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Abstract. The major importance attributed by Heidegger to the ontological status of the tool has allowed a series of challenging insights into its role and significance in *Being and Time*, leading to a questioning upon the very existence of an autonomous phenomenology of technology in it. In what follows, we chose to thematize two of the most recent attempts to evaluate the status of technique in the 1927 *Grundwerk*. Graham Harman's approach is situated within the broader context of a recent trend in continental philosophy designated as speculative realism, whereas Peter-Paul Verbeek's is largely inspired by Don Ihde's postphenomenological account of technology. The extreme diversification of these two hermeneutic projects renders their treatment on a common ground quite difficult. Nevertheless, we argue that both of them share several common points, despite their fundamental and unbridgeable gap. Harman's and Verbeek's efforts to refine the hermeneutic access to one of the most influential sections of Heidegger's major work exemplify a vivid interest in *Being and Time* itself, but also in the contemporary phenomenology of technology in general.

Keywords: Heidegger, Verbeek, Harman, phenomenology, tool, technology, *Zuhandenheit*, speculative realism, postphenomenology of things

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> "Any object is a complex and irreducible event; like the moon, one face of the tool is darkened in the silence of its orbit, while another face illuminates and completes us with dazzling surface-effects. (…) However naïve an object might seem, it still makes its incision into being, exploding with power at a level always escaping our view."
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> Graham Harman, *The Theory of Objects in Heidegger and Whitehead*, (1997).

> "My critique of Heidegger reveals the necessity for another kind of thinking about technology, one that takes the thought that 'things thing' more seriously than Heidegger will appear to do."
>
> Peter-Paul Verbeek, *What Things Do* (2005).

The well-known account of the tool and its handiness (*Handlichkeit*) appears in the First Division of *Being and Time* within the framework of the analysis of the surrounding world and worldliness in general (*Umweltlichkeit und Weltlichkeit überhaupt*). What precedes this analysis, while leading at the same time necessarily to it, is the posing of the question of Being. What follows is the questioning with regard to the mode of access to the *Grundfrage* through the entity which is prioritized due to its privileged access to it, that is, *Dasein*. In order to understand *Dasein*'s ontological uniqueness one reference is, nevertheless, deemed necessary: the reference to the being, which is not *Dasein* itself, that is, the world. Contrary to the subject-centeredness of modern philosophy of consciousness, what seems to be the target here is the understanding of the world's "Rückstrahlung" upon *Dasein*'s hermeneutic unfolding: "Being-in-the world signifies the unthematic, circumspect absorption in the references constitutive for the handiness of the totality of useful things (*Zeuge*). Taking care of things always occurs on the basis of a familiarity with the world."[1]

The major importance attributed by Heidegger to the ontological status of the tool has allowed a series of challenging insights into its role and significance in *Being and Time*, leading to a questioning of

[1] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 1996, § 16, 71.

the very existence of an autonomous phenomenology of technics in it. There have been numerous and divergent attempts to interpret the status of the tool and technics in *Being and Time*. In what follows, we chose to thematize two of the most recent attempts to evaluate the status of technique in the 1927 *Grundwerk*. Graham Harman's approach is situated within the broader context of a recent trend in continental philosophy designated as speculative realism,[2] whereas Peter-Paul Verbeek's is largely inspired by Don Ihde's post-phenomenological account of technology in Heidegger. The extreme diversification of these two hermeneutic projects renders their treatment on a common ground quite difficult. Nevertheless, both of them share several common points, despite their fundamental and unbridgeable gap. Therefore, Harman's and Verbeek's efforts to refine the hermeneutic access to one of the most influential sections of Heidegger's major work exemplify a vivid interest in *Being and Time* itself, but also in the contemporary phenomenology of technology in general.

I

Graham Harman's speculative realism as applied to *Being and Time*'s tool analysis is one of the numerous realism-driven accounts of technique in *Being and Time*.[3] Among them, Hubert Dreyfus' account of hermeneutic realism in Heidegger has been the most influential.[4] Dreyfus objects both to the reduction of Heidegger's phenomenological

[2] See L. Bryant, N. Srnicek, G. Harman, *Towards a Speculative Philosophy*, in: *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, eds. L. Bryant, N. Srnicek, G. Harman, Re. Press, Melbourne 2011, 1–18.

[3] Other realistic accounts, such as that of Charles Taylor, focus more on the ethical implications of realism regarding the status of agency in *Being and Time*. Ch. Taylor, *Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger*, in: *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Ch. Guignon, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993, 325–330.

[4] Dreyfus applies hermeneutic realism to the reading of *Being and Time* in his 1991 *Being-in-the-World* in order to go beyond both the traditional-Cartesian and the more recent versions of cognitivism in Husserl or Searle, and also classical pragmatism in Peirce and Dewey. H. L. Drefus, *Being-in-the-World*: *A Commentary of Heidegger's "Being and Time" Division I*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1991, 253–265.

account of *Zuhandenheit* to an epistemological thesis, such as that of transcendental[5] or empirical realism,[6] and to pragmatist readings which relativize Heidegger's phenomenological project.[7] The latter takes its departure from several clear allusions to "use" in the critical paragraphs of *Being and Time*, where Heidegger discusses tools and their mode of being: "The less we just stare at the thing called hammer, the more actively we use it, the more original our relation to it becomes and the more undisguisedly it is encountered as what it is, as a useful thing. The act of hammering itself discovers the specific "handiness" of the hammer. We shall call the useful thing's kind of being in which it reveals itself by itself *handiness*. It is only because useful things have *this* "being-in-themselves," and do not merely occur, that they are handy in the broadest sense and are at our disposal."[8] While fighting against epistemological realism and pragmatism Dreyfus meets Harman's recently developed realist position on tool-being. Harman comments on the "pragmatist minsunderstanding" of *Being and Time* as follows: "Instead of granting priority to a lucid conscious observer, Heidegger sees human Dasein as thrown into a context that is taken for granted long before it ever becomes present to the mind. (…) Invisible praxis is the soil from which all theory emerges. In this way, Heidegger is depicted as a pragmatist."[9] Thus, if Dreyfus turns against Rorty and Okrent,

[5] F. A. Olafson, *Heidegger and the Philosophy of Mind*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn. 1987, 14–15, 21–27 and F. A. Olafson, *What Is a Human Being? A Heideggerian View*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1995, 46–57.

[6] Th. R. Schatzki, *Early Heidegger on Being, the Clearing, and Realism*, Revue Internationale de Philosophie 43(1989), 80–102. Here Schatzki presents his position as a counter-thesis to Olafson's claim about transcendental realism in Heidegger (ibid., 100).

[7] See in particular the Dreyfus-Rorty exchange in: H.L. Dreyfus, R. Rorty, C. Taylor, *A Discussion*, Review of Metaphysics 34(1980)1, 51–52.

[8] M. Heidegger, op. cit., § 15, 65 (author's emphasis).

