

Sacha Golob. *Heidegger on Concepts, Freedom, and Normativity.* Cambridge University Press 2014. 282 pp. \$95.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9781107031708).

Sacha Golob's carefully argued, clearly written, and philosophically engaging book is a welcome addition to the growing literature that brings Heidegger's sprawling and apparently idiosyncratic thought into dialogue with philosophical approaches that are temperamentally very different from it—above all, analytic philosophy. As this book amply demonstrates, the rewards are many, both for understanding Heidegger and for fostering insight into philosophical issues. Here the issue is *intentionality*, the 'property, typically attributed to mental states, whereby those states are directed toward or about something' (6). Golob is well-versed in the analytic literature on intentionality and is careful to define his terms in ways that do not prejudge the many contested matters found there, but a direct confrontation with analytic philosophy is not his primary goal. That goal is, rather, to offer an alternative to what he calls the 'dominant approach' (5) to *Heidegger's* account of intentionality. In doing so he carves out for Heidegger a position in dialectical space that might seem paradoxical: the 'explanatorily primary' form of intentionality is non-propositional but nevertheless *conceptual*.

The dominant approach is represented by a set of authors whose work has been informed by Hubert Dreyfus's influential reading of Heidegger. Thus the book engages in detail with arguments advanced by Taylor Carman, Mark Wrathall, William Blattner, Mark Okrent, Cristina Lafont, and Dreyfus himself, among others. The dominant approach is 'dominant' not because it is shared by most Heidegger scholars, but because it is practically the only one to treat Heidegger as an interlocutor in contemporary philosophical debates about intentionality, language, truth, and meaning. Golob's treatment of it, then—certainly the most comprehensive and critical one to date—should be required reading for anyone interested in those issues. Here I can only sketch that treatment, but the real value of the book lies in its detailed analyses.

Chapter One lays out the terms, beginning with two claims drawn from Heidegger: first, that 'assertion' reduces entities to presence-at-hand; and second, that assertion derives from a more primordial engagement with things. Golob argues that Heidegger's notion of assertion is not limited to a certain speech act but includes all 'propositional intentionality', i.e., all propositional attitudes (15). The dominant approach holds that propositional intentionality derives from an intentionality that is not only non-propositional, but also (supposedly for that reason) non-conceptual. Golob's strategy in this chapter is to undermine the claim that there is a necessary connection between propositional intentionality and the ontology of the present-at-hand, thereby undermining the dominant approach's way of establishing that 'propositional intentionality is explanatorily derivative on some irreducibly non-propositional mode of intentionality' (18). In Chapter Two, Golob follows with his own view of the relation between assertion and the present-at-hand in *Being and Time*, on the basis of which, in Chapter Three, he offers a novel account of Heidegger's claim that propositional intentionality is derivative. Identifying problems with this view as well, Golob devotes two final chapters to exploring (what he takes to be) an alternative account drawn from Heidegger's post-*Being and Time* reflections on the connection between freedom and normativity.

According to Golob's Heidegger, 'conceptual' content must satisfy four conditions: it must be universal; it must support inferential relations; it must not be something that is too 'fine grained' to be expressed in propositions; and it must be unavailable to non-human animals (10). Content

exhibiting these features is conceptual even if, as with perception, it is not exhausted by them. Golob then identifies three ‘logically independent’ meanings of ‘presence-at-hand’ in Heidegger’s text and defines the thesis to be denied as a disjunction of these senses. In none of them is there a necessary connection between propositional intentionality and the present-at-hand, though there *is* a connection if we add a condition that Golob discusses in Chapter Two.

What is the basic objection to the dominant approach? Roughly, it explains the connection between propositional intentionality and the present-at-hand by arguing that the former derives from an intentionality which resides in embodied skills and abilities that elude capture in the conceptual form of assertions. But (among other things) the argument is exegetically suspect because it attributes to Heidegger a theory of ‘sensorimotor’ intentionality drawn from Merleau-Ponty, whereas ‘Heidegger shows little or no interest in developing the apparatus necessary to defend that kind of theory’ (45). Perhaps he *should* have, but the dominant approach should not be accepted as *Heidegger’s* until it is shown that no exegetically more satisfying account of the derivative character of propositional intentionality is possible.

