

Symposium: Cristina Lafont, *Heidegger, Language, and World-disclosure**

Was Heidegger a Linguistic Idealist?

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Cristina Lafont's fascinating book, originally published in German eight years ago, now revised and translated into English, makes an important contribution to Heidegger scholarship, both in its sensitivity to the historical sources informing Heidegger's reflections on language and in the way it draws Heidegger into recent debates about meaning in Anglo-American philosophy. Anyone interested in Heidegger, and especially anyone not already convinced of his relevance to contemporary theories of mind and language, should read it. Moreover, quite apart from its purely philosophical value, the book is itself good evidence that the terms 'continental' and 'analytic' have not just outlived their usefulness, but have for a long time been functioning as ideological obstacles to intercultural scholarship and creative dialogue between philosophical styles and traditions. *Heidegger, Language, and World-disclosure* exhibits an admirable disregard for those stultifying categories.

Nevertheless, I find myself in disagreement with most of what Lafont says about Heidegger's account of meaning and practice in *Being and Time* and its supposedly dire epistemological consequences. Lafont argues, in short, (1) that the discussion of signs in §17 of *Being and Time* implies, and indeed Heidegger believes, that all worldly intelligibility is linguistically constituted, or 'symbolically structured' (pp. 11, 15, 29, *passim*); (2) that Heidegger equivocates between two incompatible accounts of that intelligibility: one 'factual' and holistic, the other transcendental and (implicitly) subjectivist; (3) that he shares with Frege and Husserl (*inter alios*) the assumption that semantic meaning determines reference; (4) that he must therefore deny that our normative understanding of entities is revisable in light of experience; and (5) that internalism entails idealism. That sequence of propositions roughly describes the logical order of Lafont's argument, but it also charts what strikes me as its gradually diminishing stages of implausibility. That is to say,

*Cristina Lafont, *Heidegger, Language, and World-disclosure*, trans. Graham Harman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), originally published as *Sprache und Welterschliessung: Zur linguistischen Wende der Hermeneutik Heideggers* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994). All unprefixed page references are to the English translation.

I am confident that (1) is false, I'm comfortably certain that (2) is not true, I'm reasonably sure that (3) is wrong, I'm doubtful about (4), and I remain unconvinced of (5). Since space is limited, however, I shall restrict myself to the first three points and leave the last two to others, or to another occasion.

It is crucial for the success of Lafont's argument that she establish early on that the hermeneutic phenomenology of *Being and Time* belonged to the 'linguistic turn' in German philosophy initiated by Hamann, Herder, and Humboldt more than a century earlier. Throughout his career, long before the much stronger, more explicit claims he would later make concerning the constitutive role of language in our understanding of being, according to Lafont, Heidegger already regarded meaning and understanding as essentially linguistic phenomena. For Heidegger, she writes, 'the articulation of intelligibility can "have a specifically worldly kind of being" *only in language*' (p. 73). I want to emphasize that this thesis is the key premise on which the argument of the entire book rests. If the premise is false, much of the subsequent discussion, particularly with regard to post-Fregean theories of sense and reference in Anglo-American philosophy, will lose its relevance to the account of meaning and understanding in *Being and Time*.

And I think the premise is false. I also think, therefore, that Lafont's argument largely fails. I believe she is right, however, that Heidegger remained committed to a kind of ontological apriorism, in spite of his realization that human understanding is always essentially 'factual', which is to say dependent on the ontically concrete, historically contingent world we find ourselves thrown into. But apriorism is not the same as Fregeanism, and it seems to me Heidegger could have consistently held a less rigid conception of the ontological a priori by way of accommodating the many anti-Fregean and anti-Husserlian things he does say about the concrete worldly conditions of intentionality, meaning, and linguistic practice. Lafont conflates the distinction between a priori and a posteriori with that between meaning and reference; indeed, she conflates both with a third distinction between subject and object. All three should be kept separate. Not all meaning is ontological, some is ontic, and Heidegger is adamant in denying that Dasein is anything like a constituting subject standing over against the world as a constituted object. As he says, 'subject and object do not coincide with Dasein and world'.¹