[9] G. Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, Zero Books, Chicago 2011, 40. Harman also objects to the epistemological reduction of *Being and Time*'s phenomenological project to scientific empiricism or materialism: "Scientific materialism performs the worthy gesture of bringing inanimate relations back into philosophy, but couples it with the dismal assertion that there is nothing beyond material impact. And here once

Harman opposes to Okrent's reduction of "understanding" (*Verstehen*) in *Being and Time* to mere practical "know-how."[10] Nevertheless, he is moderate on this point, as he seems to accept a number of affinities between Heidegger's phenomenology of the tool and Dewey's fundamental distinction between "knowing-that" and "knowing-how."[11]

Nevertheless, it is clear that the divergences between Dreyfus's hermeneutic and Harman's speculative realism are of more critical importance than the similarities between their interpretative approaches. This is quite evident in their differentiated attack on the pragmatist readings of *Being and Time*. For Harman, these readings are inadequate, because they reduce tool-being to mere "use," even if their relational reality is taken into account: "Insofar as a tool is 'used,' it is no less present-at-

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more we encounter the great contribution of phenomenology, despite its idealism (…) the greatness of Heidegger is to have re-injected objects into an otherwise monolithic realm of shadowy being" (ibid., 140). On the non-reduction of *Being and Time*'s realism to mere physicalism see also: M. Steinmann, *Die Offenheit des Sinns. Untersuchungen zur Sprache und Logik bei Martin Heidegger*, Paul Siebeck, Tübingen 2008. In terms close to those of Harman on this point, Steinmann refers to hiddeness as the dimension which accounts for the inner unity of things and their hermeneutic understanding as what renders a reductionism of the physicalist type out of question (ibid., 212). Steinmann points out that the problem of reality is clearly at the center of Heidegger's thought long before existential analytics (ibid., 205). In this respect, see the 1912 M. Heidegger, *The Problem of Reality in Modern Philosophy*, in: *Supplements: From the Earliest Essays to "Being and Time" and Beyond*, ed. J. van Buren, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 2002, 39–48.

[10] G. Harman, op. cit., 41.

[11] H. L. Dreyfus, op. cit., 67. In this respect, Dreyfus comes close to Joseph Margolis' positive appreciation of the Dewey-Heidegger relationship: J. Margolis, *Pragmatism, Praxis, and the Technological*, in: *Philosophy of Technology: Practical, Historical, and Other Dimensions*, ed. P. T. Durbin, Kluwer, Dordrecht–Boston–London 1989, 125–126. Against the reduction of Heidegger's allusion to the primacy of *praxis* over pragmatist claims, such as those of Ch. C. Peirce, see E. Rigal, *De la technique et de son essence*, in: *Technique, monde, individuation. Heidegger, Simondon, Deleuze*, ed. J.-M. Vaysse, Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim 2006, 105–106. Regal argues that Peirce builds his argumentation strategy against the Kantian differentiation between the "Praktisch" and the "Pragmatisch," whereas, despite Dreyfus' claim, Heidegger differentiates clearly between the Dasein's "for-the-sake-of-which" ("Worum-willen") and all other entities' "what-for" ("Wozu").

-hand than an image in consciousness. But a tool is not 'used'; *it is*. And insofar as it is, the tool is not exhausted by its relations with human theory *or* human praxis."[12] On the other hand, for Dreyfus, Heidegger's sole effort focuses on transcending the subject-object dichotomy in theory as well as in practice. Therefore, pragmatists, such as Okrent, fail to grasp the singularity of Heidegger's enterprise, which goes against the established, cognitivist in its essence, understanding of practice, even in philosophers such as John Searle and Donald Davidson.[13]

Against Rorty's neopragmatist appropriation of *Being and Time*, Okrent qualifies the early Heidegger's pragmatism as verificationist and, consequently, as transcendentalist, with a special type of transcendentalism.[14] First, Heideggers accepts that all entities are intentional or perform intentional acts, insofar as they dispose of the possibility of understanding. Second, the primary form of understanding is not theoretical ("understanding that') but practical ("understanding how"). Understanding something is impossible without the prior use of a thing, that is, understanding is always practical, and as far as it implies a certain relation to the self, it is always self-understanding: "to the effect that there are no intentions at all without understanding, would then be the assertion that there are no intentions without practical self-understanding – not, as it first seemed, without practical understanding of the thing intended."[15] Consequently, understanding takes two forms: the first form is the practical coping with tools, whereas the second one is that of *Dasein*'s self-understanding: "Practical understanding of

[12] G. Harman, op. cit., 44. For Harman, Heidegger goes much deeper than the pragmatists: "the tool-analysis teaches us something much deeper than the emergence of conscious awareness from the prior unconscious use of things. In the first place, despite the etymology of the terms, it is wrong to identify the ready-to hand with "practice" and the present-at-hand with "theory" (…)" (ibid., 42).

[13] H. L. Dreyfus, op. cit., 49.

[14] Mark Okrent goes as far as to argue that, for a pragmatic and holistic verificationism such as the one elaborated in *Being and Time*, assertions function as tools, whereas propositional truth is dependent upon practical truth. M. Okrent, *Heidegger's Pragmatism: Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY 1988, 84–85, 87, 104–105, 107.

[15] Ibid., 24.

a tool is the capacity to use the tool in a variety of practical contexts for a variety of practical ends. Insofar as someone understands tools, she also has the ability to use other tools in order to realize her ends, and she has the further ability to act coherently for the sake of those ends."[16] Okrent's valorization of practical "understanding-how" even makes him affirm that "When I use a pen appropriately to write with and thus display a practical understanding of this thing as a pen, part of what it means to say that I understand it is that I use the pen as a part of a series of activities that have an identifiable end or purpose. (…) Self-understanding as purpose and practical understanding of the capabilities of things are just two sides of the same coin, a coin that consists in the ability to use things to bring about ends."[17]

Dreyfus criticizes Okrent on the grounds that the latter trivializes Heidegger's phenomenological enterprise by presenting it as a form of instrumentalism or as a "pragmatic metaphysics" which eventually led to its revision by the later Heidegger.[18] For him, on the contrary: "Heidegger is not an instrumentalist. Unlike the pragmatists, Heidegger accepts the Greek view that human beings are capable of getting into a mood of pure equanimity and wonder in which they can form theories that do not have any necessary relation to their needs and purposes."[19] Moreover, Okrent sees *Being and Time* in the light of the transformation of Husserl's –and, to some degree, Kant's – transcendentalism so that the originality of its pragmatic or "praxical" orientation is rated as secondary and derivative: "Husserl conceives of the fundamental form of intentionality as cognitive; Heidegger conceives of it as practical. As a result, Husserl thinks of the horizons in which beings are presented on the model of sensuous fields in which objects are placed

[16] Ibid., 38.

[17] Ibid., 24; cf. 149.

[18] Ibid., 217–218. Okrent goes as far as to talk of a peculiar form of transcendental pragmatism, which takes a very different form in the early and late Heidegger (ibid., 266–267). For Dreyfus, on the contrary, *Being and Time* manifests a minimal hermeneutic realism about nature and the objects of natural sciences. In the 1927 work, Heidegger is an anti-instrumentalist, and he remained so during his entire philosophical itinerary.