In Chapter Two, Golob provides his own account of how propositional intentionality reduces being to presence-at-hand. Such a reduction obtains only if the disjunction earlier introduced is conjoined with a certain *philosophical analysis* of assertion, which Heidegger calls ‘logic’. By focusing exclusively on *predication* in abstraction from the assertion’s existential context, logic ‘dims down’ the full content of propositional intentionality (50-2) and yields an ontology of the present-at-hand. Propositions themselves are not the culprit—after all, Heidegger’s text is full of them (64)—and there is scant evidence that Heidegger embraces an explanatorily basic level of intentionality that eludes propositional formulation. But then how do we explain Heidegger’s claim that propositional intentionality is derivative of a more primordial non-propositional form of intentionality?

Taking his cue from Heidegger’s call to ‘liberate grammar from logic’ (68), Golob addresses this question in Chapter Three, the most ambitious and complicated in the book. He proposes that the two levels of intentionality do not differ in regard to concept-involvement, as the dominant approach has it; rather, they differ in ‘grammar’: there are *two* ‘vehicles’ for conceptual content, the propositional and the ‘pre-propositional’ (68). The grammar of propositional content involves the ‘is’ (a is b); the grammar of conceptual but pre-propositional content involves the ‘as’ (a as b). Propositional content is derivative because, as Heidegger puts it in *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929/30): ‘The proposition “a is b” would not be possible with respect to what it means, and the way in which it means what it does, if it could not emerge from an underlying experience of “a as b”’ (72). The challenge for Golob, then, is to show why the ‘a as b’ is neither non-conceptual nor just an inchoate form of propositional content.

His argument is governed by two principles, ‘Context’ and ‘Apriori’. Context says that what is explanatorily basic in Heidegger’s account of intentionality is locating entities (the ‘a-variable’) within a relational/teleological context or ‘world’. And Apriori says that in order to locate entities in such a context I must have prior familiarity with it. According to Golob, Heidegger establishes Apriori through what Quassim Cassam calls a ‘self-directed transcendental argument’: given that I am capable of a certain kind of experience—in this case, the ability to locate entities in a context—the argument provides a ‘non-empirical analysis’ (hence Apriori) of the ‘intentional capacities I must possess in order to intend objects in this way’ (86-7). Further, on pain of infinite regress, Apriori

entails the ontological difference: the intentional capacity I must possess is an ‘understanding of being’, where being is not itself an entity (88).

In turning to the a-variable, these two principles help explain Heidegger’s stance toward representationalism. Heidegger clearly rejects ‘mediational’ representationalism, the view that the a-variable is some sort of mental entity that determines reference to an entity in the world (91-6). Heidegger’s target here is ‘Husserl’—that is, Husserl’s doctrine of the noema as interpreted by Dagfinn Føllesdal (and embraced by the dominant approach), which holds the noema to be a Fregean *Sinn*. In contrast, Golob argues that Heidegger’s account of the a-variable is ‘Russellian’—that is, the a-variable is the entity itself. As he shows in a later chapter, this is compatible with a ‘minimal’ representationalism in which our experience of the entity in the a-as-b structure is not ‘brute’ but has ‘accuracy conditions’ (183).

Golob’s Russellian interpretation of the explanatorily basic form of intentionality highlights Heidegger’s proximity to an alternative interpretation of Husserl, according to which the distinction between noema and object is not an ontological but a *methodological* one. On that reading, the noema ‘comes very close to Heidegger’s conception of “phenomena”’: the a-variable as manifest within a context (96-7). On the Russellian interpretation, further, intentionality turns out to be relational, and Golob devotes some acute paragraphs to showing how Heidegger’s ‘externalism’ might address standard problems associated with the relational view, such as objectless presentations, illusions, and hallucinations (100-1).

It is Golob’s discussion of the b-variable that forms the most original part of the book, however, and it exposes a tension that undermines the schema of *Being and Time*. Golob argues that Heidegger came to adopt a new approach to intentionality in the years immediately following its publication, but paradoxically his account of the b-variable, or ‘context’, in *Being and Time* itself exploits the notion of ‘prototype’ (*Vorbild*) not found before the texts from 1928/29.

