HEIDEGGER’S LANGUAGE

Adrian J. Staples, B.A. (Hons)

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Abstract

In this dissertation I attempt to provide a cogent reading of Heidegger’s fledgling account of the being of language. Emphasis is placed on the analysis of language in *Being and Time* in particular; for it is with respect to *Being and Time* that interpretations of Heidegger’s fledgling account are developed, and against which his mature account is usually contrasted. Amongst these interpretations are the derivativist and instrumentalist accounts of language, which suppose that language is itself pre-figured by a pre- or non-linguistic grasp of phenomena. Against these accounts, the structure and arguments for which I lay bare, I contend that language is in each case already there, meaningfully articulating the world, affecting understanding *ab initio*; that language is not therefore prefigured by – and in the first instance absent from – the being-in-the-world which is our own. This, I claim, is also Heidegger’s stance; a stance which, formed in *Being and Time* in essence, founds his subsequent, increasingly dedicated thinking about what language, as such, ‘is’.

In addition to my critique of instrumentalism and derivativism in this dissertation, I contest the contemporary pragmatist reading of *Being and Time* inasmuch as it is occasionally employed to champion a non-linguistic normative pragmatism with which to explain just how a non- or pre-linguistic grasp of phenomena might properly occur.

As such, this dissertation encourages the reorientation of the philosophy of language (as well as contemporary thinking about Heidegger’s own account of the phenomenon) away from the temptation to think language ‘formally’ according to an hierarchical structure of being-in-the-world, and towards the role and function of language in the structural articulation* of the world itself, human being-there, and the hermeneutic tradition in which we inevitably find ourselves to be. As such,

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1 In *Being and Time* Heidegger uses two verbs which are best translated into English as ‘to articulate’. These are *gliedern* and *artikulieren*. In German, the former, *gliedern*, means ‘to articulate’ in the sense of ‘to divide into’, ‘to separate’ or ‘to organise’ – the word *Glied* means ‘limb’ or ‘member’. On the other hand, *artikulieren* means ‘to articulate’ in the sense of ‘to highlight and distinguish’ or ‘to make distinct’. Blattner suggests that their common English translation, ‘to articulate’, be disambiguated by specifying that in the case of the word *gliedern* what is meant is structural articulation, and that in the case of *artikulieren* what is meant is an expressive articulation (See Blattner, W. D., Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, Continuum, London, 2011 at 98-99). In this sense, *gliedern* means ‘to parse’, and *artikulieren* means ‘to put into words’. In their translation of *Being and Time*, Macquarrie and Robinson use ‘articulate’, with a lower-case ‘a’, for *gliedern*, and ‘Articulate’, with an upper-case ‘a’, for *artikulieren* (see Macquarrie and Robinson’s footnote 1 in Heidegger, M., *Being and Time* (trans. Macquarrie, J. & Robinson, E.), Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 1962 at 195, H 154). Wherever it is relevant or necessary in this paper, these renderings are employed.
it outlines and suggests the possibility and preferability of a phenomenological – as opposed to a metaphysical – account of what language is, attempts to show the universality and ubiquitousness of language in human being, and illustrates the opening ‘way’ to language *qua* language which Heidegger’s mature thinking was eventually to take.