[19] H. L. Dreyfus, op. cit., 253.

before us for our intuitive apprehension, whereas Heidegger thinks of these horizons as fields of activity."[20] Thus, for Okrent, the pragmatist transmutation of both Husserl's and Kant's transcendantalism does not weaken the analogies between them: "Heidegger follows Kant in seeing the subject as the source of the unity among our various intentions of objects – a unity that is necessary if we are to intend objects at all and in conceiving the self-intention of this subject in terms of the comportment toward this organized structure. He diverges from Kant, however, in thinking of the primary unity of experience as a practical (that is, action-oriented) unity rather than a theoretical unity."[21]

Dreyfus accuses traditional pragmatism and the pragmatist interpretations of *Being and Time*, such as Mark Okrent's pragmatic verificationism, for being mentalist. This hidden mentalism is the reason why they insist too much on the theory-practice dichotomy, by building the second on the model of the first, whereas Heidegger insists upon going beyond the dichotomy altogether: "He [Heidegger] would agree that in the theoretical attitude substances can be viewed in abstraction from their functioning as equipment, but he would argue that equipment cannot be made intelligible in terms of objective substances plus subjective use-predicates. Since equipment is in no way derivative, and since involvement is as genuine a mode of access as theory, we can say that equipment in use is equipment as it is in itself."[22] Nevertheless, what distances Dreyfus's criticism of *Being and Time*'s pragmatist readings from Harman's is the former's insistance on the relational or "systematic" character of tool-being. On the one hand, for Dreyfus: "In laying out world, Heidegger seems to shift without explanation from speaking of the workshop, to the referential whole (*Verwe-*

[20] M. Okrent, op. cit., 123. Nevertheless, Dreyfus opposes Okrent's "trivializing reduction of Heidegger's work to a practical version of Husserl's by referring to his claim about the "structural analogies between the argument strategies of Husserl and Heidegger." H. L. Dreyfus, op. cit., 345.

[21] M. Okrent, op. cit., 28. Also on the Kant-Heidegger parallelism: M. Okrent, *The "I Think" and the For-the-Sake-of-Which*, in: *Transcendental Heidegger*, eds. S. Crowell, J. Malpas, Stanford University Press, Stanford, Ca 2007, 161.

[22] H. L. Dreyfus, op. cit., 66.

isungsganzheit), to the equipmental whole (*Zeugganzes*), to the involvement whole (*Bewandtnisganzheit*), to the phenomenon of world, to worldliness. The *equipmental whole*, I take it, describes the interrelated equipment; the *referential whole* its interrelations; and the *involvement whole* human purposiveness. The workshop is a specific example of all these wholes."[23] As a result, for Harman, Dreyfus' reading of *Being and Time*'s tool analysis is too anthropological in essence, because Dreyfus turns Heidegger into an "ontologist of relations": "A knife obviously has a very different reality when used in a restaurant kitchen, at a wedding banquet, or in a grispy triple homicide. But as convincing as it might sound, this reading of Heidegger misses the point. There is no real opposition between an isolated knife in consciousness and an invisibly used knife that belongs to a system. For whether the knife is seen or used, in both cases it is treated only in relation to something else, not in its own right."[24] Consequently, in a spirit of criticism not just of Dreyfus, but also of Heidegger himself, Harman stresses both the relational *and* the independent reality of things.[25] Nevertheless, this would, in Dreyfus' view, lead back to metaphysical realism, which, nevertheless, Heidegger clearly rejects.[26]

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[23] Ibid., 97 (author's emphasis). In this respect: M. A. Wrathall, *Background Practices, Capacities, and Heideggerian Disclosure*, in: *Heidegger, Coping, and Cognitive Science. Essays in Honor of Hubert Dreyfus*, vol. 2, eds. M. Wrathall, J. Malpas, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. 2000, 93–95.

[24] G. Harman, op. cit., 43. Quite characteristic of Harman's anti-relationist position is his definition of "objects" for his own object-oriented philosophy, which reaffirms the objects' autonomous reality independently from our access to them: "By 'objects' I mean unified entities with specific qualities that are autonomous from us and from each other." G. Harman, *On the Undermining of Objects: Grant, Bruno, and Radical Philosophy*, in: *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, op. cit., 22.

[25] Here Dreyfus and Harman interpret a critical point of Heidegger's tool analysis: "In accordance with their character of being usable material, useful things always are *in terms of* their belonging to other useful things: writing materials, pen, ink, paper, desk blotter, table, lamp, furniture, windows, doors, room. (…) A totality of useful things is always already discovered *before* the individual useful thing." M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., § 15, 64; author's emphasis.

[26] Ibid., § 43, 191–192. On the non-reduction of *Being and Time*'s "realism" to materialism, physicalism, or the traditional realism-anti-realism dichotomy: H. L. Drey-

Harman, on the other hand, describes his thesis as "realism without materialism."[27] Harman speaks openly of a revival of metaphysics with clearly "anti-Copernican," that is, anti-Kantian overtones, against the mood which has dominated modern and contemporary continental philosophy.[28] For Harman, Heidegger can be considered one of the most virulent "anti-Copernicans": "Although Heidegger tries to establish a pivotal gulf between Being and human Dasein, what he gives us instead is a basic difference between reality and relation."[29] But how does this new kind of realism reflect upon the critical status of the *Zuhandenheit* and of the entities which are *zuhandene* in the 1927 work? Harman devotes his 2002 study on *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* to this.[30] For Harman, Heidegger is an object-oriented philosopher, and for that reason Harman consciously neglects the late Heidegger distinction between "objects" and "things" by granting to the former the significance attributed to them by the theory of objects developed by Franz Brentano and Kazimierz Twardowski in the early days of phenomenology.[31] But how does Harman's object-oriented philosophy affect his interpretation of tool analysis in *Being and Time*, which for him contains the whole of Heidegger's philosophy? By turning his back to the prevailing thesis on Heidegger's alleged anti-metaphysical stance, Harman determines his phenomenological project as an attempt to formule an ontology of the things themselves, independently from their epistemological status, that is, from the relation between knowing subjects and objects.[32] Despite what pragmatists think, Heidegger is in-

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fus, op. cit., 260, 264.

[27] G. Harman, *On the Undermining of Objects: Grant, Bruno, and Radical Philosophy*, op. cit., 40.

[28] Ibid., 33–34; cf. G. Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, op. cit., 60.

[29] G. Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, op. cit., 44–45. Therefore, Harman places Heidegger closer to Leibniz than to Husserl (ibid., 47–48).

[30] G. Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects*, Open Court, Chicago 2002.

[31] For Harman, Husserl's case is quite particular in the sense that "despite being an idealist, he feels like a realist." G. Harman, *The Quadruple Object*, op. cit., 27–28.

[32] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 5; cf. "In the disclosure and explication of being, beings are always our preliminary and accompanying theme. The real theme is

terested neither in the theory-practice dichotomy nor in human *praxis* in general, but in the transcendent world of things in themselves: "Contrary to the most typical reading of Heidegger, the tool-being of objects cannot be its unconscious usefulness for humans in opposition to its conscious visibility. (…) To use a hammer and to stare at it explicitly are both distortions of the very reality of that hammer as it goes about just being itself, unleashed in the word like a wild animal"[33]. Therefore, Heidegger is not a pragmatist, but a "pragmatic" thinker.[34]

Harman goes against the leading interpretation of *Being and Time*'s tool analysis in terms of use, which is still emprisoned in the modern – and also, to some extent, postmodern – transcendental stance: "The concept of *Dasein* in not introduced in order to rough up the notion of world-in-itself. The revolution cannot begin with an equipmental or linguistic subjectivism, since it is not the human *use* of tools that threatens the dominance of *Vorhandenheit*."[35] Consequently, it is not the history of ontology, or its "deconstruction" (*Destruktion*), which can help us reveal the meaning of Being, as the latter is hidden in things in themselves viewed not as pure phenomena, but as "equipmental events."[36] After at-

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being. What shows itself in taking care of things in the surrounding world constitutes the pre-thematic being in the domain of our analysis. This being is not the object of a theoretical 'world'-cognition; it is what is used, produced, and so on." M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., § 15, 63.