Lafont's argument for the centrality of language in Heidegger's account of intelligibility rests on the fascinating if somewhat sketchy story he tells about the pragmatic function of signs in §17 of *Being and Time*. The argument in §17 is that signs are not, ontologically speaking, 'occurrent' (*vorhanden*) entities standing in objective relations to other occurrent entities thanks to the mental acts or subjective interpretations of their users. They are instead a kind of 'equipment' (*Zeug*) whose being is to be 'available' (*zuhanden*) for use.

But signs are peculiar, for while equipment generally remains inconspic-

uous, so that our concern can dwell on the task at hand, signs function precisely by standing out explicitly to reveal or 'show' (*zeigen*) something. In this way, 'In our concerned dealings, equipment for showing [*Zeig-zeug*] gets used in a *special* [*vorzüglich*] way' (SZ 79). Signs are equipment, but whereas equipment typically recedes into the background, signs function by being conspicuous. The sign does not just fit neatly into an interlocking nexus of equipment; it organizes our sense of the situation as a whole:

This circumspective overview does not grasp what is available; what it achieves is rather an orientation in our environment. . . . Signs of the kind we have described let what is available be encountered; more precisely, they let some context of it become accessible in such a way that our concerned dealings take on an orientation and hold it secure. (Ibid.)

More specifically, a sign is '*a piece of equipment that explicitly raises a totality of equipment into circumspection, so that together with it the worldly character of the available announces itself*'. (SZ 80)

A sign is something ontically available that, as this definite equipment, also functions as something indicative of the ontological structure of availability, of referential totalities, and of worldliness. Therein lies the special status of this available thing within the environment of circumspective concern. (SZ 82)

Signs are equipment, then, but they have a special, privileged status in virtue of their capacity to shed light not just on salient aspects of practical situations, but on ontological structures, too. Signs bring other equipment, practical situations, and even ontological phenomena into view explicitly. One could say, then, that signs play a kind of transcendental role in uncovering the underlying ontological conditions for our encounter with things in the environment. Perhaps we could tie our shoes and brush our teeth, but we could never do phenomenology, nor even negotiate a crowded intersection, without the help of signs.

So far, so good. But Lafont interprets the transcendental status of signs in a far more radical way. On her account, shoelaces and toothbrushes themselves could never even show up for us as intelligible equipment in the absence of signs, since signs are themselves responsible for constituting contexts of equipment in the first place. Lafont says that Heidegger treats signs 'as a paradigmatic case' of equipment, which 'leads him to feel justified in generalizing the results of the analysis' to his account of the pragmatic interconnectedness of the equipmental context at large, which he says consists in a kind of teleological 'reference' (*Verweisung*) (p. 31).² But Heidegger clearly regards signs an exceptional case, not exemplary or generalizable.

Lafont also maintains that, for Heidegger, 'the *understanding* of a referential totality, like every understanding, must be clarified on the basis of the structure of the sign' (pp. 31–32); that Heidegger makes 'use of the

sign-structure for explaining the constitution of the world' (p. 37); that 'the system of signs-relations . . . constitutes the world' (p. 43 n40). But this is just the opposite of what Heidegger says. What he says is that the structure of the sign must be clarified on the basis of the functioning of equipment, not *vice versa*, since a sign just is a piece of equipment, albeit of a very special kind. As he puts the point in his lectures of 1925, '*the ontic showing [of signs] is grounded in the structure of reference*'. The reference of signs, however, 'is not the showing, rather the latter is that to which the reference refers'. So, 'Just as a hammer is *for* hammering, so the sign is *for* showing, but this reference of serviceability in the structure of the environmental thing hammer does not make the hammer a sign.'³

