INTERSECTIONS

ASHGATE

Time and Death

Heidegger's Analysis of Finitude

Carol J. White

Editor Mark Ralkowski
Foreword by Hubert L. Dreyfus

TIME AND DEATH

INTERSECTIONS: CONTINENTAL AND ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY

In recent years, the familiar division within modern Western philosophy between what are commonly called its 'analytical' and its 'Continental' forms has been questioned from both sides of the divide. A new generation of philosophers, often benefiting from a far more pluralistic training in the history and methods of both 'traditions', have begun to work in ways which promise to make the terms of this traditional division irrelevant.

This new series, Intersections, is intended to provide a home and a platform for the best examples of philosophical research that seeks to expound the founding texts of 'Continental philosophy' with all the critical tools that 'analytical philosophy' makes available. It also seeks to explore the unfamiliar but challenging conceptions and standards of rigorous thinking that 'Continental philosophy' is founded upon. The series gathers together exciting new studies from philosophers well-versed in, and sympathetic to, both 'traditions', presenting a cluster of titles on key topics in contemporary philosophy which move towards rendering the traditional Continental-analytic divide irrelevant. The series aims to help to hasten the demise of a profoundly damaging internal discord that is, in large part, based on mutual misunderstanding.

Time and Death

Heidegger's Analysis of Finitude

CAROL J. WHITE

Edited by Mark Ralkowski
Foreword by Hubert L. Dreyfus

ASHGATE

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Gower House
Croft Road
Aldershot
Hants GU11 3HR
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
Suite 420
101 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05401-4405
USA

Ashgate website: http://www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

White, Carol J.
Time and death : Heidegger's analysis of finitude. –
(Intersections : Continental and analytic philosophy)
1. Heidegger, Martin, 1889–1976 – Views on ontology
2. Heidegger, Martin, 1889–1976 – Views on the philosophy of time
I. Title II. Ralkowski, Mark
193

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

White, Carol J.
Time and death : Heidegger's analysis of finitude / by Carol J. White ; edited by Mark Ralkowski ; foreword by Hubert L. Dreyfus.
p. cm. – (Intersections)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-7546-5008-1 (alk. paper)
1. Heidegger, Martin, 1889–1976. Sein und Zeit. 2. Ontology.
I. Ralkowski, Mark. II. Title. III. Series: Intersections (Aldershot, England).

B3279.H48S49 2004
111—dc22 2004002019

ISBN 0 7546 5008 1

Typeset in Times by J.L. & G.A. Wheatley Design, Aldershot. Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin.

Contents

Acknowledgements

Parts of the Introduction first appeared as 'Ontology, the Ontological Difference, and the Unthought,' in *Tulane Studies in Philosophy*, XXXII (1984): 95–102.

Parts of Chapter 2 first appeared as 'Dasein, Existence and Death,' in *Philosophy Today*, XXVIII (1984): 52–65.

Parts of Chapter 5 first appeared as 'The Time of Being and the metaphysics of presence,' in *Man and World*, 29 (1996): 147–66.

Quotations from Heidegger's *Being and Time* are by permission of Blackwell Publishers.

Foreword

By Hubert L. Dreyfus

There are already hundreds of books on Heidegger, why add one more? Because no one has successfully employed Carol White's strategy of interpreting *Being and Time* in the light of Heidegger's later works. White has taken up the most fundamental and difficult aspect of Heidegger's thought and has presented a coherent and plausible retrospective reading of his development. Her approach turns out not only to cast new light on the origin of Heidegger's later ideas but also to illuminate *Being and Time* as groping towards them. Thus, her account enables White to relate what *Being and Time* says about *human time* to Later Heidegger's talk of *the time of being*,[1] thereby reconstructing for us the phenomenon, from beginning to end, Heidegger was struggling to describe. As White says:

> I quote freely from the whole chronological range of Heidegger's works since one of my basic premises . . . is that he spent his life saying, to use his term, 'the Same.'
>
> (Preface)

Of all the books written on his work, Heidegger would probably have preferred this one, since he himself was constantly reinterpreting his earlier works as attempts to articulate the one thought he was all his life trying to put into words.

White shows that, from his unfinished first attempt in *Being and Time* to the late essay, *Time and Being*, Heidegger is trying again and again to find the right way to describe the basic structure of finitude that makes possible our access to the world and to everything in it. Her book follows Heidegger's path of thinking by showing how he worked out the structure of finitude in terms of death and time. White argues convincingly that Heidegger's thought is unified by the insight, elaborated in detail in this book, that being human is historical, and, that, in the West, being itself has a history.

White's basic insight is that in *Being and Time* Heidegger already had a dim sense of what he was later to call the history of being, even though in *Being and Time* the history of our understanding of being is presented simply as a decline from the pre-Socratics' understanding of being as *presencing* through a series of metaphysical (mis)understandings of being as pure *presence*. Heidegger already had the idea that Parmenides' understanding of being was an originating leap that defined the history

1 In translating Heidegger's technical terms, I've followed the editor's recommendations. I've also modified all quotations from Heidegger's texts to make them consistent with this decision.

of the West, but he later saw that this originating leap gave rise, not just to a gradual loss of the pre-Socratics' insight but, rather, to a series of radically reconfigured worlds. That insight, White contends, led him from an analysis of the finite timeliness of human being to the finite temporality of being itself.