[33] G. Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics: Phenomenology and the Carpentry of Things*, Open Court, Chicago 2005, 74. This is also the ground of Harman's confrontation with Dreyfus: "From the start, Dreyfus forgets that equipment is what always *hides* from view and is *irreducible* to any sort of presence, that it is no longer equipment as soon as it lies explicitly before us. For this reason, it cannot possibly be identified with contexts, roles, or social goals. Heidegger says only that the hammer is not a piece of wood that has contexts and goals projected upon it *after the fact*; he never says that it exists *only* in a context." G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 124 (author's emphasis). In fact, what Harman does is to radicalize Dreyfus' hermeneutic holism, thus, producing a new kind of holism designated as realist.

[34] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 20.

[35] Ibid., 19 (author's emphasis).

[36] Harman's qualification of objects as "events" is largely due to Heidegger's wide use of it (event as *Ereignis*), but also to Whitehead's ontology. G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism: Lectures and Essays*, Zero Books, Chicago 2010, 33, 199.

tacking the systematic – either pragmatic or realist – accounts of tool analysis, Harman goes on to attack a second influential interpretative paradigm of *Being and Time*, that is the historicizing trend in Heidegger scholars, such as Jacques Taminiaux and Robert Bernasconi, which traces the tool analysis back to the Aristotelian *praxis*.[37] The emphasis on

[37] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 104–106. Harman criticizes extensively Bernasconi's views on Heidegger's appropriation of the Aristotelian *praxis*/*poiesis* distinction. Bernasconi positions himself against the pragmatist readings of *Being and Time* by taking as a starting point Heidegger's well-known statement in) that: "the existential analytic of everydayness does not want to describe how we use a knife and fork." R. Bernasconi, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indianapolis 1997, 212. Bernasconi underestimates the hermeneutic thrust of Heidegger's *Zuhandenheit* analysis, as he evaluates its status in comparison to the *poiesis*/*praxis* dichotomy and poses both readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand on the same side, that of *poiesis*. G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 111–112; cf. R. Bernasconi, *The Fate of the Distinction Between Praxis and Poiesis*, in: Idem, *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, N.J. 1993, 2–24. Nevertheless, for Harman, Bernasconi's equivalence of *Zuhandenheit* to *poiesis* is arbitrary. Therefore, for Bernasconi, and also for Taminiaux, entities which are ready-to-hand, such as tools, are of an inferior status in comparison to *Dasein*'s resoluteness. J. Taminiaux, *La réappropriation de l'Éthique à Nicomaque'. Ποίησις et πράξις dans l'articulation de l'ontologie fondamentale*," in: Idem, *Lectures de l'ontologie fondamentale: Essais sur Heidegger*, Jérôme Millon, Grenoble 1995, 156–159. Due to this misunderstanding, Bernasconi seeks to find a proper equivalent to *praxis*, beyond both the contemplative and the productive activity in the late Heidegger's discourse on technology and dwelling. Here Harman reaches once more a provocative conclusion arguing that: "the question of how much history to bring into philosophy is a far more *ad hoc* or *practical* question than Bernasconi believes. The importance of history for formulating any given philosophical problem can never be dictated *a priori*; like everything else that exists, the historical method must earn its living one battle at a time. (…) Indeed, everything covered under Bernasconi's term "phenomenology *also* belongs to throwness, a term that applies to the concealed backsides of cola cans as much as it does to *Nicomachean Ethics*." G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 113; author's emphasis. For another historizing interpretation of *Being and Time*'s tool analysis, see also F. Volpi, *Der Bezug zu Platon und Aristoteles in Heideggers Fundamentalverständnis der Technik*, in: *Kunst und Technik: Martin Heidegger zum 100. Geburtstag*, eds. W. Biemel, F.-W. von Herrmann, Klostermann, Frankfurt a.M. 1989, 67–92. The only representative of the mainstream historicizing interpretative trend which Harman treats an exception is John Sallis: "In what one might take as present-at-hand – e.g., the hammer merely stared at – operation of readiness-to-hand, a disregarded instrumentality. What is decisive is the displacement of presence

the historical continuity of Heidegger's ontological claims is no doubt due to a misunderstanding of one of the best-known statements of *Being and Time*'s tool-analysis, which actually touches upon Aristotle: "The Greeks had an appropriate term for 'things': *Pragmata*, that is, that with which one has to do in taking care of things in association (*praxis*). But the specific 'pragmatic' character of the *pragmata* is just what was left in obscurity and 'initially' determined as 'mere thing'."[38]

But what Harman is most polemical against is what he designates, in a rather provocative manner, as the "linguistic-pragmatic guetto" of Heidegger scholars, because what they do is leave aside the very reality of things.[39] He speaks repeatedly of the need for a complete reversal of the readiness-to-hand – "hermeneutic as" order in existential analytics. For him, hermeneutic understanding is secondary in view of *Zuhandenheit*'s ontological status. The opposite would lead to a subjectivization of *Being and Time*'s ontological project: "The visible world is the world of the "as," a tangible and volatile surface derived from a more primary dimension of being."[40] He goes against all attempts to humanize readiness-to-hand by turning it into a mere "know-how" or into a historical phenomenon, such as modern technology. He thus claims that, contrary to the leading interpretation within both the continental and the analytical philosophy, *Being and Time*'s tool analysis operates as a reality principle. This is how he interprets Heidegger's assertion that "handiness [*Zuhandenheit*] is the ontological categorical definition of beings as they are "in themselves."[41] Tools are never isolated entities, as they form an equipmental whole, which by itself isn't entirely transparent to the human *Dasein*, even through the hermeneutic "as-

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that this analysis produces. There are no simply, sheerly present things; for everything is openly or concealedly ready-to-hand, and what is ready-to-hand – is not sheerly present as a self-contained positivity." J. Sallis, *Delimitations: Phenomenology and the End of Metaphysics*, 2nd edition, Indiana University Press, Bloomington. Indianapolis 1995, 142; cf. G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 111.

[38] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., § 15, 64.

[39] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 104–105.

[40] G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 9.

[41] M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., § 15, 67 (author's emphasis).

-structure" (*Als-Struktur*).[42] On another occasion, Harman goes as far as arguing that "the tool is a force that exists rather than not existing, a reality that has emerged into the world and set up shop. Of course in the strict sense we should speak here not of tools, but rather of a single unitary world in action. For at this point we are not yet in position to regard an individual piece of gear as anything but illusory, as an ontic nullity with respect to its underground reality."[43] Thus, for Harman, to claim that such hermeneutic access makes entities fully reachable to the human Dasein is to subjectivize the ontological breakthrough for which *Being and Time* paves the way.

Consequently, what is of crucial importance for Heidegger's tool analysis is not its view in terms of a protophenomenology of technique, but as a unique ontological enterprise with the aim of jeopardizing the primacy of presence-at-hand (*Vorhandenheit*) in Western ontology. This is, for Harman, the leading thread of Heidegger's ontological reflection from 1919 to 1949 and further on.[44] But this is also his point of departure from Husserl's transcendental idealism.[45]

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[42] "Reference to" and, further on, a multiplicity or a totality of references is one of the essential characteristics of entities which are at hand or handy (*zuhandenes*): "Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as *a* useful thing (*Zeug*). There always belongs to the being of a useful thing a totality of useful things in which this useful thing cab be what it is. A useful thing is essentially 'something in order to (…).' The structure of 'in order to' contains a *reference* of something to something." M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., § 15, 64; Heidegger's emphasis.

[43] G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 6.