That is, the practical referring of a hammer, the way it fits into an equipmental context as a whole, lies not just in the hammering of the hammer, not just in its contact with a hand at one end and a nail at the other, but in a multitude of equipmental interconnections, for instance, its place on the wall or in the toolbox. So too, the referring of a sign lies in the way it fits into a practice as a whole, not just in its showing something, say, a path in a wood, or an approaching storm. Hammers are hammers and signs are signs only by referring in the equipmental sense, but hammering and showing do not exhaust the equipmental reference of hammers and signs. Trying to account for the availability of equipment at large in terms of the showing of signs, Heidegger seems to be saying, would be like trying to account for it in terms of hammering or gluing or painting.

On Lafont's account, by contrast, signs are not *based on* but rather *form the basis of* equipmental reference as a whole. In support of this much stronger transcendental reading, she twice quotes Heidegger's remark near the beginning of §17 that 'being-a-sign-for can itself be formalized into a *universal kind of relation*, so that the sign-structure itself provides an ontological clue for "characterizing" all entities in general' (SZ 77) (cf. pp. 32, 33). She seems to take this comment at face value, as if Heidegger were endorsing the notion that any and every entity can be regarded as a sign, or as being uncovered only in virtue of signs.

But in fact the remark means just the opposite. Concerning 'signs', Heidegger writes, 'Many things are named by this word: not only different *kinds* of signs, but being-a-sign-for can itself be formalized into a *universal kind of relation*, so that the sign-structure itself provides an ontological clue for "characterizing" all entities in general' (SZ 77). The point is that in doing phenomenology we must focus on some concretely specified phenomenon, since, loosely speaking, anything and everything can be called a 'sign'. If we are not careful, we are liable to miss the phenomena altogether and find ourselves talking about everything and nothing. That this is Heidegger's point becomes obvious if we compare the passage in *Being and Time* with its textual precursor in the 1925 lectures, which is worth quoting at length:

[T]he universal scope of phenomena such as signs and symbols easily gives rise to using them as a clue for interpreting the totality of entities, the world as a whole. No less a figure than Leibniz sought in his *characteristica universalis* a systematization of the totality of entities in terms of an orientation to the phenomenon of the sign. Recently Spengler, following the procedure of Lamprecht, has elaborated the idea of the symbol for the philosophy of history and metaphysics in general, without offering any properly scientific clarification of the range of phenomena thereby indicated. Finally, in his work, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Cassirer has tried to explain the various domains of life – language, knowledge, religion, myth – in a fundamental way as phenomena of the expression of spirit. He has likewise sought to broaden the *critique of reason* provided by Kant into a *critique of culture*. Here, too, the phenomenon of expression, of symbol in the widest sense, is taken as a clue for explaining henceforth all phenomena of spirit and of entities in general. The universal applicability of such formal clues as ‘gestalt’, ‘sign’, ‘symbol’ in this way easily obscures the primordially or nonprimordially of the interpretation thereby achieved. What might be an appropriate approach for aesthetic phenomena can lead to precisely the opposite of an elucidation or interpretation in the case of other phenomena. . . . It is obvious that interpretive efforts of the kind described, taking up the clues of such universal phenomena, of which anything and everything can be made – for ultimately anything and everything can be interpreted as a sign – pose a great danger for the development of the human sciences. (PGZ, pp. 276–8, emphasis added)

Far from representing his own view, then, such appeals to general notions such as the concept of a sign or a symbol by way of explaining intelligibility at large are plainly anathema to Heidegger. If the peculiarities of signs seem to offer a single key with which to unlock the secret ontological constitution of entities in general, we are in danger of ignoring the phenomena – *the ‘things themselves’* – in favor of a prefabricated interpretive schema, precisely the sort of hermeneutical craving for generality and neatness that Heidegger is always at pains to resist and condemn. Lafont, it seems to me, has misread the text and succumbed to temptation in insisting that, for Heidegger himself, ‘the world as “a whole of significance” is . . . of a symbolic nature’ (48). At one point she even treats the terms ‘ontological’ and ‘symbolical’ as synonymous (p. 18 n11). It is no accident, I think, that Heidegger never says anything like this in *Being and Time*.