Readers will, I hope, be able to find their own way through White's lucid reconstruction of Heidegger's deepening account of temporality. In this preface, I want to concentrate on what I consider one of the most important rewards of White's retrospective reading. I hope to show how her approach enables her to explain and fit together Heidegger's life-long series of seemingly inconsistent pronouncements concerning death and finitude, and that this in turn enables her to give an original and convincing interpretation of the controversial section on death in *Being and Time* – an interpretation that is closer to the phenomenon and to the text than any interpretation so far presented in the many books and articles on this subject. Her ability to use the unifying thread of Heidegger's thinking (read back to front) to make sense of Heidegger's understanding of death is proof of the power of her approach.

But first, to prepare to understand White's masterful analysis of death and finitude, we need to turn to her account of what Heidegger means by being and how being can itself have a history.

1. The Phenomenon of Being

White is able to see Heidegger whole in spite of his constantly changing neologisms and higher and higher levels of abstraction, because, through it all, she keeps her eye on the phenomenon – the 'matter for thought,' as Heidegger would say. She sees that, from the start, what Heidegger means by being is not some super entity, nor some general property of all entities, but the intelligibility that makes entities accessible. And that, as he later saw, for us in the West, what counts as intelligibility depends upon the style of each particular cultural epoch.

As Heidegger first puts it in *Being and Time*, 'Being is that on the basis of which entities are already understood.'[2] He spells this out through a description of the intelligibility of the everyday world. World is the whole context of shared equipment, roles, and practices on the basis of which one can encounter entities and other people. So, for example, one encounters a hammer as a hammer in the context of other equipment such as nails and wood, and in terms of social roles such as being a carpenter, a handyman, and so forth. Moreover, each local cluster of tools, the skills for using them, and the roles that require them constitutes a sub-world such as carpentry, or homemaking, and each, with its appropriate equipment and practices, makes sense on the more general background of our one shared, familiar, everyday world. Heidegger calls the way the shared background practices are coordinated to give us access to things and to ourselves our understanding of being. He says:

---

2 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 25, 26. Henceforth page references to this translation appear in parentheses after the quotation.

> That wherein Dasein already understands itself . . . is always something with which it is primordially familiar. This familiarity with the world . . . goes to makeup Dasein's understanding of being.
>
> (119)

Heidegger sees that this familiarity is so pervasive that it is easily passed over. As he puts it, it is nearest to us and so furthest away. White and I share the idea that to begin to see our own sense of familiarity and how it works we need a contrasting case of the style of another culture.

As White notes, sociologists point out that mothers in different cultures handle their babies differently and so inculcate the babies into different styles of coping with themselves, people, and things. To get a feel for the phenomenon – the way the background practices work to grant intelligibility – I'll elaborate her suggestive example in further detail. As long as we can use it to get a sense of how a cultural style works, we need not be concerned as to whether the sociological account is accurate or complete.

Let us suppose, as we are told by the sociologists, that American mothers tend to put babies in their cribs on their stomachs, which encourages the babies to move around effectively, while Japanese mothers tend to put their babies on their backs so they will lie still, lulled by the mothers' songs. As the infants develop, American mothers encourage passionate gesturing and vocalizing, while Japanese mothers are much more soothing and mollifying. In general, American mothers situate the infant's body and respond to the infant's actions in such a way as to promote an active and aggressive style of behavior, while Japanese mothers, in contrast, promote a greater passivity and sensitivity to harmony.

The babies, of course, imitate the style of nurturing to which they are exposed. It may at first seem puzzling that the baby successfully picks out precisely the gestures that embody the style of its culture as the ones to imitate, but, of course, such success is inevitable. Since *all* our gestures and practices embody the style of our culture, the baby will pick up that pervasive style no matter what it imitates. Starting with a style, various practices will make sense and become dominant, and others will either become subordinate or will be ignored altogether.

The style, then, determines how the baby encounters himself or herself, other people, and things. So, for example, no bare rattle is ever encountered. For an American baby, a rattle-thing is an object to make expressive noise with and to throw on the floor in a willful way in order to get a parent to pick it up. A Japanese baby may treat a rattle-thing this way more or less by accident, but generally we might suppose a rattle-thing is encountered as serving a soothing, pacifying function like a Native American rain stick. In general, what constitutes the American baby as an *American* baby is its cultural style, and what constitutes the Japanese baby as a *Japanese* baby is its quite different cultural style.

Once we see that a style governs how anything can show up *as* anything, we can see that the style of a culture does not govern only the babies. The adults in each culture are shaped by it as they respond to things in the way they show up for them. The style of coping with things, out of which all conceptualizing grows, determines

what it makes sense to do, and what is worth doing. It should come as no surprise, given the picture I have just presented of Japanese and American culture, that Japanese adults seek contented social integration, while American adults are still striving willfully to satisfy their individual desires. Likewise, the style of enterprises and of political organizations in Japan serves to produce and reinforce cohesion, loyalty, and consensus, while what is admired by Americans in business and politics is the aggressive energy of a *laissez-faire* system in which everyone strives to express his or her own desires, and where the state, business, or other organization's function is to maximize the number of desires that can be satisfied without destructive instability.

