify things as toys (*Spielding*), vehicles (*Fahrzeug*), or tools (*Werkzeug*) in terms of the activities for which we use them—for playing (*Spiel*), driving (*Fahrt*), or doing work (*Arbeit*). Our interactions with them he calls "Umgang," "instrumental activity," which he indicates is his German term for the Greek term *praxis*. The "um" in all of these cases is again the *um* of *um-zu* (in order to) much more than merely the *um* (around) of spatial surroundings. We see things and know what to do with them, hence Heidegger's determination of their being as "readiness-at-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*). Essential to their very being is their *Bewandtnis* (involvement or relevance). Entities within the *Umwelt* exhibit the structure of "something being relevant for something," whereby the former is the thing or entity and the latter is not a thing, but an activity or, as Heidegger puts it, a "possibility of Dasein" (*Möglichkeit des Daseins*)—a more general term that makes clear that the relevance of a thing concerns not just instrumental activities, but also things that can happen to us, and not just things that people actually do or have happen to them, but also things that might or could occur as well.

Just as the various instruments point to an interconnectedness among each other, for example, hammer and nails, levels, measures, and other instruments involved in carpentry, so too do the possibilities themselves point to each other—hammering, using the level, and the measuring to construct a wall the correct way—but activities and possibilities also exhibit hierarchical instrumental relationships of means and ends. I construct the wall to make a house to live in—subordinate and instrumental activities as means pointing to higher ends that themselves may point to other, even higher, perhaps ultimate ends that endow the subordinate and intermediate ends with the significance they have. Heidegger makes a terminological distinction between the kind of meaning that entities within the *Umwelt* have, namely their *Bewandtnis* or "relevance," and the kind of meaning that possibilities of Dasein—activities and/or things that happen to us—have, namely their *Bedeutung* or "significance."

For Heidegger, the world is not the sum of the objects within the world, but rather the interconnected possibilities that we are aware of, that guide our actions, and determine the relevance of the things within the world as useful or obstructive to our ends. Heidegger explains that the "in" of "Being-in-the-world" is meant to convey a sense of engagement or involvement, not spatial location. The *Umwelt* then is the world of instrumental activities, the sets of possibilities and experiences that have significance for us and determine the relevance of objects within the world. To say that the *Umwelt* is the world in which we find ourselves "zunächst und zumeist" ("at first and for the most part") is to say that much of our daily lives are devoted to achieving ends that matter to us.

But what determines what matters to us? Heidegger notes that every chain of means and ends ultimately points back to an end that is not itself simply a means towards another end, a "Wurzeln," a "for the sake of which,"—which both in its insight and its formulation recalls the Aristotelian notion of a *huphena*. The real question then is what determines the "for the sake of which." If the relevance of the objects is determined by the significance of actions and events that matter to us, then it cannot be any characteristics of the entities independent of our positive or negative assessment of those characteristics, but rather Dasein's estimation of the goodness or badness of what those characteristics enable and serve.
So what determines their significance is Dasein's understanding of the "world," and above all of the ultimate ends that are the source of the significance of the intermediate ends and the means to accomplish them, and this understanding is something that Dasein does. In fact, Heidegger makes a distinction between the way that we are aware of things that hold for entities with in the world as "discovering" (entdecken) and the way we are aware of what holds for possibilities, what is true and false about them as good or bad things, which he calls "Erschlossenheit" ("disclosedness"). Understanding is a form of disclosedness and is itself a kind of activity. It is not a thing, but something Dasein performs. That is why Heidegger can also refer to it as "nothing" in some of the otherwise more puzzling passages in "Part Two."

What then determines or decides how we are disclosed to ourselves and what is truly significant? In his analysis of what he calls the "self" of Dasein, Heidegger contrasts the way that our everyday understanding of the world involves a form of self-forgottenness in which one simply accepts or adopts whatever the common understanding happens to be about what is or is not important, acceptable, desirable, and so on. Dasein essentially involves a relationship to other Dasein, and normally this involves not only an implicit awareness that they too have a different kind of being than entities within the world, everyday objects, but also that we think of them, ourselves, and the things within the world in terms of a set of common understandings and expectations about roles and priorities that seem almost obvious to all of us. "Everyone knows" what is important or right. The "everyone" here is the infamous "they" (das Man) as the form of relation to ourselves and others that predominates in daily life in the Umwelt. It would go beyond the scope of this chapter to attempt to provide a full account how "Part Two" of Being and Time introduces the notion of authentic selfhood that makes possible an authentic relationship to other Dasein in terms of what Heidegger describes as "originary temporality," but even in the "First Section," it is apparent that "fallenness," which is also an essential feature of Dasein, means that an essential tendency towards unthinkingly adopting the common understandings of the "they" predominates in Dasein's everyday relationship to its Umwelt and the things we encounter within it as well.