Golob associates the context—what I am already familiar with whenever I am intentionally directed toward an entity, my *Vorgriff*—with Heidegger’s notion of discourse (*Rede, logos*), but he rejects Cristina Lafont’s contention that context is identical to language. At the same time, he rejects the dominant approach’s claim that it is a non-conceptual framework of skills, practices, and gestures. Context, on Golob’s view, is both non-linguistic *and* conceptual, a ‘new vehicle for conceptuality’ (103). Heidegger has no name for this new vehicle in *Being and Time*, however, so Golob imports the Platonic term ‘*Vorbild*’ from *Vom Wesen des Grundes* (1929) to unpack an implicit ‘prototype theory’ of concepts in *Being and Time*. A prototype is an exemplar that adumbrates a context or world (129). When I encounter the blackboard as badly positioned, for instance, it is because I am oriented by a prototype that adumbrates what I am trying to be (a teacher), which ‘forms’ (*bildet*) the normative order of the classroom-context in which blackboards can show up in appropriate or inappropriate ways. Such prototypes satisfy the four criteria for conceptual content introduced earlier (148-51), but being oriented by a prototype does not have a propositional structure.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger is especially concerned with the prototype for understanding beings *as beings*—and Golob devotes some careful pages to showing how Heidegger’s discussion of Kant’s schematism in the *Kantbuch* suggests that the prototype theory already governs *Being and Time*’s pursuit of time as the ultimate context for understanding being. However, the prototype theory

involves a certain tension between Kantian and Platonic motives in Heidegger's thinking, one that contributes to the failure of *Being and Time*.

On the one hand, the prototype theory represents Heidegger's attempt to free Platonism from the logical prejudice of the 'theory of ideas' (124); on the other, Heidegger's 'insertion of a prototype account of intentionality into the Critical framework' (114), through his identification of time as *the* horizon for an understanding of being, ends in failure. In Chapters Five and Six, then, Golob argues that after *Being and Time* Heidegger's dissatisfaction with the Kantian architectonic led him to *freedom* as the explanatorily basic form of intentionality. Though these explorations, too, are carried out as a dialogue between Kant and Plato, it is the Platonic motif (I would argue) that contains the productive kernel of the prototype approach. I would go further: the 'failure' of *Being and Time* does not stem from the prototype theory itself but from the unmotivated idea that there must be one 'ultimate' prototype, one meaning of being.

Before getting to that, however, Chapter Four applies the prototype theory to 'metaphysical' questions (155) that have exercised readers of *Being and Time* for decades. John Searle, for example, dismisses Heideggerian phenomenology because it treats the ready-to-hand as basic when it is obviously grounded in nature. In answer, Golob distinguishes between a narrow sense of the ready-to-hand, confined to tools, and a broad sense that covers *all* entities, including natural things, that have attained 'world-entry' and so can be intended (158). While the former are constituted by 'mind-dependent' properties (and so cannot exist without Dasein), the latter include entities whose properties are 'prima facie mind-independent' (167). When Heidegger says that reality depends on Dasein, 'reality' is the prototype according to which we can intend real things as real. But this does not turn their mind-independent properties into mind-dependent ones; hence on Golob's definition of 'idealism', Heidegger is not an idealist (174).

Nevertheless, Heidegger refuses the naturalistic ontological approach recommended by Searle: start with an account of mind-independent nature and arrive at the 'narrow' ready-to-hand by adding certain teleological and social capacities. Why this refusal? Golob argues that Heidegger has no adequate answer to this question; rather, the refusal stems from his general project of providing 'a non-naturalistic, non-reductive account of the nature of Dasein's intentionality', a project committed to the idea that normativity cannot be naturalized (161). At bottom, Golob argues, *Being and Time* has 'no real story about, or interest in, the question of how Dasein relates to the present-at-hand insofar as the latter is considered *outside the scope of intentionality*', and this deficiency (if it is one, I would add), is made good 'in name only when Heidegger later appeals to 'metontology'' (162). On Searle's definition of idealism as any theory that makes irreducibly *de re* reference to entities impossible, then, Heidegger's realism may well count as idealism (176).

Regarding truth, Golob takes up Tugendhat's influential claim that Heidegger's explanatorily basic form of intentionality is non-normative, hence not a mode of truth at all. Golob denies that Russellian 'acquaintance' can be understood as some direct intuition (*noein*) of an entity prior to the a-as-b structure. Further, while acquaintance does not have a propositional structure, it is normatively assessable (hence relevantly truth-like) because it involves non-binary 'accuracy conditions' (183). The explanatorily basic level thus avoids Tugendhat's criticism and can be used to address Cristina Lafont's charge that Heidegger's theory makes all empirical revision and learning impossible (185).