The confusion is compounded by the close link Lafont forges between two terms that function quite separately in Heidegger’s account, namely ‘sign’ (*Zeichen*) and ‘signify’ (*be-deuten*).⁴ The affiliation emerges tacitly in section 1.2.2, and then explicit at the beginning of 1.3:

With his analysis of signs, Heidegger focuses on and explains a particular kind of reference, namely ‘signifying’. Once this has been done, he believes that his interpretation of the sign as an exemplary case of equipment justifies him in identifying the two in a certain way. The reference of the sign (and hence its ‘signifying’) is held to be of the same kind as the teleological ‘reference’ of equipment to the ‘towards-which’ of its ‘serviceability’, the very point from which the analysis of equipment began. (p. 40)

After quoting a passage in §18 of *Being and Time* in which Heidegger says nothing about signs or showing, she then comments, ‘it is surprising to note that the exemplary kind of referring (signifying or showing) no longer appears’ (ibid.). It seems, then, that Lafont takes *signifying* to be the kind of reference peculiar to *signs*, and moreover that she equates it with *showing*.

But neither equation is correct. There is nothing surprising in the fact that the account of signifying (*be-deuten*), signification (*Bedeutung*), and significance (*Bedeutsamkeit*) in §18 makes no mention of signs, for Heidegger never intended signs to play the constitutive role Lafont assigns them in her account. Signifying has nothing directly to do with signs or language; it is simply the pragmatic teleological relation between equipment (the ‘with-which’), a practical situation (an ‘in-which’), a proximal goal (a ‘toward-this’), a more general end (an ‘in-order-to’), and the ultimate meaning or point that makes sense of the activity (the ‘for-the-sake-of’). The referential structure of signifying is what Heidegger calls ‘significance’, and the only relation any of this has to language is that linguistic meanings are a special case of pragmatic significations. Significations, Heidegger says, ‘found the possible being of words and language’ (SZ 87).

All this might sound like so much scholastic subtlety and textual hairsplitting, but I emphasize it because, as I said, Lafont’s entire argument stands or falls with this initial claim that *Being and Time* describes worldly intelligibility as linguistically constituted, or symbolically structured. Existential possibility itself, Lafont says on Heidegger’s behalf, is something ‘owing to the existence of a *symbolic medium*’ (p. 47). Indeed, for Lafont, ‘[t]here is no doubt that “possibilities” can be “given” only in a symbolic medium’, for ‘culture . . . is characterized by symbolic structures’ (p. 47 n45). Such a claim might be plausible, it might even be Heidegger’s view, if ‘symbolic’ means something more general and more basic than language and linguistic articulation.

I believe Heidegger does in fact posit a form of expression and communication distinct from and more primordial than language, namely ‘discourse’ (*Rede*). ‘*The existential–ontological foundation of language is discourse*’ (SZ 160); the constitutive elements of discourse ‘first make anything like language possible ontologically’ (SZ 163). But discourse cannot be identical with language, for it includes such things as ‘remaining silent’ (SZ 161, 296) and ‘hearing’, or being responsive to, the ‘call of conscience’, which says nothing (SZ 269, 271, 273). Not only does the voice of conscience not explicitly ‘assert’ anything, it pretty clearly involves no subsentential names or predicates, either. All language is discourse, then, but not all discourse is language. Heidegger does not offer the following sort of example, but it is not hard to see facial expressions and bodily postures as expressing and communicating meaningfully but non-linguistically, though of course non-verbal expressions are as a matter of fact interwoven with language in

complex ways. Similarly, language and music are mutually interpenetrating phenomena *de facto*, but music is not language. Body language is not language.