The case of child-rearing helps us see that a cultural style is not something in our minds but, rather, a disposition to act in certain ways in certain situations. It is not in our beliefs but in our artifacts, our sensibilities, and our bodily skills. Like all skills, it is too embodied to be made explicit in terms of rules.[3] Therefore it is misleading to think of a cultural style as a scheme, or conceptual framework.

Our cultural style is invisible both because it is manifest in everything we see and do, and so is too pervasive to notice – like the water to the fish – and because it is in our comportment, not in our minds. And this is not a disadvantage or limitation. Like the illumination in a room, a cultural style normally lets us see things just in so far as we don't see *it*. That is, like the background in perception, the ground of intelligibility must recede so we can see the figure.[4] As Heidegger puts it, the mode of revealing has to *withdraw* in order to do its job of revealing us and things, and it is the job of phenomenology to make it visible. In *Being and Time* he says:

> What is it that phenomenology is to 'let us see'? What is it that must be called a 'phenomenon' in a distinctive sense? . . . Manifestly, it is something that proximally and for the most part does *not* show itself at all: it is something that lies *hidden*, in contrast to that which proximally and for the most part does show itself; . . . but at the same time it is something that belongs to what thus shows itself, and it belongs to it so essentially as to constitute its meaning and its ground.
>
> (59)

Style, while remaining hidden, is what makes everything intelligible and is what Heidegger calls being. Each specific style is a specific mode of intelligibility and so is a specific understanding of being. Being never fully reveals *itself*, at least not *as* itself, so it turns out that, for Heidegger, being is the phenomenon that is the proper subject of phenomenological study:

---

3 For an argument to this effect, see Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus, *Mind over Machine: The Power of Human Intuitive Expertise in the Era of the Computer* (New York: Free Press, revised paperback edition, 1988).

4 The exception, according to Heidegger, is cultural works of art like temples and cathedrals, the acts of great statesmen, and the writings of thinkers, each of which shows the style by articulating and glamorizing it. See Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

> [T]o lay bare the horizon within which something like being in general becomes intelligible is tantamount to clarifying the possibility of having any understanding of being at all – an understanding which itself belongs to the constitution of the entity called Dasein.
>
> (231)

Heidegger is still saying the same thing in his last work: *Time and Being*.[5] Being holds itself back 'in favor of the discernability of the gift,' that is, of being in regard to the grounding of what-is.[6] As White puts it: 'The contribution of the background practices recedes unnoticed in favor of the things that are.' (5.4)

We come a step closer to White's analysis of death when we see how she draws on this account of being to explain human finitude. One of White's most original and valuable insights is to see that our inability to spell out the understanding of being in our background practices is one important aspect of what Heidegger means by human finitude. Heidegger calls this condition ontological guilt, which he defines as the structural condition that Dasein cannot get behind its thrownness.[7] White glosses this as the claim that 'our finitude prevents us from . . . turning the background practices into explicit knowledge.' (5.1) And she adds:

> [T]he finitude of knowledge is a matter of its grounding in an understanding of being which cannot be taken up in conceptual judgments. We should give up our quest for not only an absolute knowledge of things in themselves, as Kant thought, but also for explicit knowledge of the source of our knowledge (KPM 245/229f.). The goal of knowing the presuppositions of our knowledge, so devoutly pursued by Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and every other metaphysician, is unattainable.
>
> (5.1)

But, as Heidegger insists, there is nothing wrong with this structural condition that we can't make the background of our thought and action explicit; indeed, it serves a positive function in enabling us to make sense of things at all.

From this 'limitation' there follows a second important aspect of finitude. Already in *Being and Time* Heidegger stresses that the practices on the basis of which entities are understood cannot themselves be justified or grounded. Once a practice has been explained by appealing to what one does, no more basic justification is possible. As Wittgenstein later puts it in *On Certainty*: 'Giving grounds [must] come to an end sometime. But the end is not an ungrounded presupposition: it is an ungrounded way of acting.'[8]

This view is antithetical to the philosophical ideal of *total* clarity and *ultimate* intelligibility. Heidegger in *An Introduction to Metaphysics* suggests that there can be no such metaphysical grounding:

---

5 Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

6 Ibid., p. 9.

7 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 330.

8 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright and translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Harper and Row, 1969).

> It remains to be seen whether the ground arrived at is really a ground, that is, whether it provides a foundation; whether it is an ultimate ground [*Urgrund*]; or whether it fails to provide a foundation and is an abyss [*Ab-grund*]; or whether the ground is neither one nor the other but presents only a perhaps necessary appearance of foundation – in other words, it is a nonground [*Un-grund*].[9]

To relate this point to her account of finitude, White quotes a crucial but little-noticed remark of Heidegger's published five years after *Being and Time*:

> So profoundly does finitude entrench itself in existence that our ownmost and deepest limitation refuses to yield to our freedom (WIM 108/118).
>
> (5.1)

This understanding of finitude leads White to take *Dasein*, Heidegger's technical term referring to us, not as naming individual human beings, but as referring to a way of being of all human beings, in other words that they live in a world that is made intelligible by their shared background practices and that these background practices cannot and need not be made explicit and justified. White, therefore, warns against all individualistic readings of *Being and Time*. For her, Heidegger is not an existentialist emphasizing subjectivity and personal choice, nor is he a romantic holding that there is a deep inner self to which Dasein is called to be true. Heidegger is an ontologist interested in the conditions of the possibility of intelligibility, and he understands that the practices that make people and things intelligible can be pointed out and their general structure described but that the understanding of being in those practices cannot be spelled out in detail and given a transcendental or metaphysical grounding.