[44] Harman gives much attention to one of Heidegger's first lecture courses Heidegger in Freiburg known as the *Kriegsnotsemester* course of 1919. He focuses on the example of the "Senegal Negro," a superb example of Heidegger's phenomenological rigour and originality, which aims at showing the importance of "equipmental strangeness": "This is what the world means for the young Heidegger: it is not a spectacle of colors and shapes, but rather an environment in which all things have a special significance for us and are linked with one another in a specific way. What we learn from the visitor from Senegal is that objects always have a highly specific meaning even when they are not lucidly present in consciousness. Things are events, not perceptual or physical occurrences." G. Harman, *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing*, Open Court, Chicago – La Salle, Ill. 2007, 22–23; cf. G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 81–85.

[45] G. Harman, *Heidegger Explained*, op. cit., 63. Harman gives the example of Ru-

In fact, what is essential in Harman's reading of *Being and Time* is the way in which he brings together tool-being with the ontological status of readiness-to-hand (*Zuhandenheit*): "the tool in Heidegger's analysis is not a simple present-at-hand object. Instead, the hammer and bridge turn out to be concealed agents in the world, real objects that build or institute their forces into the fabric of the cosmos rather than simply *unveiling* these forces (which in the strict sense is shown to be impossible)."[46] Presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand are not attributed to things in a fixed and stable manner: a tool may lose the status of *Zuhandenheit* by breaking.[47] Yet, even in this case, Heidegger's considerations produce a radical reversal of the conventional manner of viewing entities: "we find that there are two separate facets to equipment: (1) its irreducibly veiled activity, and (2) its sensible and explorable profile. In more familiar Heideggerian terms, there is the tool viewed "ontologically" and the same tool viewed "ontically."[48] At this point, Harman intentionally goes further than Heidegger in claiming that there is no way human *Dasein* can have full access to the readiness-to-hand of tools. In the context of a 2010 paper, Harman talks of this impossibility in terms of an "excess" or a "residue not currently expressed in the relational system of the world." Nevertheless, he points out that: "While this latter conclusion goes beyond Heidegger's self-interpretation, it is the only way to make sense of the tool-analysis."[49] In fact, Harman's move away from any consideration of the *Dasein*'s primacy, based on language and understanding, is the core of

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dolph Bernet's attempt to trace Heidegger's ontology back to Husserlian phenomenology as a modified version of it (ibid., 135–136).

[46] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 80 (author's emphasis).

[47] Harman argues repeatedly us that there is no dualism of readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand, as entities can transmute from one state to the other. G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 86. Elsewhere he speaks of equipment in terms of a Janus head. G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 97.

[48] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 22.

[49] G. Harman, *Technology, Objects, and Things in Heidegger*, Cambridge Journal of Economics 34(2010)1, 21.

his critique he addresses to Heidegger.[50] Harman goes as far as to argue that: "Any claim to define *Dasein* via some representation or *eidos* or by way of any external properties is incapable of living up to the task. But this irreducibility of Dasein to a representation is also shared by hammers, and even by sand and rocks. (…) Thus, Dasein in the second sense is *the absolute equivalent of the tool*, however counterintuitive this might seem."[51]

From the above, it becomes obvious that Harman "overinterprets" Heidegger's tool analysis by disconnecting "tool" from "equipment" and by making readiness-to-hand the most fundamental ontological category of *Being and Time*. He also accuses other interpreters of misunderstanding Heidegger's ontological concern by reducing *Being and Time*'s phenomenological project to an analytics of the human *Dasein*.[52] Thus Harman reaches the conclusion that Heidegger's early ontology of things in *Being and Time* cannot give useful insights into modern technology: "it turns out that Heidegger's tool-analysis has no greater connection with planetary technology than with a rural flour--mill or immemorial redwood forest."[53] Once more, for him, what is important in tool-being is not the use, because the tool is not a handicraft or a device. In this light, the debate about *Being and Time*'s modernism or antimodernism makes no sense.[54] Harman summarizes

[50] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 132–133; cf. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, op. cit., § 18, 80–81.

[51] G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 8 (author's emphasis).

[52] This is equally true of realists, such as Hubert Dreyfus, who insist on reducing tools to equipment and *Zuhandenheit* to availability, thus subjectivizing Heidegger's ontological project. G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 124.

[53] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 180. Harman gives the example of Michael Zimmerman's too humanizing interpretation of *Being and Time*'s tool analysis in: M.E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger's Confrontation with Modernity. Technology, Politics, and Art*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington – Indianapolis 1990, for whom, Heidegger demonstrates a romantic anti-industrialism and anti-technologism.

[54] This is the case for Dreyfus' claim that *Being and Time* manifests a form of technological nihilism: "The account of worldhood in Being and Time, however, removes every vestige of resistance – that of *physis* and earth, as well as that of will and subjectivity – to the technological tendency to treat all beings (even man) as resources.

his provocative thesis as follows: "Equipment isn't 'useful'; it *is*. It can prove to be useful or harmful or indifferent *only insofar as it is*."[55]

Harman's attempt to revive a "meta-ontological" thinking in Heidegger, which for him takes the form of an ontology of things, is largely inspired by A. Whitehead's realist ontology. In fact, for Harman, Whitehead and Heidegger, even if they seem to be invisible to each other, are the two major representatives of ontology in the twentieth century, as they have elaborated a new ontology of objects.[56] This is more openly discussed in the case of Whitehead than in that of Heidegger, because of the insistance of Heideggerian orthodoxy upon the themes of language and hermeneutic understanding, which Harman takes as expressions of a much wider set of philosophical beliefs, which he terms "the philosophy of access," that is subject-centered philosophy.[57] Another source from which Harman visibly draws is a number of quite diverse phenomenological traditions, such as the Polish phenomenologist Kazimierz Twardowski's early phenomenology of objects; what is already present in him is the definition of phenomenology's task as

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Nothing stands in the way of the final possibility that for Dasein the only issue left becomes ordering for the sake of order itself. This is the understanding of Being definitive of technological nihilism, an understanding prepared but not consummated by the account of equipment in *Being and Time*." H. L. Dreyfus, *Heidegger's History of the Being of Equipment*, in: *Heidegger: A Critical Reader*, eds. H. L. Dreyfus, H. Hall, Blackwell, London 1992, 184. See also H. L. Dreyfus, *Techne and Technology: The Ambiguous Place of Equipment in "Being and Time"*, in: *The Thought of Martin Heidegger*, ed. M. E. Zimmerman, Tulane Studies in Philosophy XXXII, Tulane University Press, New Orleans 1984, 23–35.

[55] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 186 (author's emphasis).

[56] G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 37–43. What Harman discovers in Whitehead is the re-evaluation of the long-forgotten seventeenth-century metaphysics, e.g. in Leibniz. G. Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics*, op. cit., 75.

[57] "I cannot think of a single continental philosopher who has made a serious effort to defend the credentials of an independent reality beyond appearance, of a substance beyond every series of qualities, of a world-in-itself in which the human subject plays just one limited part. Indeed, these claims evoke the sort of conservatism that continental philosophy believes it was born to destroy." G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 106. See indicatively Harman's fierce attack on Derrida's influential reading of Heidegger, G. Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics*, op. cit., 110–116.

object-giveness, instead of a consciousness-focused theory of intentionality.[58] Last but not least, what is also present in Harman's project in a discreet, yet powerful, manner are the "carnal phenomenologies" of Merleau-Ponty, Levinas, and Alphonso Lingis.[59]

II

Peter-Paul Verbeek belongs, like Graham Harman, to the second generation of philosophers of technology who have been largely inspired by Heidegger's phenomenological project. Although, as Don Ihde points out,[60] Heideggerian orthodoxy seems to be in retreat, a multitude of He-

[58] G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 153–154. Intentionality as "immanent objectivity" makes of phenomenology "a philosophy of concrete objects" which renders their actual description possible (ibid., 154). Harman interprets Husserl's idealist turn as a move away from his early, more realist phenomenological perspective and also from his philosophical mentors, Franz Brentano and Kazimierz Twardowski (ibid., 203).