Heidegger's claim that language is founded on discourse would be odd, to say the least, if it turned out that the two were identical, for it is either senseless or tautological (I'm not sure which) to say that a thing is founded on itself. Yet Lafont's linguistification of *Being and Time* forces her to accept this strange result – and then charge Heidegger with inconsistency! As she reads the text, that is, what Heidegger calls 'discourse' and 'language' turn out to be two merely analytically distinct aspects of a single thing, namely language. 'Language' in Heidegger's jargon refers to an ontically concrete system of signs, while 'discourse' refers to the ontological world-disclosing aspect of language.

The view is essentially Humboldtian, '[b]ut in contrast to Humboldt, Heidegger thinks he will be able to establish a *founding* relationship between the two aspects of language'.⁵ In *Being and Time*, discourse is still understood as an existentials of Dasein, in a doomed effort to conceive the phenomenon of 'articulation' as categorically distinct from language as a system of signs. Heidegger presupposes that in this way the 'world-disclosing function of language . . . could still somehow be traced back to Dasein itself. . . . this project is doomed to failure from the start' (p. 67).

According to Lafont, that is, Heidegger draws a merely 'terminological distinction between discourse and language' (p. 71). The founding relation he seeks to establish between them is therefore part of a persistent but futile effort to reinstate the very notion of a transcendental, constituting subjectivity, *à la* Kant and Husserl, which his own conception of world-disclosure was meant to overturn. Lafont thus refers to what she calls 'Heidegger's difficulties in employing the language/discourse distinction to reproduce the sharp distinction characteristic of the founding relation between "constitutive" and "constituted"' (p. 73). Indeed, with Heidegger's insistence on the distinctive status of Dasein, 'which renders the difference between being and beings equivalent to the Dasein/non-Dasein dichotomy, the traditional subject-object schema is tacitly reintroduced' (p. 22).

This is really the heart of Lafont's critique of Heidegger, namely, that Heidegger lapses back into a form of transcendental philosophy that presupposes a constituting subject over against a constituted object. It would be a fatal lapse indeed, given that the philosophical inspiration of *Being and Time* was supposed to lie in Heidegger's conception of Dasein as *factual* being-in-the-world, as *thrown* projection. Lafont thus conjoins two claims: first, that world-disclosure is an essentially linguistic phenomenon; and second, that Heidegger reinscribes the subject-object distinction by tracing the ontic contingencies of world-disclosure itself back to the existential structures of Dasein, as he does when he grounds language in discourse. The

two claims together yield the central thesis of the book, namely, that Heidegger inherits from the linguistic turn and the semantic tradition the assumption that meaning constitutes the empirical world by determining the referents of our linguistic terms.

For all his originality, Lafont concludes, Heidegger remains a semantic internalist by assuming with Humboldt, Frege, and Husserl that meaning determines reference. But semantic internalism leaves the world entirely at the mercy of our language, rather than allowing that the meanings, hence the essences, lodged a priori in our language might in turn be shaped by our empirical knowledge of facts about the world. Like all internalists, that is, Heidegger is vulnerable to ‘the inherent danger of every linguistic turn – that of a reification of language, or of an extreme linguistic idealism’ (p. 180). Idealism is avoidable, Lafont argues, only if we can identify objects independently of the ways in which we describe them. Post-Fregean theories of direct reference of the sort advanced by Kripke, Putnam, and Donnellan undermine Heidegger’s semantic assumptions, and with it the linguistic idealism to which he was unwittingly committed.

But again, if Lafont is wrong at the outset that Heidegger took all intelligibility to be linguistically or symbolically constituted, then none of the rest of the argument goes through. And, as I have said, I think it is clear that, at least in *Being and Time*, Heidegger insists that language is not identical with but rather founded on discourse, and that linguistic meaning is parasitic on a kind of pragmatic signification that has nothing directly to do with signs or words. Grounding language in discourse is therefore nothing like grounding objective facts in the mental representations of a transcendental subject, for discourse is an existential structure of Dasein, and Dasein is not the worldless ego of Kant and Husserl, but the factually particular, historically contingent human being.

