

COMMENTARY ON HEIDEGGER

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was born into an actively religious Catholic family in rural Germany. He pursued an unremarkable academic career until the publication of *Being and Time* in 1927 whereupon he was given a full professorship at Marburg. A year later when his mentor Edmund Husserl retired, Heidegger was awarded the chair of philosophy at Freiburg University. The reception of Heidegger's work continues to be marred by his involvement with the Nazi Party. Heidegger joined the Party in the early 1930s and under the regime he rose to the position of Rector of Freiburg University, during which time he actively oversaw the Nazification of the University and the departure of several Jewish academics. Following Germany's defeat in World War II, and as a result of his Nazi association, Heidegger was forbidden to teach from 1946 until 1949. He never resigned from the Party.

Despite his dubious political associations, philosophers of the Left in France, notably Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Simone de Beauvoir, eagerly adopted his antiessentialism and his practically orientated account of human existence. Heidegger also gave a fresh impetus to hermeneutics (notably in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur), and his critique of metaphysics has been a driving force in post-modernism, informing the work of Jacques Derrida. Heidegger has also attracted strong critics – among them the political philosopher and activist, Jürgen Habermas – for his Nietzschean-style notion of authenticity and his distaste for the lives of “ordinary” people (the much derided “*das Man*”).

Heidegger acknowledges a deep indebtedness to Husserl. Whereas Husserl's method of bracketing, or *epoche*, aimed at establishing purely logical foundations of meaning, Heidegger sought the foundations of meaning in the structures of things as they are encountered in everyday life. Despite the highly abstract appearance of the work, *Being and Time* is oriented to the practical basis of human understanding. Heidegger considered the fundamental task of philosophy was to bring to light the nonphilosophical sources of philosophical concepts in order to then be able to “ask into the meaning of the Being of the sort of entities with which it deals.”¹

The success of this grand plan turns upon the success of a more basic enquiry into what it means to be, *per se*. Heidegger opens his philosophical opus with an enquiry

into the entity whose Being consists in asking just this question, namely, ourselves, or “*Dasein*.” *Dasein* concerns the being of human beings. However, it is wiser to use “*Dasein*” to indicate “selfhood” rather than the being of human beings, simply because the class of human beings includes babies and nonconscious people, whereas in its explanation it is clear that *Dasein* properly refers only to those beings with explicitly reflective self-awareness.

Heidegger sets out to identify the ontological structures of *Dasein* through an analysis of the nature of self-conscious experience. His method is phenomenological, focused on the way in which we encounter objects in our practical experiences. Heidegger’s analysis reveals that one always already finds oneself encountering a world wherein one is aware of one’s existence in that world *as* self-aware, that is, as having an orientation to, and concern for, one’s existence. This mode of existence is “*Dasein*.”² *Dasein* is made up of two concepts, “to be” (*zu sein*) and “there” (*da*), meaning “to be there” in the world. In this sense *Dasein* belongs to, or is made for, the world, hence Heidegger’s other famous expression “being-in-the world.” In a nutshell, *Dasein* is “an entity for which, intimately involved in its being-in-the world, this very being is at issue.”³ This statement is a rather formal way of describing a being which is essentially practical and self-reflective: *Dasein* is the kind of being that can enquire into its own existence *as* an enquirer. For Heidegger, this describes selfhood.

Heidegger insists that *Dasein* is not to be regarded as an object or substance. It is more like a power or potency, a mode of existence constitutive of those beings whose existence is an issue for them, namely ourselves (that is, the readers of *Being and Time*). According to Heidegger, subjectivity consists in living this self-concernfulness; there is no other human essence, no soul, no *telos* determining what one is or will be. Heidegger’s insight here is that since human being lacks an essential nature, it can be characterized only by potentiality. Heidegger then goes on to draw out the kind of structures implicit in the idea of an existence that is sheer potentiality.

As potentiality, one’s existence is a question, the question of what *to be*, and this is necessarily a personal question: what am *I* going to make of myself? *Dasein* sets for each of us the task of becoming who we will be, that is, the task of self-determination through self-interpretation. The meaning of one’s existence, one’s life as a whole, is not a function of either nature or God, but can only be our own self-activity as we each take up the enquiry into our own being.