In the book's final two chapters, then, normativity takes center stage. On Golob's view, Heidegger turns to freedom—'the capacity to recognize and commit oneself to norms' (195)—to

overcome the impasse of his account of temporality in *Being and Time* and *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Hence freedom—central to what Heidegger calls Dasein’s ‘transcendence’—is the explanatorily basic form of intentionality that accounts for the irreducibly normative aspect of the a-as-b structure.

Chapter Five develops this point by interpreting transcendence as Dasein’s ability to act ‘for the sake of’ something that it is trying to be. To act for the sake of being a teacher, for instance, is to commit oneself to the norms that govern success or failure in teaching. Doing so does not require that such norms be formulated as rules; and indeed on the prototype theory the *Vorbild* of teaching will not be a thematic object but something ‘understood’, a way of being that makes me beholden to entities in certain specific ways. Golob pursues this issue through a comparison with ‘Kant’s “practical” account of freedom’ which, like Heidegger’s, ‘turns on a distinctive relation between selfhood, normativity, and the first-person perspective’ (198). For Heidegger, as for Kant, ‘my being and behavior is *mine* because it is at issue for me’, that is, because its success or failure is normatively at stake (200). Such a conception of selfhood—in which the capacity to ‘take on, respond to and assess normative commitments’ is basic (202)—is conceptually (though perhaps not metaphysically) incompatible with my being a locus of external causal forces. I act in *light* of norms and not merely *in accord* with them. As Golob points out in his response to various Kantian and Hegelian objections to Heidegger’s concept of freedom, Heidegger is trying to address what Robert Pippin calls ‘the difficult to describe [...] character of the conceptual activity at work’ in the explanatorily basic form of intentionality (205).

Despite this Kantian analogue, Heidegger’s account of Dasein’s transcendence cannot appeal to any pre-given nature (e.g., ‘rational being’) as the normative prototype for such selfhood. In Chapter Six, Golob will suggest that ‘authenticity’ plays something like this role, but here it seems to me there is a missed opportunity. Heidegger himself identifies what replaces Kant’s ‘form of law’, namely, the Platonic *agathon* as *epekeina tes ousias*. Though Golob does not investigate this connection, it forms the heart of prototype theory: the ultimate context (measure, norm) for my being a self is not some particular exemplary ‘for the sake of’ or practical identity, nor is it some specific concept, like ‘time’; rather, it is the normative *distinction* between better and worse. To be a self is to act in light of ‘what is best’.

Golob’s account of authenticity, which includes consideration of the ‘factic’ character of the ‘normative terrain within which Dasein operates’ (213)—its ‘finitude’ and its dependence on *das Man*—turns on an interpretation of the *breakdown* of all Dasein’s particular ‘for the sake of’s’ or normative commitments. In *Angst*, death, and conscience Dasein *experiences* the ‘true facts about itself’, above all, a ‘set of limitations’ on its responsibility: that ‘nothing will ever provide the foundational ground’, or ultimate normative justification for what it does, ‘which was promised by theories such as the categorical imperative’ (235-6). On his reading, *Angst* teaches that there are ‘no norms, no possibilities, which are binding on Dasein simply in virtue of its being Dasein’ (230). And death, in turn, as Dasein’s ‘ownmost possibility’, shows that to be a self is to ‘confront’ the ‘absence of such a norm’ (233). Finally, conscience calls me to the kind of responsibility possible in such a situation: not to be responsible for the norms according to which I act (which derive from the social whole, *das Man*), but rather for their normative *force*. To be authentic, or ‘resolute’, is to act with a ‘transparent’ understanding of this existential relation to the space of reasons (218).