II. The History of Being

In the published part of *Being and Time*, Heidegger attempted to work out an ontological account of the universal structures of worldhood and thus ground a 'science of being.' He was, therefore, not interested in what he called ontic accounts of specific sub-worlds, other cultures, nor epochs in our own culture's understanding of being. It was only in the early 1930s that Heidegger was struck by the idea that, in our Western culture at least, the understanding of being has a history that is more than a story of decline. As he puts it:

> [I]n the West for the first time in Greece what was in the future to be called being was set into work . . . : the realm of what there is as a whole thus opened up was then transformed into entities in the sense of God's creation. This happened in the Middle Ages. These entities were again transformed at the beginning and in the course of the modern age.

---

9 Martin Heidegger, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1961), pp. 2, 3.

> Entities became objects that could be controlled and seen through by calculation. At each time a new and essential world arose.[10]

It follows that each time a culture gets a new understanding of being, human beings and things show up differently. For the Greeks, what showed up and solicited attention were heroes and followers along with beautifully crafted things; for the Christians, it was saints and sinners, and things showed up as temptations and allegories of God's plan. There could not have been saints in Ancient Greece; at best there could only have been weak people who let others walk all over them. Likewise, there could not have been Greek-style heroes in the Middle Ages. Such people would have been regarded as prideful sinners who disrupted society by denying their dependence on God and encouraging everyone to depend on them instead.

White follows Later Heidegger in spelling out the way the sequence of world styles that has given us our sense of what is intelligible and worth doing comes to pass. A new understanding of being must be both incomprehensible and yet somehow intelligible. To account for this possibility, Later Heidegger elaborates an idea already touched on in *Being and Time*[11] that in a historical change, a historical figure makes history by retrieving some practices from the past and giving them a new central role in the present.

As Later Heidegger puts it, world-disclosing is not the creation (*schaffen*) of a genius, but the drawing up (*schöpfen*) as from a well.[12] World-grounding takes place when a person or a work of art takes up and makes central some marginal practices already in the culture. A new style does not arise *ex nihilo*. Marginal practices of various sorts are always on the horizon. As Heidegger says: 'In the destiny of being, there is never a mere sequence of things one after another . . . There is always a passing by and simultaneity of the early and the late.'[13] For example, the printing press and Luther were already moving the culture in a new direction, which Descartes saw as a new individualism and freedom from authority. That idea became central in his attempt to take over his life and education from the ground up, and made possible Kant's definition of the Enlightenment as humanity reaching maturity, that is autonomy. Heidegger adds:

> That which has the character of destiny moves, in itself, at any given time, toward a special moment of insight which sends it into another destiny, in which, however, it is not simply submerged and lost.[14]

---

10 Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' pp. 76, 77.

11 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Section 74

12 Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' p. 76.

13 Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing,' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Alfred Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 184, 185

14 Martin Heidegger, 'The question concerning technology,' in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), p. 37

fails to make clear where his analysis of the inauthentic misunderstanding of death ends and the authentic ontological understanding of finitude begins.[17]

Thus we get interpreters like Sartre who, early on, took the account of death in the first sections of the death chapter to be Heidegger's own account and so ended up with an existentialist account of death as an event in the future at which point a human being ceases to exist[18] – an event one must hide to avoid facing the absurdity of life. Others, as White points out, 'recognize that Heidegger calls death a "way to be" (245) and that for him death is a matter of "being-toward-death."' But then, 'at best they have taken death to be a matter of a person's attitude about or relationship to physical death, that is, a way of caring about one's demise.' (2.5)

An example of such an approach can be found in the work of Michael Zimmerman, whose interpretation White singles out for telling criticism. Such interpreters assume that in writing about death, Heidegger must be talking about demise and think that, in the light of our mortality, we can gain a new seriousness and unity in how we live our lives. According to Charles Guignon, who holds a view similar to Zimmerman's, Heidegger thinks of an authentic human life as a narrative in which, by facing one's demise, one can gain a complete and coherent understanding of the whole of one's life history. As he puts it:

> The inauthentic anyone self . . . is dispersed, distracted, and fleeing in the face of its own death. To be authentic is to recognize the gravity of the task to which one is delivered over and to take full responsibility for one's life. Authentic Dasein lives resolutely, coherently, with 'sober joy', expressing in each of its actions a sense of its being-toward-the-end.[19]

Taylor Carman's excellent book, 'Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in *Being and Time*', offers a profound critique of such moralizing views. Carman points out that according to this edifying interpretation,

---

17 White focuses on this basic misunderstanding in Paul Edwards' ridiculing of Heidegger's account of death. She rightly dismisses all such interpretations in her article [Paul Edwards, 'Heidegger on Death: A Deflationary Critique,' *The Monist*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April, 1976), pp. 161–168]. As White says succinctly: 'I want to argue that the problem which Heidegger is addressing has been fundamentally misconceived by both these authors as well as many others . . . To understand what Heidegger is saying we must make a radical distinction between the death of a person and the existential death of Dasein.' [Carol J. White, 'Dasein, Existence and Death,' *Philosophy Today*, XXVIII (Spring 1984), p. 53.]