Heidegger’s view is innovative in that he regards understanding as primordially practical and arising from our worldly involvements. This is a point that Merleau-Ponty later develops into his account of bodily intentionality. Heidegger describes a holistic understanding of the world built up not as an accretion of concepts of objects, but through practical encounters with things that are meaningful in terms of the purposes, or task, to which we can put them (what he calls “equipment”). *Dasein* always already finds itself in a world structured with practical significance. This state is the state of “being-in-the-world,” and, for Heidegger, this state is ontological.

The idea of being-in-the world makes subjectivity essentially temporal because my orientation to my existence is given in terms of a past, present, and future. Heidegger says that the unity of temporal orientations (“*ecstases*”) is the primordial structure of *Dasein*: one is always already in the world in time, or, as he puts it, *Dasein* is a “being-within-timeness.”⁴ The temporal unity of past, present, and future grounds the unity of

self by configuring my experiences into a temporal order. Thus, conceptual unity is underpinned by the (ontological) temporal unity of consciousness.

For Heidegger, because Dasein is sheer potentiality, each individual person must actively take up the question of his or her existence and determine who he or she is going to *be*. Heidegger describes the alternative – the unreflected life of “*das Man*” – as mere “idling,” the kind of herd-like existence so despised by Nietzsche. To exist as *das Man* is to be a nobody, to lack individuality and self-determination and, thus, to live “inauthentically.” For Heidegger, like Nietzsche, this is a degenerate form of existence.

Heidegger connects the idea of authenticity to Dasein’s temporality through his concept of “being-toward-death.” This expression describes a double experience. First, it describes the experience of confronting one’s mortality: I realize that at some time in the future I am going to die and that my existence is finite. That realization sets off another realization, namely, the insight that one can suffer another kind of “death”: the failure to make one’s life one’s own. Common to both senses of “death” is the idea of an existential limit to Dasein’s existence. In this sense, death is, specifically, a failure of self-determination, the failure to make Dasein *mine*.⁵ Death is a finitude that is not merely a chronological limit on the life span, but the extreme negative end of the spectrum of possibilities of my existence: “the condition of not being able to be anybody in particular.”⁶

Being-toward-death has a special role to play in the psychological and practical processes of self-determination and “authenticity.” Heidegger argues that Dasein, in grasping itself as potentiality for being, realizes that it must make itself *something*, else face the meaninglessness of being nothing in particular (death). The threat of meaninglessness induces the dread and anxiety of existential *angst*, and this precipitates the processes of self-determination. Knowing that I am going to “die” brings with it awareness that my life is mine, and that only I die with me. The correlative thought is that only I can live my life, and only I can be responsible for the meaning that my life has for me. Heidegger says that in this realization of my life as mine I am able to grasp my existence as a whole, to see myself extended over the entirety of my life.⁷ In this way, one is able to posit oneself as the subject of a whole life, a life of one’s own.

For Heidegger, without the basic ability to self-interpret I cannot become anyone. A self-interpretation is achieved when one forms an understanding of oneself that is historical, that is, in which there is a chronological and conceptual continuity of one’s past, present, and future. Borrowing from Dilthey, Heidegger calls this *Zusammenhang des Lebens*, or the “connectedness of life.”⁸ I take responsibility for the meaning of my life when I take responsibility for the connectedness of my life. For Heidegger, one must become a kind of author of one’s life, and every activity one undertakes earns its significance in the context of one’s self-interpretations – a view echoed in narrative accounts of identity.

The notion of authenticity is controversial, not least for its radical individualism, but also for the shadow it casts over supposedly inauthentic lives. Heidegger’s account falls foul of the same kind of criticisms made against that philosophical tradition that counts only fully rational beings among the members of the moral community. Nevertheless, Heidegger’s conception of Dasein and being-in-the-world has influenced almost all phenomenological and existentialist accounts of selfhood and identity since.