[59] G. Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics*, op. cit., 33, 34–44, 45–58, 59–70. See also G. Harman, *Towards Speculative Realism*, op. cit., 14–21. In fact, Alphonso Lingis is a forerunner of Harman's object-oriented philosophy with its strong anti-pragmatist vein: "The utility and the value that a thing can have are separable and come after. A thing can have several uses, or remain unused and encumbering our home; it can wear out, become useless. A tool is not a transitory relay of our body that extends its force in a monumental field. It is by being in our possession, available, that a detached substance can function as a tool. Use presupposes possession. Before things become implements (*Zeuge*), annexed to the body of the user, prostheses, they are furnishings, *meubles* – movable goods, detached substances brought into the zone of the home, tranquilized, and kept in reserve." A. Lingis, *The Imperative*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington – Indianapolis 1998, 76. Pragmatism and focus upon the use of things divert attention from their true function within the frame of "carnal" phenomenologies: "The sensuous properties of things do not only provide data for identifying them practically and conceptually. (…) The things support us, sustain us, exalt us. They buoy up our gaze, fill our hearing, nourish our energies, restore our movements. The delight that illuminates our sight, the tact and sensuality that refine our touch, the refinement that makes high-spirited our hearing come from them" (ibid., 76).

[60] Ihde talks of those who are clearly "revisionists" of Heidegger's main theses, such as almost all the contributors to a recent anthology on the philosophy of technology, who elaborate on Heidegger's philosophy of technology. D. Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives*, Fordham University Press, New York 2010, 117.

ideggerian insights circulate among the representatives of the younger generation of philosophers of technology, who still claim to be inspired especially by *Being and Time*'s First Division, sections 15 to 18. In Peter-Paul Verbeek's case, the reliance upon Heidegger, among other representatives of existentialism (Karl Jaspers) and phenomenology (Don Ihde, Albert Borgmann), is coupled with the important heritage of the Dutch School of philosophers of technology, such as Hans Achterhuis.[61]

Verbeek shares with Harman a number of importance points of convergence; among others, his preference for the early against the late Heidegger philosophy of technology, and also a distance from classical phenomenology towards more recent phenomenological projects, which valorize technological intentionality[62] as an independent component of human experience. This is why Verbeek relies most upon Don Ihde's "post-phenomenology" in order to elaborate on the humans-artifacts relation.[63] The term introduced by Ihde is mediation. It is in his footsteps that Verbeek also talks about a mediation theory within a "post-phenomenological" perspective. Nevertheless, the major point of convergence between Verbeek and Harman, which influences largely their criticism of Heidegger, is their reluctance to keep things within the realm of, strictly speaking, human experience. Harman talks about an ontology of things or an object-oriented philosophy, and in the same anti-humanist vein, Verbeek talks about a post-phenomenology of things.[64]

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[61] What is pertinent to Achterhuis' thought is an orientation towards a "material ethics,' that is, a post-Kantian ethical stance inclusive of both humans and artifacts. P.-P. Verbeek, *The Morality of Things: A Postphenomenological Inquiry*, in: *Postphenomenology: A Critical Companion to Ihde*, ed. Evan Selinger, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 2006, 124–125.

[62] Another term used earlier by him is that of "instrumental intentionalities." D. Ihde, *Expanding Hermeneutics: Visualism in Science*, Northwestern University Press, Evaston, Ill. 1999, 77.

[63] See among others: D. Ihde, *If Phenomenology is an Albatross, is 'Postphenomenology' Possible?*", in: *Chasing Technoscience. Matrix for Reality*, eds. D. Ihde, E. Selinger, Indiana University Press, Bloomington – Indianapolis 2003, 136. In Ihde's view, post-phenomenology is a hybrid, as it moves between phenomenology and pragmatism, or between Heidegger and Dewey.

[64] P.-P. Verbeek, *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design*, trans. R. Crease, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pa. 2005, 111.

Verbeek adopts in large part Ihde's evaluation of the phenomenology of the tool in *Being and Time.* For Ihde, what emerges from Heidegger's analysis of the *Zuhandenheit* is the description of equipmentally intentional structures, the ultimate goal being that of re-evaluating the existentiality of *praxis*. In a tone strongly reminiscent of pragmatism, Ihde emphasizes the primacy of *praxis* and of the *Dasein*'s "praxical" constitution, from which all other features of the *Zeuge* – contextuality, latency, inversion of the theory-*praxis* relation – emerge: "This *praxical* dimension is where the *essence* of Dasein is shown and effected."[65] Verbeek claims to extend Ihde's claim for the superiority of the early Heidegger's analysis of equipment over his later reflexion upon technology by accusing him of gradually transcendentalizing while, at the same time, historicizing technology: "While the later Heidegger described technology from the perspective of the history of being and saw technological machines and devices as indices of this history, the early Heidegger addressed himself to an (ahistorical) analysis of the role of technology in the relation between human beings and their world. While the late Heidegger reduced technology (transcendentally) to the history of being, the early Heidegger approached it in terms of concrete artifacts."[66]

In fact, Verbeek's access to *Zuhandenheit* in *Being and Time* becomes possible via a direct confrontation with several of its most influential readings. In the case of Hubert Dreyfus' attempt to historicize Heidegger's account of tools and equipment, Verbeek's reaction is immediate.[67] On the other hand, Verbeek seems to single out two approaches

[65] D. Ihde, op. cit., 53.

[66] P.-P. Verbeek, *What Things Do*, op. cit., 80. And against his claim to extend Ihde's postphenomenology of things: E. Selinger, *Towards a Postphenomenology of Artifacts: A Review of Peter-Paul Verbeek's 'What Things Do'*, Techné: Research in Philosophy and Technology 9(1995)2, 4. In fact, Verbeek borrows Ihde's prior argument that early existentialist philosophies of technology tend to be transcendental and too general making of Technology with a capital "T" a unique reified being. See D. Ihde, *Technoscience and postphenomenology*, in: *Phénoménologie et technique(s)*, eds. P.-E. Schmit, P.-A. Chardel, Le Cercle Herméneutique Éditeur, Paris 2008, 181.

[67] P.-P. Verbeek, *What Things Do*, op. cit., 81. Opposing Dreyfus' claim about *Be-*

to the status of technology in *Being and Time* to which he is favorable, the one being Don Ihde's post-phenomenology, and the other Albert Borgmann's device paradigm. What Verbeek explores in both theses is their move away from the transcendentalist and dystopian vision of technology as this is exemplified in the existentialist and early phenomenological philosophies of technology: "The power of Borgmann's analysis consists in his approach of technology in terms of specific artifacts rather than reducing it to its conditions of possibility, as did the classical philosophy of technology. The pattern that he perceives as organizing our existence is not something a priori of which technology is the concrete realization."[68] It is, therefore, not accidental that the refusal of transcendentalism and the drive toward concretization shape Verbeek's own mediation theory concerning artifacts by allowing him to criticize such binary relations as *Being and Time*'s *Vorhandenheit*/*Zuhandenheit* opposition: "not only Heidegger's binary opposition between readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand needs to be challenged, but also the idea that artifacts need to be ready-to-hand in order to be usable. Artifacts mediate human action and involvement not only via embodiment relations but also via alterity relations. (…) A fireplace is not "embodied" or ready-to-hand when it is used. It has an entirely different position in human-world relations than, for instance, a pair of glasses. A fireplace does mediate these relations, but from a present-at--hand position instead of withdrawing into readiness-to-hand."[69]

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ing and Time's ambiguity as to the status of the tool Verbeek claims that Heidegger's perspective on tools and equipment is essentially ahistorical, and certainly not identified to a historical phase in the evolution of technology, as Dreyfus suggests: "While Heidegger's claim that nature is revealed in dealings with tools as a forest of timber or as a source of water power might be specifically linked to a historical phase of technology, his analysis of presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand is not." Ibid., 82.