But the mistake is still being made. For example, Taylor Carman does a careful and devastating job of showing that Herman Phillipse's recent discussion of Heidegger on death in *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998) is an 'astonishing misreading' of the text. See Taylor Carman, *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in Being and Time* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 278.

18 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Pocket Books, 1966).

19 Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1983), pp. 135, 136.

> [a] concept of death minimally appropriate to human beings as such must be a biographical notion, a notion of the conclusion or resolution of a human life understood as a series of actions, events, episodes, life experiences, and so on. Biographical dying is the ending of a life inasmuch as that life can be understood retrospectively as a whole, perhaps narrated in part as a story. Dying, biographically understood in this way, is what Heidegger calls 'demise' (*Ableben*) (291).[20]

Carman, in contrast, sees clearly that:

> the very structure of being-in-the-world as my own . . . makes it impossible in principle for me to take up a merely observational or biographical point of view on myself and my existence. I am so directly involved in my life that I can't 'understand my own existence as anything like a finite life span . . . organized by a beginning, a middle and an end.'[21]

William Blattner takes seriously that demise cannot be the ontological death that Heidegger is trying to describe and tries to work out what Heidegger must have had in mind by death. He tells us:

> [What Heidegger] is primarily interested in is not the being-at-its-end of human life, but a sense of end that is tied exclusively to the conceptual framework of Dasein's originary way of being, to existence and understanding. Human life stops; neither existence nor understanding can be said to stop as such, however.[22]

Blattner thus distinguishes between '*demise*, which is the stopping of Dasein's life, and *death*, which is the end of Dasein in some other sense.'[23] He goes on to note that fear of demise is a cover-up of death, which Heidegger says is 'the possibility of no-longer-being-able-to-be-there' (294), the possibility 'of the utter impossibility of existence' (307).

Blattner sees that death has something to do with the collapse of an individual's world. He contends that the death we cover up by fearing demise is, in fact, an impending anxiety attack in which Dasein would lose its ability to cope with things and therefore lose its ability to be. To defend this original interpretation, Blattner gives a masterful account of what Heidegger means by anxiety that I can only touch on here. He tells us that:

> Dasein's being . . . is an ability-to-be. The end or limit of this ability is the inability-to-be. The condition Heidegger calls 'death' is a limit-situation for that ability-to-be, one in which one confronts this limitation . . . This situation occurs when Dasein is beset by

---

20 Taylor Carman, op. cit., p. 279.

21 Ibid., p. 272.

22 William Blattner, 'The concept of death in *Being and Time*', *Man and World*, 27 (Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994) pp. 49–70. Reprinted in Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (eds), *Heidegger Reexamined, Vol. 1, Dasein, Authenticity, and Death*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 323.

23 Ibid., 324 (my italics).

> anxiety, in which none of its possibilities matters to it differentially, in which all are equally irrelevant to it.[24]

On this account, being towards death is being *ready* for an anxiety attack. As Blattner puts it:

> Only through resoluteness – silently throwing oneself into the possibility of death, and being prepared for the attendant anxiety (343) – does one come face to face with what sort of entity one is, and hold on to that understanding.[25]

But, since an anxiety attack is sudden and unmotivated – 'It is part of Dasein's being that death is always possible, that anxiety may strike it at any time'[26] – it is hard to see how one should live in order to be ready for it, and Blattner does not even try to explain what a life of readiness for an anxiety attack would be like. Perhaps, living like an epileptic, resigned to having breakdowns after which one has to collect one's wits and go on.

Indeed, it's not clear that Heidegger holds that Dasein *can* be ready for the sort of anxiety attack that Blattner equates with death. The text Blattner cites is about how resolute Dasein is ready for the anxiety of *conscience*. It turns out that, rather than being ready for anxiety, the highest form of resoluteness, *forerunning* resoluteness,[27] is *constantly anxious* without its world falling apart. Heidegger brings forerunning, resoluteness, death, and anxiety together in the following summation:

> [Forerunning] brings [Dasein] face to face with the possibility of . . . being itself in an impassioned freedom towards death – a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the 'anyone', and which is factical, certain of itself, and *anxious*.[28]

If *authentic* Dasein is *constantly* anxious, that is, senses its finitude and lives appropriately, that would seem to suggest that authentic resolute forerunning, since it has already integrated its finitude into its life, need not be constantly ready for the sort of anxiety attack that 'may strike . . . at any time' in which life is seen to have no intrinsic meaning, nothing matters, and Dasein is paralyzed.

But Blattner is surely right that an anxiety attack as a complete breakdown of Dasein and its world bears a structural similarly to whatever Heidegger means by death as Dasein's no more being able to be there. Perhaps, Heidegger would want to

---

24 Ibid., p. 325.

25 Ibid., p. 314.

26 William Blattner, *Heidegger's Temporal Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 88.

27 For a discussion of Heidegger's distinction between resoluteness and forerunning resoluteness, see Hubert L. Dreyfus, 'Could anything be more intelligible than everyday intelligibility? Reinterpreting division I of *Being & Time* in the light of division II,' in *Appropriating Heidegger*, ed. James E. Faulconer and Mark A. Wrathall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

28 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 311 (Heidegger's italics removed; my italics added).

say that an anxiety attack, for which one can never be ready, and which one therefore flees, is the nearest experience an inauthentic Dasein can have to death.