Notes

- 1 John Caputo, "Heidegger," in Simon Critchley and William Schroeder (eds.), *A Companion to Continental Philosophy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), p. 225.
- 2 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962) (hereafter *BT*), p. 12. All page numbers refer to German pagination.
- 3 Martin Heidegger, *The History of the Concept of Time*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 294. See also *BT*, p. 7.
- 4 *BT*, p. 333.
- 5 Heidegger does base death in the extinction of life in the biological sense, although he concedes it is "a certainty which is 'only' empirical." He says, "So far as one knows, all men 'die'" (*BT*, p. 257).
- 6 William Blattner, "Existence and Self-Understanding in *Being and Time*," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LVI (1), 1996, p. 108.
- 7 The idea of one's death allows Dasein to grasp its existence as a totality because it "finalizes my past, cuts off my future, and invades my present as the perspective from which Dasein is seen in its wholeness and conclusive meaning." Heidegger quoted in Hans Kellner, "'As Real As It Gets . . .': Ricoeur and Narrativity," *Philosophy Today*, 34, Fall 1990, p. 231.
- 8 *BT*, p. 373.

Main Texts by Heidegger

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Further Reading

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“EXPOSITION OF THE TASK OF A PREPARATORY ANALYSIS OF DASEIN”

Martin Heidegger

The Theme of the Analytic of Dasein

We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any such entity is *in each case mine*. These entities, in their Being, comport themselves towards their Being. As entities with such Being, they are delivered over to their own Being. *Being* is that which is an issue for every such entity. This way of characterizing Dasein has a double consequence: 42

1. The “essence” [“Wesen”] of this entity lies in its “to be” [Zu-sein]. Its Being-what-it-is [Was-sein] (*essentia*) must, so far as we can speak of it at all, be conceived in terms of its Being (*existentia*). But here our ontological task is to show that when we choose to designate the Being of this entity as “existence” [Existenz], this term does not and cannot have the ontological signification of the traditional term “*existentia*”; ontologically, *existentia* is tantamount to *Being-present-at-hand*, a kind of Being which is essentially inappropriate to entities of Dasein’s character. To avoid getting bewildered, we shall always use the Interpretative expression “*presence-at-hand*” for the term “*existentia*”, while the term “existence”, as a designation of Being, will be allotted solely to Dasein.

The essence of Dasein lies in its existence. Accordingly those characteristics which can be exhibited in this entity are not “properties” present-at-hand of some entity which “looks” so and so and is itself present-at-hand; they are in each case possible ways for it to be, and no more than that. All the Being-as-it-is [So-sein] which this entity possesses is primarily Being. So when we designate this entity with the term “Dasein”, we are expressing not its “what” (as if it were a table, house or tree) but its Being.

2. That Being which is an *issue* for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine. Thus Dasein is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities as things that are present-at-hand. To entities such as these, their

Being is “a matter of indifference”; or more precisely, they “are” such that their Being can be neither a matter of indifference to them, nor the opposite. Because Dasein has in each case *mineness* [*Jemeinigkeit*], one must always use a *personal* pronoun when one addresses it: “I am”, “you are”.

Furthermore, in each case Dasein is mine to be in one way or another. Dasein has always made some sort of decision as to the way in which it is in each case mine [*je meines*]. That entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue, comports itself towards its Being as its ownmost possibility. In each case Dasein *is* its possibility, and it “has” this possibility, but not just as a property [*eigenschaftlich*], as something present-at-hand would. And because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it *can*, in its very Being, “choose” itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; 43 or only “seem” to do so. But only in so far as it is essentially something which can be *authentic* – that is, something of its own – can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. As modes of Being, *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* (these expressions have been chosen terminologically in a strict sense) are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness. But the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any “less” Being or any “lower” degree of Being. Rather it is the case that even in its fullest concretion Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity – when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment.

The two characteristics of Dasein which we have sketched – the priority of “*existential*” over *essentia*, and the fact that Dasein is in each case mine [*die Jemeinigkeit*] – have already indicated that in the analytic of this entity we are facing a peculiar phenomenal domain. Dasein does not have the kind of Being which belongs to something merely present-at-hand within the world, nor does it ever have it. So neither is it to be presented thematically as something we come across in the same way as we come across what is present-at-hand. The right way of presenting it is so far from self-evident that to determine what form it shall take is itself an essential part of the ontological analytic of this entity. Only by presenting this entity in the right way can we have any understanding of its Being. No matter how provisional our analysis may be, it always requires the assurance that we have started correctly.

In determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of a possibility which it *is* itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands. This is the formal meaning of Dasein’s existential constitution. But this tells us that if we are to Interpret this entity *ontologically*, the problematic of its Being must be developed from the existentiality of its existence. This cannot mean, however, that “Dasein” is to be construed in terms of some concrete possible idea of existence. At the outset of our analysis it is particularly important that Dasein should not be Interpreted with the differentiated character [*Differenz*] of some definite way of existing, but that it should be uncovered [*aufgedeckt*] in the undifferentiated character which it has proximally and for the most part. This undifferentiated character of Dasein’s everydayness is *not nothing*, but a positive phenomenal characteristic of this entity. Out of this kind of Being – and back into it again – is all existing, such as it is. We call this everyday undifferentiated character of Dasein “*averageness*” [*Durchschnittlichkeit*].

And because this average everydayness makes up what is ontically proximal for this entity, it has again and again been *passed over* in explicating Dasein. That which is ontically closest and well known, is ontologically the farthest and not known at all; and its

ontological signification is constantly overlooked. When Augustine asks: “*Quid autem propinquius meipso mihi?*” and must answer: “*ego certe laboro hic et laboro in meipso: factus sum mihi terra difficultatis et sudoris nimii*”, this applies not only to the ontical and pre-ontological opaqueness of Dasein but even more to the ontological task which lies ahead; for not only must this entity not be missed in that kind of Being in which it is phenomenally closest, but it must be made accessible by a positive characterization. 44

Dasein’s average everydayness, however, is not to be taken as a mere “aspect”. Here too, and even in the mode of inauthenticity, the structure of existentiality lies *a priori*. And here too Dasein’s Being is an issue for it in a definite way; and Dasein comports itself towards it in the mode of average everydayness, even if this is only the mode of fleeing *in the face of it* and forgetfulness *thereof*.

But the explication of Dasein in its average everydayness does not give us just average structures in the sense of a hazy indefiniteness. Anything which, taken ontically, *is* in an average way, can be very well grasped ontologically in pregnant structures which may be structurally indistinguishable from certain ontological characteristics [Bestimmungen] of an *authentic* Being of Dasein.

All *explicata* to which the analytic of Dasein gives rise are obtained by considering Dasein’s existence-structure. Because Dasein’s characters of Being are defined in terms of existentiality, we call them “*existentialia*”. These are to be sharply distinguished from what we call “*categories*” – characteristics of Being for entities whose character is not that of Dasein. Here we are taking the expression “category” in its primary ontological signification, and abiding by it. In the ontology of the ancients, the entities we encounter within the world are taken as the basic examples for the interpretation of Being. *Noείν* (or the *λόγος*, as the case may be) is accepted as a way of access to them. Entities are encountered therein. But the Being of these entities must be something which can be grasped in a distinctive kind of *λέγειν* (letting something be seen), so that this Being becomes intelligible in advance as that which it is – and as that which it is already in every entity. In any discussion (*λόγος*) of entities, we have previously addressed ourselves to Being; this addressing is *κατηγορεῖσθαι*. This signifies, in the first instance, making a public accusation, taking someone to task for something in the presence of everyone. When used ontologically, this term means taking an entity to task, as it were, for whatever it is as an entity – that is to say, letting everyone see it in its Being. The *κατηγορίαι* are what is sighted and what is visible in such a seeing. They include the various ways in which the nature of those entities which can be addressed and discussed in a *λόγος* may be determined *a priori*. *Existentialia* and categories are the two basic possibilities for characters of Being. The entities which correspond to them require different kinds of primary interrogation respectively: any entity is either a “*who*” (existence) or a “*what*” (presence-at-hand in the broadest sense). The connection between these two modes of the characters of Being cannot be handled until the horizon for the question of Being has been clarified. 45

In our introduction we have already intimated that in the existential analytic of Dasein we also make headway with a task which is hardly less pressing than that of the question of Being itself – the task of laying bare that *a priori* basis which must be visible before the question of “what man is” can be discussed philosophically. The existential analytic of Dasein comes *before* any psychology or anthropology, and certainly before any biology. While these too are ways in which Dasein can be investigated, we can

define the theme of our analytic with greater precision if we distinguish it from these. And at the same time the necessity of that analytic can thus be proved more incisively.