[68] Ibid., 185. This is also apparent, from a post-phenomenological perspective, in Don Ihde's account of "technological intentionality": "When human beings use an object, there arises a "technologically mediated intentionality," a relation between human beings and world mediated by a technological artifact." Ibid., 116.

[69] Ibid., 194–195.

III

The points of convergence and divergence between Harman's and Verbeek's positions have already been roughly highlighted, the most critical point being that of *Zuhandenheit*'s relational being in Verbeek: "The concept of readiness-to hand directs our attention to the way in which objects are present in the relation between human beings and their world, and brings such things into precisely the domain the phenomenology investigates. The crucial question now concerns the various ways in which things, on the basis of their readiness-to-hand, play a role in the human-world relation."[70] This goes apparently against Harman's repeated claim that things should be dismissed from the human mediation in order to be encountered in themselves. This is, for Harman, the big lesson we learn from phenomenology: "phenomenology is caught at the midpoint of two intersections: (1) On the one hand, we deal only with objects, since sheer formless sense data are never encountered; on the other hand, an "object-only" world could not be

[70] Ibid., 114. Cf. "Heidegger argues that to take "things" interpreted as bare entities with properties is already to have presupposed an ontology prior to the actual investigation of human engagement with the environment. It is from this argument that Heidegger constructs two different ways of relating to entities with the environment. These two ways are well known as the distinction between the "ready-to-hand" (*Zuhandenheit*) and the "present-at-hand" (*Vorhandenheit*). It must be noted that both are qualitatively different relations to entities within the environment." D. Ihde, op. cit., 44. On another occasion, Ihde situates Heidegger's tool analysis within the frame of the relational triad embodiment relations – hermeneutic relations – alterity relations, which shapes his own post-phenomenological perspective on technology: "Heidegger's hammer in use displays an embodiment relation. Bodily action through it occurs within the environment. But broken, missing, or malfunctioning, it ceases to be the means of praxis and becomes an obtruding object defeating the work project. Unfortunately, that negative derivation of objectness by Heidegger carries with it a block against understanding a second existential human-technology relation, the type of relation I shall term hermeneutic." D. Ihde, *Technology and the Lifeworld. From Garden to Earth*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind. 1990, 80. On another occasion Ihde speaks of "relational ontology": "in each set of human-technology relations, the model is that of an interrelational ontology." D. Ihde, *Postphenomenology and Technoscience. The Peking University Lectures*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY 2009, 44.

tangible or experienceable in any way, since objects always elude us. (2) On the one hand, phenomena are united with our consciousness in a single intentional act, while on the other hand they are clearly separate, since they fascinate us as end points of awareness rather than melting indistinguishably into us."[71] This approach is not without consequences for the reading of Heidegger's phenomenology of the tool. For Verbeek, on the other hand, readiness-to-hand is defined by the early Heidegger as a mode of disclosedness, which rests upon a relation between human beings and reality: "instead of *reducing* the relation between human and world, technological artifacts generate forms of access to the world for human beings. This analysis offers fruitful points of departure for the formulation of a philosophy that seeks to understand technology through its artifacts."[72]

Harman's and Verbeek's move away from a subject-centered phenomenology make them recognize the anti-Husserlian tone of Heidegger's early phenomenology of the tool.[73] Moreover, they both distance themselves from Heideggerian orthodoxy as well as more conventional ways of perceiving Heidegger's contribution to the phenomenology of technology.[74] This criticism even reaches the point of doubting

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[71] G. Harman, *Guerilla Metaphysics*, op. cit., 32–33.

[72] P.-P. Verbeek, *What Things Do*, op. cit., 76 (Verbeek's emphasis). For Verbeek, *Being and Time*'s tool analysis could be a privileged mode of effecting a "turn towards the artifacts" in contemporary philosophy of technology, whereas the late Heidegger technological thinking is accused of reductionism.

[73] At this point Verbeek follows once more Ihde's suggestion that "phenomenology, in its Husserlian form, is at its best *indirectly* related to any materially sensitive philosophy of technology". D. Ihde, *Technoscience and postphenomenology*, op. cit., 185.

[74] If Harman and Verbeek share the same predilection for *Being and Time*'s phenomenology of the tool, Heideggerians, such as Iain D. Thompson, focus on the late Heidegger's discussion of technology as enframing *Gestell*, I. D. Thompson, *Heidegger, Art, and Modernity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011, 18–19. Thompson insists upon the relation of the middle and late Heidegger's critique of metaphysics in terms of ontotheology to his reflexion on technology, while he literally dismisses his early phenomenology of the tool in *Being and Time*. See indicatively I. D. Thompson, *What's Wrong with Being a Technological Essentialist?*, Inquiry 43(2000)2, 429–444. Thompson is optimistic about the late Heidegger's way to transcend "technological

Heidegger's importance for contemporary philosophy of technology. In this respect, for Harman, Heidegger is more of an ontologist of "subject-less objects"[75], than a philosopher of technology: "Equipment is global; beings are tool-beings. This is not to be confused with the superficial hypothesis that 'everything is a tool,' a phrase that fails to appreciate the depth of Heidegger's breakthrough. As I have argued, the point is not that everything can be 'used' in some way, but rather that all entities are saddled with the duplicitous character of tool-being, an ontological fissure detectable in stars and angels and melons no less than in common ustensils"[76]. For Verbeek, on the other hand, Heidegger's – especially the late Heidegger's – emphasis on the limits or conditions of possibility of technological *praxis* obstructs him from developing a fruitful reflexion upon concrete technologies. Verbeek objects to the so called historical transcendentalism of the middle and late Heidegger technological thinking, "for that overlooks how specific technologies always (ahistorically) play a role in the relation between human beings and their world, whether or not they are a manifestation of an always historical meaning of being."[77] Nevertheless, both Harman and Verbeek insist upon addressing their critique of Heidegger from within the field of phenomenology and denounce critiques which are externalist.

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ontotheology" in terms of what he designates as a "free relation to technology," which is both the promise and the danger of technology (ibid., 207–212). He also goes as far as to suggest that it is the late Heidegger who suggests an "ontological pluralism" or "plural realism" (ibid., 24). Thompson's "plural realism" is certainly much different in essence from Harman's speculative realism, which is object-oriented, and also from from Ihde and Verbeek's postphenomenological perspectives: "I hold that such a pragmato-phenomenological account leaves in shambles the metaphysical Heideggerian tale. The current tale, on the ground, is a lot messier, but also richer, with its interrelationality of humans, technologies, and science." D. Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies*, op. cit., 113. Thompson seems to appropriate insights only from Hubert Dreyfus' analyses of technology in late Heidegger, whereas he focuses on the externalist critiques of Heidegger's philosophy of technology, such as Andrew Feenberg's critique.