In any case, as we shall soon see when we return to Blattner after discussing John Haugeland's and White's views, the kind of sudden and unmotivated world collapse experienced in an anxiety attack is the wrong sort of phenomenon to count as the ontological breakdown Heidegger calls death.

Taylor Carman's account of death offers an answer to how one can be *constantly* dying, not just *ready* for death, but it runs into its own problems. Carman sees, like White before him, that, with his ontological/formal understanding of death, Heidegger wants to cover,

> not just persons but projects, loves, hopes, epochs, cultures, and worlds dying off. Loves, hopes, and worlds die, and not just in a secondary metaphorical sense transferred from a more basic literal concept of the perishing of organisms or the demise of persons.[29]

And Carman, therefore, suggests that death is 'the constant closing down of possibilities, which is an essential structural feature of all projection into a future.'[30] He adds:

> [S]uch things die by dying to us, or rather by our dying to them as possibilities.[31] Our possibilities are constantly dropping away into nullity, then, and this is what Heidegger means when he says – what might sound otherwise hyperbolic or simply false – that 'Dasein is factically dying as long as it exists' (295). To say that we are always dying is to say that our possibilities are constantly closing down around us.[32]

This, however, is a very implausible view. Possibilities are also always opening up. Moreover, as a reader of Kierkegaard, Heidegger could not have had such a narrow understanding of possibilities. It would be like saying that by making a defining commitment such as marriage, you close down all the other possible marriages you might have had. But if your commitment is wholehearted, you sense it as closing down trivial possibilities to gain ones worth living for.

Besides, the constant closing of possibilities could not be the kind of ontological dying Heidegger has in view. Carman, like White, is right that the dying of a culture or a love, like the loss of one's identity, are ways in which a particular way of being can fail to make sense. As such, each is the total collapse of a current world and makes possible the arrival of another. But, for this very reason, Heidegger could not accept Carman's assimilation of death to the constant loss of possibilities each time we make a choice. The gradual closing down of possibilities does not have the right ontological structure to deal with the death of one world and the birth of another. A change of worlds, according to Kierkegaard and Heidegger, happens in a kind of discontinuity or leap. Carman's loss of specific possibilities is something that happens

29 Taylor Carman, op. cit., p. 284.
30 Ibid., p. 285.
31 Ibid., p. 281.
32 Ibid., p. 282.

on the background of a stable world. His interpretation can't account for Heidegger's claim that death is 'the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all' (307), since this suggests a closing down to the zero point, which the nullity of choice doesn't involve. As something that happens *in* the world, choice simply does not have the structure of ontological dying – the total collapse *of* the world that Heidegger has in mind.[33]

Carman may well have Heidegger's account of death wrong, but his criticism of my account of death is absolutely right. He says:

> [W]hereas Charles Guignon ascribes to Heidegger what seems to me an overly robust or metaphysically optimistic account of the ontological structure of the self, Hubert Dreyfus sees in the account of forerunning resoluteness what I think is an overly impoverished or pessimistic conception of authentic existence.[34] What anxiety reveals, he suggests, is 'that Dasein has no possibilities of its own and that it can never acquire any.'[35] Hence, 'anxiety is the revelation of Dasein's basic groundlessness and meaninglessness.'[36]

It's true that in my *Commentary* I avoid all reference to demise by claiming that death means that Dasein's identity can never be definitively settled. That is, that

---

33 As an explanation of Heidegger's view of existential dying, or death as a way of life, Carman's account faces not only phenomenological difficulties but exegetical ones as well. Heidegger does, indeed, mention the sort of nullifying of possibilities Carman describes. Carman quotes the crucial passage:

> Having an ability-to-be [Dasein] always stands in one possibility or another: it constantly is *not* other possibilities, and it has waived these in its existentiell projection (331).

But though this loss of possibilities is described as a nullity of projection, it is not the null projection of death. Heidegger is not talking at this point in the text about the existential projection involved in death; rather he is referring to the nullifying effect of ordinary existentiell choice. He says, 'the nullity we have in mind belongs to Dasein's being free for its existentiell possibilities. Freedom, however, *is* in the choice of *one* possibility, that is, in tolerating not having chosen the others, and one's not being able to choose them' (331). This loss of particular possibilities due to our freedom of choice cannot be 'the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all' (307).

That this nullity of choice has nothing to do with dying should also be clear from its place in Heidegger's exposition. The nullity of choice is mentioned only once and then only in the guilt chapter; never in the chapter on death. Recognizing this problem leads Carman to the implausible and unjustified assertion that death is a subcategory of guilt, something Heidegger never says. In fact it's clear from Heidegger's placement of this mention of freedom and choice in the chapter on guilt that the nullity of choice is a sub-specie of guilt if it is to be subsumed under any other nullity. More likely, the nullity of choice is supposed to be a third nullity – the nullity of the present – as opposed to the nullity of guilt, which is the nullity of the past, and of death, which is the nullity of the future.

34 Ibid., p. 271.

35 Ibid., p. 286. See Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, Division I (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 305.