How the Analytic of Dasein is to be Distinguished from Anthropology, Psychology, and Biology

After a theme for investigation has been initially outlined in positive terms, it is always important to show what is to be ruled out, although it can easily become fruitless to discuss what is not going to happen. We must show that those investigations and formulations of the question which have been aimed at Dasein heretofore, have missed the real *philosophical* problem (notwithstanding their objective fertility), and that as long as they persist in missing it, they have no right to claim that they *can* accomplish that for which they are basically striving. In distinguishing the existential analytic from anthropology, psychology, and biology, we shall confine ourselves to what is in principle the ontological question. Our distinctions will necessarily be inadequate from the standpoint of “scientific theory” simply because the scientific structure of the above-mentioned disciplines (not, indeed, the “scientific attitude” of those who work to advance them) is today thoroughly questionable and needs to be attacked in new ways which must have their source in ontological problematics.

- 46 Historiologically, the aim of the existential analytic can be made plainer by considering Descartes, who is credited with providing the point of departure for modern philosophical inquiry by his discovery of the “*cogito sum*”. He investigates the “*cogitare*” of the “*ego*”, at least within certain limits. On the other hand, he leaves the “*sum*” completely undiscussed, even though it is regarded as no less primordial than the *cogito*. Our analytic raises the ontological question of the Being of the “*sum*”. Not until the nature of this Being has been determined can we grasp the kind of Being which belongs to *cogitationes*.

At the same time it is of course misleading to exemplify the aim of our analytic historiologically in this way. One of our first tasks will be to prove that if we posit an “I” or subject as that which is proximally given, we shall completely miss the phenomenal content [Bestand] of Dasein. *Ontologically*, every idea of a “subject” – unless refined by a previous ontological determination of its basic character – still posits the *subjectum* (ὑποκείμενον) along with it, no matter how vigorous one’s ontical protestations against the “soul substance” or the “reification of consciousness”. The Thinghood itself which such reification implies must have its ontological origin demonstrated if we are to be in a position to ask what we are to understand *positively* when we think of the unreified *Being* of the subject, the soul, the consciousness, the spirit, the person. All these terms refer to definite phenomenal domains which can be “given form” [“ausformbare”]: but they are never used without a notable failure to see the need for inquiring about the Being of the entities thus designated. So we are not being terminologically arbitrary when we avoid these terms – or such expressions as “life” and “man” – in designating those entities which we are ourselves.

On the other hand, if we understand it rightly, in any serious and scientifically-minded “philosophy of life” (this expression says about as much as “the botany of plants”) there lies an unexpressed tendency towards an understanding of Dasein’s Being.

What is conspicuous in such a philosophy (and here it is defective in principle) is that here “life” itself as a kind of Being does not become ontologically a problem.

The researches of Wilhelm Dilthey were stimulated by the perennial question of “life”. Starting from “life” itself as a whole, he tried to understand its “Experiences” in their structural and developmental inter-connections. His “*geisteswissenschaftliche Psychologie*” is one which no longer seeks to be oriented towards psychical elements and atoms or to piece the life of the soul together, but aims rather at “*Gestalten*” and “life as a whole”. Its philosophical relevance, however, is not to be sought here, but rather in the fact that in all this he was, *above all*, on his way towards the question of “life”. 47 To be sure, we can also see here very plainly how limited were both his problematic and the set of concepts with which it had to be put into words. These limitations, however, are found not only in Dilthey and Bergson but in all the “personalistic” movements to which they have given direction and in every tendency towards a philosophical anthropology. The phenomenological Interpretation of personality is in principle more radical and more transparent; but the question of the Being of Dasein has a dimension which this too fails to enter. No matter how much Husserl and Scheler may differ in their respective inquiries, in their methods of conducting them, and in their orientations towards the world as a whole, they are fully in agreement on the negative side of their Interpretations of personality. The question of “personal *Being*” itself is one which they no longer raise. We have chosen Scheler’s Interpretation as an example, not only because it is accessible in print, but because he emphasizes personal Being explicitly as such, and tries to determine its character by defining the specific Being of acts as contrasted with anything “psychical”. For Scheler, the person is never to be thought of as a Thing or a substance; the person “is rather the *unity* of living-through [Er-lebens] which is immediately experienced in and with our Experiences – not a Thing merely thought of behind and outside what is immediately Experienced”. The person is no Thinglike and substantial Being. Nor can the Being of a person be entirely absorbed in being a subject of rational acts which follow certain laws.