In "Part Two" it will become apparent that the Worsmumtomten to which all other activities and ends are subordinated is one's life as a whole, that is itself something we do and pursue, and the question of authenticity will involve the awareness that no things within the world or their characteristics and no one else can decide the answer to the question of how we should pursue it, that is, what gives significance to a life as a whole. In our everyday lives in the Umwelt, by contrast, we for the most part avoid confronting that question directly and instead follow established patterns of action and accept the common understandings of the significance of specific possibilities and the relevance of the objects within the world in terms of those possibilities.

Concluding Observations

The foregoing remarks show that there are indeed significant differences between Husserl's descriptions of the Umwelt in Ideas II and Heidegger's descriptions of it in Being and Time. Heidegger's analyses are much more focused on a specific topic, namely how objects within the world derive the meaning they have for us from their relevance for activities and events in our lives that matter to us, and how our understanding of the significance of these activities and events is usually and for the most part unthinkingly taken from the predominant common views of the social settings in which we find ourselves. Being and Time as a hermeneutics of Dasein not only describes how things show up for us in our daily lives, how things like present-at-hand objects emerge by abstraction from the practical concerns of daily life, and how Dasein's being is radically different from either of these. The descriptions of originary temporality and authentic Dasein in "Part Two" can also serve as a call to a more authentic form of existence.

Husserl's analyses, by contrast, are much more wide-ranging since his use of the term Umwelt refers not only to the instrumental character of much of our everyday lives, but to our daily lives as a whole that do indeed include practical concerns, but also include a whole range of other aesthetic considerations and regions of objects beyond just use-objects. This chapter has also attempted to show that the different foci do not necessarily or for the most part involve incompatibilities, but rather differences in emphasis and different projects.

For instance, what Heidegger has to say about authenticity and the role of the "they" in constituting the default assumptions that govern most of our everyday lives is not inconsistent with Husserl's observations that the notion of an individual Umwelt is an abstraction from the common social Umwelt in which we find ourselves; that historically evolved common assumptions provide the starting point for our inherited beliefs, desires, and actions; that, at the same time, personhood involves the ability to perform authentically egoic acts that can call those into question and change them; and that reason allows and demands that individuals take responsibility for their beliefs, values, and actions what-
ever their source. And even though Heidegger has little to say about embodiment, ideal objects, or social institutions in Being and Time, there is nothing there that would preclude phenomenological investigations into these areas along the lines of Husserl’s descriptions in Ideas II or other texts either.

Central to both of their projects is the rejection of the view that our everyday lives and the things that we encounter in our everyday lives can be captured in the concepts and models of reality and theoretical knowledge that are oriented on approaches developed in modern natural science. For both thinkers, the project is not to show how the Umwelt can be reduced to a physically conceived nature, but rather how certain abstractive processes and interests can allow something like “nature” in this very specific sense to be constituted, and to stress the legitimacy of a whole range of different regions of objects and ways of encountering them other than those recognized by modern natural science or philosophers who take an approach to reality and knowing modeled on the modern natural sciences as the only legitimate ones.

Notes

1. Martin Heidegger, Sein und Zeit (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1972). All citations will be listed according to the page numbers in the Niemeyer edition, which are also listed in the margins of both the published English translations.

2. Edmund Husserl, Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie, Husserliana, vol. 4 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952). Except for the Logical Investigations, all citations of Husserl’s works will be quoted using the volume number of the Husserliana series in Arabic numerals, followed by the page number of the German original. These page numbers are listed in the margins of the various English translations.


6. In the Husserl’s “Einleitung des Herausgebers” to Husserliana 39 (see fn.4), xxix–xxxvii.

15. Husserl, Ideen II, 186.
32. Husserl, Ideen II, 152.
34. Husserl, Ideen II, 133.
40. Edmund Husserl, “Natur und Geist (Vortrag in der kulturwissenschaft-

41. Martin Heidegger, Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, in Gesamtausgabe, vol. 58 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1993).

42. Heidegger, Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, 33.
43. Heidegger, Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, 33.
44. Heidegger, Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, 33.
47. Heidegger, Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, 40–42.
48. Martin Heidegger, Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität), in Gesamtausgabe, vol. 63 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1988).
49. Heidegger, Ontologie (Hermeneutik der Faktizität), 102.
50. Martin Heidegger, Prolegomena zur Geschichte der Zeitbegriff, in Gesamtausgabe, vol. 20 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979).
53. Heidegger, Sem und Zeit, 70.
55. Heidegger, Sem und Zeit, 71.
57. Heidegger, Sem und Zeit, 82.
58. Heidegger, Sem und Zeit, 175–79.
59. I have tried to establish the case for this assertion in “Originary Temporality, the Origin of Modality, and the Question of the Limits of Toleration in Heidegger’s Being and Time,” in Interpretando la Experiencia de la Tolerancia, ed. C. Montecagudo and R. Rizo-Patron (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2005), 107–22.

60. For a comparison of Husserl and Heidegger’s very significant differences on the grounding of an ethics, see Thomas Nenon, “Martin Heidegger and the Grounding of Ethics” in Husserl’s “Iden,” ed. Embree and Thomas Nenon (Berlin: Springer, 2012), 177–94.

Edited by Michael Bowler
and Ingo Farin

Northwestern University Press
Evanston, Illinois

2016