36 Ibid., pp. 286, 310.

Dasein can never have an 'eternal' identity in the sense proposed by Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling*, one that defines Dasein for its whole life,[37] and that alone rules out the Zimmerman and Guignon interpretation. In my *Commentary* I take this to be a serious structural lack in Dasein's way of being. Heidegger does, indeed, hold that one has to be constantly ready to give up one's defining commitment, but, as Carman sees, this vulnerability looks like a negative feature of Dasein's finitude only to those with a metaphysician's longing for absolute certainty.[38]

He also sees that somehow for Heidegger death is something positive, but he and I are, unfortunately, on the list of those who have failed to find the phenomenon that makes sense of this claim.

Julian Young makes a valiant attempt. First, like White, he notes an important shift in Heidegger's understanding of death from an individual to a cultural phenomenon:

> In *Being and Time* Heidegger's primary (though not exclusive) focus is the individual – individual 'Dasein'. Authenticity, anxiety in the face of death, mortality itself, its key concepts, are all, in their primary application, individual attributes. During the 1930s and the first half of the 1940s, however, his focus shifts strongly away from individual and on to collective Dasein. What concerns him during this period is, above all, the health or otherwise of the culture as a whole.[39]

But, whereas White sees Heidegger as having always been concerned with cultural death and so retroactively reads early Heidegger's apparent concern with individual death as a sign of his confusion, Young claims that while Heidegger later changed his mind, death in *Being and Time* clearly denotes the individual Dasein's encounter with nothingness, that is with total meaningless destruction:

> *Being and Time* is, I suggest, a work of 'heroic nihilism'. It is heroic because it advocates 'living in the truth' about death, nihilistic because the 'truth' it discovers is that beyond the intelligible world of entities, is the absolute nothing, 'the abyss'.[40]
>
> (194)

Young, then, goes on to claim that, after *Being and Time*, Heidegger totally changed his account of death. He tells us:

---

37 Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hanny (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986).

38 Carman rightly notes that I made the same mistake in assuming that ontological guilt in *Being and Time* means that there is something wrong with Dasein, that is, that it can't get behind its thrownness; whereas it is precisely the metaphysical demand that we overcome our finitude and achieve total clarity about our taken for granted understanding of being that Heidegger rejects.

39 Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 127.

40 Ibid., pp. 131–13[illegible]

> No longer is [death] to be thought of as the 'abysmal', 'empty' or 'negative' nothing. Rather, it is to be understood 'positively' as the nothing of 'plenitude', the nothing that is to be sure 'something completely and utterly Other (*Anderes*) than entities, but, for all that, undoubtedly 'something (*etwas*)' (*Gesamtausgabe* 15, 363) . . . [A]s Schopenhauer succinctly put it, that the 'Other' of entities is not an 'absolute' but only a 'relative' nothingness.

According to Young, this change has important implications not only for understanding the death of cultures, but for the attitude an individual should assume in the face of his or her inevitable demise.

> Understanding one's (in Kantian language) 'membership' [in] the mystical realm of 'plenitude' abolishes anxiety, establishes one as ultimately secure in one's world because one understands, now, that that which surrounds the clearing is no longer abysmal but is, rather, the richness of all those concealed (and unintelligible) possibilities of disclosure which, in addition to one's ego, one is.[41]

But this is a view White would certainly not accept. Young's idea of plenitude reifies the worlds that may some day arrive as if they were already fully formed and waiting in the wings. It, thereby, misses the finitude that White so well shows to be essential to world-disclosing. Heidegger denies the metaphysical plenitude of other worlds waiting to be born, and offers, instead, a down-to-earth, finitist account of that plenitude:

> [A]bsence is not nothing; rather it is precisely the presence, which must first be appropriated, of the hidden fullness and wealth of what has been and what, thus gathered, is presencing, of the divine in the world of the Greeks, in prophetic Judaism, in the preaching of Jesus.[42]

The plenitude turns out to be marginal practices still remaining from other cultural epochs. New worlds for Heidegger, then, are not present but hidden. They are not, as Young cites Rilke as saying, like 'the other side of the moon.' Rather new worlds arise by a leap that shifts marginal practices from the wings to center stage.[43]

Like Schopenhauer's view of the 'relative nothingness' of the Other that Young alludes to as the 'Other of entities,' Rilke's account of the plenitude that lies outside the current clearing is a view that Heidegger would certainly not accept. One must remember that Heidegger's recounting of Rilke's views cannot be assumed

---

41 Ibid., pp. 132–133.

42 Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing,' op. cit., p. 184.