Here Golob poses two questions: Why should we accept Heidegger’s account of the self and its characterization of the normative ground of intentionality? And why should we care about

authenticity? Thanks to the ‘scope of [Heidegger’s] ambition’, answering the first question is hard; it would, for instance, require us to ‘rule out alternatives’, such as normative realism, which Heidegger ‘barely considers’ (237). Golob answers the second question by appeal to what he calls Heidegger’s ‘methodological perfectionism’ (240). This yields, first, a *hypothetical* reason to care about authenticity: if Dasein ‘fully realizes its own essence’ in authenticity, and if such realization is ‘a necessary condition on good philosophy’, then insofar as I am engaged in the project of philosophy I will have a reason to care about authenticity (240). Because Heidegger holds that philosophy requires a special sort of first-person commitment that ‘guarantees that we are “coining the appropriate existential concepts”’ (225) rather than merely taking over traditional tropes, authenticity would be something like an obligation for the philosopher. But Golob goes further: on the basis of the exegetical fact that Heidegger often describes existence itself as a kind of ‘philosophizing’ (241), it seems that a concern for authenticity is a desideratum for *all* acting for the sake of something. Though this does not amount to an ‘obligation’ to be authentic (244), authenticity allows us to ‘better navigate among the irreducibly finite’ demands that confront us in *das Man* (243), because only as authentic are we ‘genuine loci of responsibility’ (248).

Having presented his interpretation of Heidegger, Golob concludes his book with some contrarian reflections. First, his dismissal of the dominant approach’s emphasis on the phenomenological difference between ‘sensorimotor’ intentionality and reflective deliberation is generalized to the claim that ‘Heideggerian phenomenology places no special weight on conscious experience’ (254). I think this conclusion is hasty. It is true that ‘insofar as Heidegger’s phenomenology can be said to have a single guiding light, it is [...] normativity’ (254), but it seems to me that neither the prototype theory nor the account of finitude are intelligible apart from a phenomenology that refers at every point—if only tacitly—to the descriptive features of first-person experience. First, Heidegger’s understanding of concepts (or prototypes) as ‘formal indications’—a notion that Golob mentions but does not develop—is predicated on the very kind of experiential ‘authenticity’ Golob himself emphasizes: insight into the ‘evidence situation’ in which we *try* to ‘coin the appropriate existential concepts’. Second, the sort of self-directed transcendental argument that does the heavy lifting in Chapter Three requires that the descriptive features of our experience be fixed, and there is no way to do that except through reflection on first-person experience. Finally, the accuracy conditions that Golob attributes to the a-variable cannot really be characterized without engaging in the kind of phenomenological reflections that Merleau-Ponty (and his dominant approach followers, among others) pursue.

Somewhat surprisingly, Golob concludes by calling into question the whole project of looking for an intentionality that is more primordial than propositional intentionality. Here the paradox of interpreting *Being and Time* through the later notion of prototype becomes acute. For Golob seems to think that the failure of the prototype theory *as such* is demonstrated by *Being and Time*’s failure to establish time as the prototype for all understanding of being. Thus he suggests that we drop the prototype theory and think of Heidegger’s subsequent turn to freedom and normativity not as unearthing a more primordial mode of intentionality but as a way of ‘unpacking the explanatory structure of propositional intentionality’ (255). The result would be that ‘there would be no mode of intentionality that was not propositional’ (256).

I am not convinced that this is anything more than a terminological matter. When in *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* Heidegger calls Dasein’s transcendence a kind of ‘primal intentionality’, he distinguishes it clearly enough from act-intentionality, and not much seems to hang

on whether one calls it an ‘explanatory condition’ of propositional intentionality rather than a mode of intentionality itself. And while Golob thinks that the claims about freedom and normativity he developed in Chapters Five and Six are ‘compatible’ with the prototype theory but ‘logically separable from it’ (255), I’m not so sure. I agree that the prototype theory is at work in *Being and Time*, though it is not named there; but I would argue that the normative concept of freedom, also not named, is at work there as well. And I have already suggested that the failure of *Being and Time* stems not from the prototype theory itself but from an unmotivated commitment to the idea that there must be a single exemplary meaning of being. If, further, one attends to the role of the *agathon* in Heidegger’s actual development of the prototype theory—as the formally-indicating concept which adumbrates the context of my responsibility for going on in light of what I hold to be ‘best’—then separating freedom from *Vorbild* does not seem to be an option. The claim that the relation between freedom and normativity is the explanatory ground of propositional intentionality stands or falls with conceiving of conceptual normativity as context-adumbrating exemplarity to which I am committed in my practice and whose meaning is always at issue in that practice. Whether this remains a kind of ‘conceptualism’ in Sacha Golob’s specific sense can remain open for now. His wonderful book will be indispensable for any future discussion of Heidegger and intentionality.

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