[75] The expression belongs to L. R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects*, Open Humanities Press, Ann Arbor 2011, 13. Bryant designates the recent trend of object-oriented philosophy not as a revived ontology, but as an onticology (ibid., 27).

[76] G. Harman, *Tool-Being*, op. cit., 36 (author's emphasis).

[77] P.-P. Verbeek, *What Things Do*, op. cit., 83 (note 18).

What brings them together is their common effort to "dehumanize" *Being and Time*'s phenomenology of the tool, by bringing Heidegger close to contemporary philosophers of science and technology, such as Bruno Latour, even if the latter has repeatedly positioned himself against both phenomenology and Heidegger's insights into modern technology.[78] In fact, the impact of Latour's actor-network theory upon the unorthodox phenomenological projects of Harman and Verbeek is more than discernible. Harman's veneration for Latour starts early in his philosophical itinerary and culminates in his recent book on *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (2009), where Harman discusses extensively a not too much known aspect of Latour's intellectual identity, which is for him the most intriguing one, that is, his metaphysics. In fact, Latour's realism, which Harman qualifies as a realism of relations, keeps equal distance from idealism and materialism. What lies at the heart of Latourian metaphysics is, in Harman's terms, a deep "nonmodernism."[79] What Latour shares with Heidegger is their common "nonmodern" or "amodern" philosophical fate, that of anti-Copernicanism: "If Kant's Copernican Revolution placed humans at the center of philosophy while reducing the rest of the world to an unknowable set of objects, what Latour recommends is a Counter-Revolution. Nature and Culture are not 'inextricably linked,' because

[78] In his much read *We have never been modern* Latour criticized Heidegger's account of readiness-to-hand as well as his late reflexions on modern technology. For Latour, on the one hand, in his virulent critique of modern metaphysics, Heidegger is trapped in the self-image the "Modern Constitution" has created for itself. Heidegger never realized that modernity never abandoned its old anthropological matrix and, therefore, Heidegger's oblivion of being is meaningless, if we agree that the split between premodern (pre-Cartesian, pre-Kantian) and modern metaphysics is an artificial one. B. Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes*. *Essai d'anthropologie symétrique*, La Découverte, Paris 1991, 90. On the other hand, Heidegger was the first to go as far as the preservation of the "quasi-objects," of promoting hybridization against the typically modern subjects-objects dichotomy. Nevertheless, this obvious gain from Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is devalued by his anti-scientific and anti-technological fervor (ibid., 88–89).

[79] G. Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, Re-press, Melbourne 2009, 31–32, 58.

they are not two distinct zones at all.[80]" Both Heidegger, saved from by his postmodern followers, and Latour share a distaste for what is the quintessence of modernity, that is the subject-object dichotomy. This distaste lies at the heart of Heidegger's account of *Zuhandenheit*: "For Latour, the black box replaces traditional substance. (…) While traditional substances are one, black boxes are many – we simply *treat* them as one, as long as they remain solid in our midst. Like Heidegger's tools, a black box allows us to forget the massive network of alliances of which it is composed, as long as it functions smoothly."[81]

As for Verbeek, the impact of Latour's "realism of relations" on his search for a turn towards things is quite evident. This is also what makes him qualify *Being and Time*'s *Zuhandenheit* as relational: "The crucial question now concerns the various ways in which things, on the basis of their readiness-to-hand, play a role in the human-world relation. (…) A train coshapes the way in which a landscape is present to human beings, a telephone coshapes the way human beings relate to each other. Things, therefore, are not neutral "intermediaries" between humans and world, but *mediators*: they actively mediate this relation."[82] Verbeek proposes a combination of Ihde's post-phenomenology with Latour's "amodern" ontology, while he seems to recognize a relative priority to the postphenomenological perspective. In this respect, Ihde's and his own treatment of Heideggerian *Zuhandenheit* are in compliance with the aspiration at doing away with the subject-object dichotomy: "Phenomenology and postphenomenology bridge the gap rather than denying it, by bringing to light the mutual engagements that constitute subject and object. Their perspectives are focused on the relations between humans and their world, and, contra Latour, do not look "from an externalist perspective" to describe how configurations of humans and nonhumans are continually arising everywhere."[83]

[80] Ibid., 59.

[81] Ibid., 34 (author's emphasis).

[82] P.-P. Verbeek, *What Things Do*, op. cit., 114 (author's emphasis).

[83] Ibid., 166.

But, despite their common recognition of Latour' fresh look at the technological artifacts, Harman and Verbeek are not in agreement on his philosophical strategy with regard to one important issue. For Verbeek, Latour is a constructivist, even though not a social constructivist, because "he thinks in terms of constructions in which both humans and nonhumans play a role"[84]. For Harman, on the other hand, Latour is primarily an ontologist and a metaphysician: "Relations do not exhaust the things that relate, and hence nothing can be defined as a sum total of alliances or even of possible alliances."[85] Consequently, the Heidegger-Latour affinity is approached from a different perspective by each of the two. For Verbeek, both Heidegger and Latour contribute to a mediation theory concerning artifacts, though their approaches are divergent.[86] What Verbeek also points out is the inadequacy of Latour's critique of the early Heidegger tool-analysis, as his critique concerns mostly the late Heidegger: "In *Being and Time* Heidegger does make a thorough analysis of tools and equipment and the role they play in human behavior – an analysis that can be used to augment Latour's."[87] For Harman, on the other hand, both thinkers, despite what Heidegger-inspired postmodernism might want to believe, are object-oriented philosophers, and this is the true meaning of *Being and Time*'s account of *Zuhandenheit*: "The first instinct of both Latour and Heidegger is to replace the model of solid objects with a system of things on reciprocal connection: the network, the tool-system… Heidegger can and must be pushed in the opposite direction: the hammer is no more exhausted by its context than by human vision or handling and thus the hammer in its being must be free of all relations… An object must be measured or registered by its relations, but can never be fully defined by them."[88]

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[84] Ibid., 150–151.

[85] G. Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, op. cit., 134.

[86] With regard to technical mediation in Heidegger and Latour, see P.-P. Verbeek, *What Things Do*, op. cit., 95–96 and 154–155 respectively.

[87] Ibid., 155 (note 4).

[88] G. Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, op. cit., 143.

Both Harman's and Verbeek's accounts of tools and *Zuhandenheit* belong to the frontline of today's novel interpretations of *Being and Time*, which as such have overcome the framework of the established – pragmatist or neopragmatist, realist or historicizing – accounts of it. While departing from the solid ground of phenomenology, both Harman and Verbeek opt for a distancing from classical phenomenology – to which Heidegger most certainly belongs – in the direction of "carnal" phenomenology, in the case of Harman, and in that of post-phenomenology, in the case of Verbeek.[89] Nevertheless, what is of great interest in both philosophers is their will to move away from the postmodernist readings of Heidegger, and also their will to bring his early tool analysis close to the work of philosophers of technology, such as Albert Borgmann and Bruno Latour.

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[89] This is how Verbeek depicts the relation of Ihde's postphenomenology to Heidegger: "The difference between Heidegger and Ihde stems from a difference in the ways in which each conceptualizes technology (…) the traditional project of the philosophy of technology consisted of research into the interpretative relation to reality that lies behind technology. (…) Ihde's approach to technology, however, does not begin with this world-interpretation, but with our dealings with the concrete technological artifacts, and the praxes and interpretations that are made possible by them." P.-P. Verbeck, *Don Ihde: The Technological Lifeworld*, in: *American Philosophy of Technology: The Empirical Turn*, ed. H. Achterhuis, Indiana University Press, Bloomington Indianapolis 2001, 144.

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