The person is not a Thing, not a substance, not an object. Here Scheler is emphasizing what Husserl suggests when he insists that the unity of the person must have a Constitution essentially different from that required for the unity of Things of Nature. 48 What Scheler says of the person, he applies to acts as well: “But an act is never also an object; for it is essential to the Being of acts that they are Experienced only in their performance itself and given in reflection.” Acts are something nonpsychical. Essentially the person exists only in the performance of intentional acts, and is therefore essentially *not* an object. Any psychical Objectification of acts, and hence any way of taking them as something psychical, is tantamount to depersonalization. A person is in any case given as a performer of intentional acts which are bound together by the unity of a meaning. Thus psychical Being has nothing to do with personal Being. Acts get performed; the person is a performer of acts. What, however, is the ontological meaning of “performance”? How is the kind of Being which belongs to a person to be ascertained ontologically in a positive way? But the critical question cannot stop here. It must face the Being of the whole man, who is customarily taken as a unity of body, soul, and spirit. In their turn “body”, “soul”, and “spirit” may designate phenomenal domains which can be detached as themes for definite investigations; within certain limits their ontological indefiniteness may not be important. When, however, we come

to the question of man's Being, this is not something we can simply compute by adding together those kinds of Being which body, soul, and spirit respectively possess – kinds of Being whose nature has not as yet been determined. And even if we should attempt such an ontological procedure, some idea of the Being of the whole must be presupposed. But what stands in the way of the basic question of Dasein's Being (or leads it off the track) is an orientation thoroughly coloured by the anthropology of Christianity and the ancient world, whose inadequate ontological foundations have been overlooked both by the philosophy of life and by personalism. There are two important elements in this traditional anthropology:

1. "Man" is here defined as a ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, and this is Interpreted to mean an *animal rationale*, something living which has reason. But the kind of Being which belongs to a ζῷον is understood in the sense of occurring and Being-present-at-hand. The λόγος is some superior endowment; the kind of Being which belongs to it, however, remains quite as obscure as that of the entire entity thus compounded.
2. The second clue for determining the nature of man's Being and essence is a *theological* one καὶ εἶπεν ὁ Θεός. ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν – "*faciamus hominem ad imaginem nostram et similitudinem*". With this as its point of departure, the anthropology of Christian theology, taking with it the ancient definition, arrives at an interpretation of that entity which we call "man". But just as the Being of God gets Interpreted ontologically by means of the ancient ontology, so does the Being of the *ens finitum*, and to an even greater extent. In modern times the Christian definition has been deprived of its theological character. But the idea of "transcendence" – that man is something that reaches beyond himself – is rooted in Christian dogmatics, which can hardly be said to have made an ontological problem of man's Being. The idea of transcendence, according to which man is more than a mere something endowed with intelligence, has worked itself out with different variations. The following quotations will illustrate how these have originated: "*His praeclaris dotibus excelluit prima hominis conditio, ut ratio, intelligentia, prudentia, iudicium non modo ad terrenae vitae gubernationem suppetere, sed quibus transcurrere usque ad Deum et aeternam felicitatem.*" "*Denn dass der mensch sin u f s e h e n hat uf Gott und sin wort, zeigt er klarlich an, dass er nach siner natur etwas Gott näher anernborn, etwas meen a c h s c h l ä g t, etwas zu zu g s zu im hat, das alles on zweyfel darus flüsst, dass er nach dem b i l d n u s Gottes geschaffen ist.*"

The two sources which are relevant for the traditional anthropology – the Greek definition and the clue which theology has provided – indicate that over and above the attempt to determine the essence of "man" as an entity, the question of his Being has remained forgotten, and that this Being is rather conceived as something obvious or "self-evident" in the sense of the *Being-present-at-hand* of other created Things. These two clues become intertwined in the anthropology of modern times, where the *res cogitans*, consciousness, and the interconnectedness of Experience serve as the point of departure for methodical study. But since even the *cogitationes* are either left ontologically undetermined, or get tacitly assumed as something "self-evidently" "given" whose "Being" is not to be questioned, the decisive ontological foundations of anthropological problematics remain undetermined.