The account of language that emerges in *Being and Time*, then, is in many ways like the later Wittgenstein’s conception of meaning as rooted in linguistic practice. So, for example, when Heidegger says, ‘words accrue to significations (*Bedeutungen*)’ (SZ 161), he does not mean that we attach prefabricated words to already articulated things like ready-made tags or labels, but that words are themselves already an integrated part of a practice, a custom, an institution.⁶ Indeed, contrary to Lafont’s rejection of all analogies between language and equipment as remnants of the discredited instrumentalism of naïve, pre-Humboldtian semantics, recall Wittgenstein’s advice about how to resist the temptation to reify language as a kind of free-floating medium of thought, independent of concrete practice: ‘Think of the tools in a tool-box: there is a hammer, pliers, a saw, a screw-driver, a rule, a glue-pot, glue, nails and screws. – The functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects’ (PI §11). In a similar vein, in his 1925 lectures, Heidegger says:

There is no language in general, as some kind of free-floating essence in which the various so-called particular existences could take part. Every language is – like Dasein itself – *historical* in its being. The seemingly uniform, free-floating being of a language, in which Dasein always first moves, is only its lack of pertinence to some particular Dasein, i.e. its proximal mode of being in the one (*das Man*). (PGZ 373)

To trace historically contingent, factual languages back to discourse understood as an existential structure of being-in-the-world is not to reify language in general as a kind of universal medium, but to acknowledge that ontically concrete linguistic phenomena are what they are only by being part of human practices, which are at once constituted and constituting, thrown and projecting. Language, like all meaningful worldly phenomena, owes its intelligibility to what Wittgenstein calls a ‘form of life’ (PI §§19, 23, 241, pp. 174, 226). Language is to discourse, one might say, as the surface of a thing is to the whole. Even if there cannot fail to be a surface, still the surface is not the whole. One can even admit that without this surface the thing would not be the thing it is. But this is arguably true not just of discourse and language, but of ontological structures and their ontic manifestations generally. Language is not the whole of significance, then, but only a part, a kind of surface. There is nothing obviously inconsistent or untenable, it seems to me, in Heidegger’s account of language as an ontically concrete manifestation of discourse, which is for its part an existential structure of being-in-the-world.

Does this conception of language, incomplete and underdeveloped though it is in *Being and Time*, commit Heidegger to ‘the conception of meaning and reference already developed, in different versions, by Frege and Husserl’, namely the thesis that ‘meaning determines reference’ (p. 180)? No. In fact, to the extent that Heidegger can be said to have any worked-out view of semantic reference, he is apparently a kind of externalist.⁷ If externalism is the idea that we can identify the entities we refer to independently of our descriptions of them, then Heidegger is clearly an externalist, for, as we have seen, linguistic meaning in *Being and Time* is parasitic on a fundamentally different form of meaning and intelligibility, namely discourse and pragmatic signification. Nowhere in *Being and Time* does Heidegger suggest, with Frege and Husserl, that our access to what we refer to in discourse must be mediated by conceptually articulated semantic content.

Moreover, Heidegger writes: ‘In discourse (*apophansis*), insofar as it is genuine, *what* is said (*was geredet ist*) is drawn *from* what is talked about (*worüber geredet wird*)’ (SZ 32). I would resist any hasty assimilation of these notions of ‘what is said’ (*das Geredete*) and ‘what is talked about’ (*das Beredete*) in discourse (see SZ 162) to Fregean meanings and referents. But if they suggest any answer to the semantic question Lafont presses on Heidegger, it is a decidedly non-Fregean answer. Lafont might reasonably reply that what Heidegger means here is not that discursive meaning is responsive to entities as such, but that particular utterances are themselves

drawn from a field of semantic possibilities projected in advance by our understanding of being. As I said above, I agree that Heidegger clings to a kind of apriorism with respect to our understanding of being *vis-à-vis* entities, though I think he could have consistently blurred the ontological difference somewhat in order to accommodate a partially naturalized, or perhaps simply further historicized, account of the meaning of being. But again, his notion of being is not the same as his conception of discursive or linguistic meaning. So, even if we conclude that he drew too sharp or too rigid a line between being and entities, it does not follow that he failed to see the ways in which entities as such play a constitutive role in articulating the meanings we express in discourse and language.

