

## Formal Indication

Heidegger developed an account of “non-committal” reference made possible by what he called formal indicators or designators (*formalen Anzeige*). Non-committal reference begins with contingent features and arrives at essential features, if there are any, only after an investigation. Heidegger explains:

The empty meaning structure [of the formal designator] gives a direction towards filling it in. Thus a unique binding character lies in the formal designator; I must follow in a *determinate direction* that, should it get to the essential, only gets there by fulfilling the designation by appreciating the non-essential.” (33)

Thus, Heidegger held that reference need not commit one to any essential features; rather, it binds one to investigate, in whatever way is appropriate to the domain, which features, if any, of an object *referred to* by its *inessential* features are *essential*. Heidegger continues:

[We must] make a leap and proceed resolutely from there! . . . One lives in a non-essential having that takes its specific direction toward completion from the maturing of the development of this having. . . . The *evidence* for the appropriateness of the original definition of the object is not essential and primordial; rather, the appropriateness is absolutely *questionable* and the definition must precisely be understood in this questionableness and lack of evidence. (34-35)

Phänomenologische Interpretationen zu Aristoteles, Band, 61

## II. Our most basic way of being.

[W]hat is first of all “given”...is the “for writing,” the “for going in and out,” the “for illuminating,” the “for sitting.” That is, writing, going-in-and-out, sitting, and the like are what we are *a priori* involved with. What we know when we “know our way around” and what we learn are these “for what’s.”\*

\*A blackboard [is] unintelligible and as such absolutely not present, hidden, unless understood as for writing on. The same with a door: for going in and out. These things are intelligible because we are that within which we operate, and in such a taken-for-granted way that we forget this state of affairs in its basic structure as the constitution of things.

This as-what, in the light of which I understand and which I already have (although unthematically) from the outset is, nonetheless, not grasped thematically in this “having from the outset.” Rather I *live* in the understanding of writing, illuminating, going-in-and-out, and the like. More precisely: as existence I am—in speaking, going, and understanding—an act of understanding dealing-with. My being in the world *is* nothing other than this already-operating-with-understanding in this mode of being.

Martin Heidegger, Logic: The Question of Truth, *Gesamtausgabe*, Band 21, Trans. Thomas Sheehan, Manuscript.