This is no less true of "psychology", whose anthropological tendencies are today unmistakable. Nor can we compensate for the absence of ontological foundations by

taking anthropology and psychology and building them into the framework of a general *biology*. In the order which any possible comprehension and interpretation must follow, biology as a “science of life” is founded upon the ontology of Dasein, even if not entirely. Life, in its own right, is a kind of Being; but essentially it is accessible only in Dasein. The ontology of life is accomplished by way of a privative Interpretation; it determines what must be the case if there can be anything like mere-aliveness [Nur-noch-leben]. Life is not a mere Being-present-at-hand, nor is it Dasein. In turn, Dasein is never to be defined ontologically by regarding it as life (in an ontologically indefinite manner) plus something else. 50

In suggesting that anthropology, psychology, and biology all fail to give an unequivocal and ontologically adequate answer to the question about the *kind of Being* which belongs to those entities which we ourselves are, we are not passing judgment on the positive work of these disciplines. We must always bear in mind, however, that these ontological foundations can never be disclosed by subsequent hypotheses derived from empirical material, but that they are always “there” already, even when that empirical material simply gets *collected*. If positive research fails to see these foundations and holds them to be self-evident, this by no means proves that they are not basic or that they are not problematic in a more radical sense than any thesis of positive science can ever be.

The Existential Analytic and the Interpretation of Primitive Dasein. The Difficulties of Achieving a “Natural Conception of the World”

The Interpretation of Dasein in its everydayness, however, is not identical with the describing of some primitive stage of Dasein with which we can become acquainted empirically through the medium of anthropology. *Everydayness does not coincide with primitiveness*, but is rather a mode of Dasein’s Being, even when that Dasein is active in a highly developed and differentiated culture – and precisely then. Moreover, even primitive Dasein has possibilities of a Being which is not of the everyday kind, and it has a specific everydayness *of its own*. To orient the analysis of Dasein towards the “life of primitive peoples” can have positive significance [Bedeutung] as a method because “primitive phenomena” are often less concealed and less complicated by extensive self-interpretation on the part of the Dasein in question. Primitive Dasein often speaks to us more directly in terms of a primordial absorption in “phenomena” (taken in a pre-phenomenological sense). A way of conceiving things which seems, perhaps, rather clumsy and crude from our standpoint, can be positively helpful in bringing out the ontological structures of phenomena in a genuine way. 51

But heretofore our information about primitives has been provided by ethnology. And ethnology operates with definite preliminary conceptions and interpretations of human Dasein in general, even in first “receiving” its material, and in sifting it and working it up. Whether the everyday psychology or even the scientific psychology and sociology which the ethnologist brings with him can provide any scientific assurance that we can have proper access to the phenomena we are studying, and can interpret them and transmit them in the right way, has not yet been established. Here too we

are confronted with the same state of affairs as in the other disciplines we have discussed. Ethnology itself already presupposes as its clue an inadequate analytic of Dasein. But since the positive sciences neither “can” nor should wait for the ontological labours of philosophy to be done, the further course of research will not take the form of an “advance” but will be accomplished by *recapitulating* what has already been ontically discovered, and by purifying it in a way which is ontologically more transparent.

- 52 No matter how easy it may be to show how ontological problematics differ formally from ontical research there are still difficulties in carrying out an existential analytic, especially in *making a start*. This task includes a *desideratum* which philosophy has long found disturbing but has continually refused to achieve: *to work out the idea of a “natural conception of the world”*. The rich store of information now available as to the most exotic and manifold cultures and forms of Dasein seems favourable to our setting about this task in a fruitful way. But this is merely a semblance. At bottom this plethora of information can seduce us into failing to recognize the real problem. We shall not get a genuine knowledge of essences simply by the syncretistic activity of universal comparison and classification. Subjecting the manifold to tabulation does not ensure any actual understanding of what lies there before us as thus set in order. If an ordering principle is genuine, it has its own content as a thing [Sachgehalt], which is never to be found by means of such ordering, but is already presupposed in it. So if one is to put various pictures of the world in order, one must have an explicit idea of the world as such. And if the “world” itself is something constitutive for Dasein, one must have an insight into Dasein’s basic structures in order to treat the world-phenomenon conceptually.

In this chapter we have characterized some things positively and taken a negative stand with regard to others; in both cases our goal has been to promote a correct understanding of the tendency which underlies the following Interpretation and the kind of questions which it poses. Ontology can contribute only indirectly towards advancing the positive disciplines as we find them today. It has a goal of its own, even if, beyond the acquiring of information about entities, the question of Being is the spur for all scientific seeking.