As I argue elsewhere,⁸ for example, Heidegger's notions of 'the one' (*das Man*) and 'idle talk' (*Gerede*) in *Being and Time* are plausibly read as entailing a social externalist, or anti-individualist, conception of pragmatic and discursive meaning. Just as the generic intelligibility of equipment is constituted by the anonymous norms governing its use, so too what I mean in ordinary discourse is dictated not by my intentions, individualistically construed, but by the anonymous discursive norms, Heidegger even says the social 'dictatorship' (*Diktatur*), of 'the one' (*SZ* 126). According to Heidegger, 'the one-self, for the sake of which Dasein is from day to day, articulates the referential context of significance' (*SZ* 129). Far from a mere passively constituted social fact, 'The one prescribes a disposedness (*Befindlichkeit*); it determines what and how one "sees" (*SZ* 170). The commonly intelligible world 'governs, *qua* public, *all* interpretation of the world and of Dasein' (*PGZ* 340, emphasis added), so that 'Dasein is *never* able to extricate itself from this everyday interpretedness'. Rather, 'In it and out of it and against it *all* genuine understanding, interpretation and communication, rediscovery and renewed appropriation take place' (*SZ* 169, emphasis added).

I know Lafont is aware of these passages, and others like them. What I am suggesting is that, properly understood, they call into question her claim that Heidegger failed to see the ways in which discursive and linguistic meaning, if not all the a priori categories informing our understanding of being, are determined not by Dasein *qua* transcendental subject, but by concrete collective social practices in all their ontic contingency.

NOTES

1 M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1927; 15th ed. 1979), §60. Hereafter *SZ*. All translations of Heidegger are mine.

2 It is crucial not to confuse this kind of 'reference', or pragmatic significance, with semantic reference, that is, the reference of linguistic terms. Equipmental 'reference' is a relation obtaining among meaningfully related pieces of equipment, for example hammers and nails. It is constitutive of the teleological 'in-order-to' structure of practical activity (see *SZ* 68 ff.).

- 3 M. Heidegger, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, *Martin Heidegger: Gesamtausgabe*, div. 2, 20, P. Jaeger (ed.) (Frankfurt-am-Main: Klostermann, 1979), p. 280. Hereafter *PGZ*.
- 4 Readers of the English edition might be misled by this terminological link, since in English the terms are cognates. But the verbal connection is a purely coincidental artifact of translation. See *Sprache und Welterschliessung*, pp. 66–67.
- 5 The issue is too complex to treat adequately here, but I think it is worth mentioning that Heidegger remains utterly un-Humboldtian in his repudiation of representationalism, linguistic or otherwise. For example, Lafont quotes Humboldt saying what Heidegger could never say, namely, that ‘it is never [material] objects directly, but always only the representation of them provided by the word, that is made present in the soul’ (p. 5).
- 6 Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd ed. and trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1953), §§198–9, *inter alia*. Hereafter *PI*.
- 7 In his critique of Lafont in these pages, Hubert Dreyfus suggests that Heidegger actually anticipated recent theories of direct reference in his notion of ‘formal indication’. The similarities are striking, particularly in their shared insight that descriptions used to fix reference to something need not capture even its nominal essence. Lafont’s reading seems to make such ‘nonbinding’ (*unverbindlich*) indication impossible for Heidegger in principle. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s idea remains a methodological device, not a theory about the ordinary function of linguistic terms, with the possible exception of the personal pronoun ‘I’ (see *SZ* 116).
- 8 See my *Heidegger’s Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in Being and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), chs 3 and 5.

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