43 Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History,' in *Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Book, 1984), p. 84. Not *all* marginal practices, however, need come down to us from what Heidegger calls our heritage. As my mention of the printing press suggests, some new practices are introduced by technology; others might be introduced by cultural invasions, and so forth.

uncritically to be Heidegger's own views since Heidegger thinks that Rilke is, in the last analysis, still in the grip of metaphysics.[44]

Even more implausibly, Young, like Schopenhauer, wants to use this metaphysical conception of relative nothingness to ground a sort of immortality for Dasein. As he tells us:

> One feels safe, that is dwells, in one's mortality because, knowing that one belongs also to the realm of immortality, one can, in the words of Rilke that Heidegger quotes, 'face . . . death without negation' (*Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 125).[45]

Just as the will, for Schopenhauer, is what is essential while the self is an illusion so that the will survives the death of individuals precisely because it has nothing to do with selves, so Young claims that, for Heidegger, what is essential about each individual Dasein, that is, being a world-discloser, somehow survives the individual one's death. He says:

> Understanding one's transcendence transforms one's world into an unconditionally 'safe' place because one knows that nothing that happens in it can annihilate one's essential self.[46]

But this talk of a substantive essential self is not at all Heideggerian. Being a world-discloser is, indeed, what is essential about Dasein but, since Dasein's openness or transcendence arises from the finite stand it takes on itself through its activity in the world – that is its essence is its existence – it cannot suffer the loss of its

---

44 As evidence that Rilke has not worked his way out of the metaphysics of the subject, Heidegger cites the very claim to deep inwardness that Young would like to think of as Heidegger's own view.

> Heidegger quotes Rilke as suggesting that however vast the world of space and time may be: 'it hardly bears comparison . . . with the dimensions of our inwardness, which does not even need the spaciousness of the universe to be within itself almost unfathomable.'
>
> (Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 146)

Another hint that Young mistakenly attributes Rilke's views to Heidegger is that, after quoting a passage on Rilke's angels, Heidegger says, that the angel is '*metaphysically the same* as the figure of Nietzsche's Zarathustra.' [Martin Heidegger, 'What are Poets For?,' *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 134 (Heidegger's italics).

White anticipates Young's mistake when she rightly observes that 'Some remarks that Rilke makes obviously strike a responsive chord in Heidegger, but I have resisted quoting them in the body of the paper since sorting out the difference between the two thinkers would require too much space.' [Carol J. White, 'Dasein, Existence and Death,' p. 65. Reprinted in *Heidegger Reexamined, Vol. 1, Dasein, Authenticity, and Death*, p. 343].

45 Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, p. 133.

46 Ibid.

ability-to-be without total annihilation. Or to put it another way, Heidegger never takes back his claim in *Being and Time* that Dasein's essential feature is its *mineness*.

The most illumining and convincing account in the critical literature on Heidegger on death outside of White's, and indeed, an account very similar to hers, has been proposed independently by John Haugeland. He approaches the question of death in Heidegger by starting with Kuhn's account of scientific revolutions, which are after all the collapse of one world and the arrival of another.[47]

Haugeland has from the start pointed out that in Heidegger's thinking Dasein does not refer to an individual human being but to a way of life that could include science or a culture.[48] He, therefore, can use his parallel of death with a scientific revolution as a model to give a convincing account of how, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger understands the dying of Dasein. Haugeland's account of resolute being-towards-death is 'living in a way that explicitly has everything at stake.'[49] And this means that the resolute Dasein lives in a way that is always at risk. As Haugeland puts it, 'authentic Dasein faces up to and takes over the ultimate *riskiness* of its life as a whole – it lives resolutely as and only as ultimately *vulnerable*.'[50]

---

47 John Haugeland, 'Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism,' in *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Volume 1*, ed. Mark Wrathall and Jeff Malpas (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

48 See John Haugeland, 'Heidegger on Being a Person,' in *Heidegger Reexamined: Vol. 1, Dasein, Authenticity, and Death* and 'Truth and Finitude,' op. cit., footnote 6.

Haugeland points out that Dasein is always a public way of life. According to Haugeland, then, Heidegger's essential point is not that death is the death of an individual, but that Dasein can take over its death in a way that individualizes it. A resolute individual therefore dies to the extent that his or her way of life does, but that's far from the whole story. For Haugeland, then, the Kuhnian account of scientific revolutions is more than an analogy; it is a correct description of the life and death of scientific Dasein as a way of life.

In this foreword, I've limited myself to one aspect of Haugeland's published account of death in *Being and Time*. (I've also left aside his promised account of historicity in *Being and Time* and the history of being in Later Heidegger.) I'm thus restricting and distorting his view in order to bring out an important opposition between an account of world-collapse restricted to individualized being-in-the-world, on the one hand, and, on the other, White's claim that, one can see in retrospect that Heidegger's account of the death of Dasein was never meant to be about individuals at all but was supposed to be exclusively aimed at describing the death of cultures.

49 Haugeland, op. cit., 73. I would have preferred he said 'lucidly' rather than 'explicitly,' since lucidly avoids making it seem that this way of life is conscious or reflective, and so it better captures Heidegger's Kierkegaardian notion of transparency, that is, letting one's unconditional commitment become apparent in every aspect of one's life.

50 Haugeland, op. cit., p. 352, footnote 9. One might think that world-collapse is an event in the future that, like any possibility, can turn into actuality. If so, it would suffer from what Carman criticizes as the assumption that death is some *possible* future event that could become *actual*. But world-collapse escapes this objection because the possibility of the annihilation of a world is the annihilation of *all* possibilities, not the actualization of any possibility in the world.

This interpretation makes sense of Dasein's forerunning into death as a way of life that is constantly ready for radical transformation. It fits Heidegger's remark that:

> [F]orerunning discloses to existence the uttermost possibility of giving itself up and thus shatters any rigidity in the existence reached at any time.
>
> (308)

Haugeland explains:

> [H]olding itself free for taking it back belongs just as essentially to existential responsibility as does sticking to it as long as one reasonably (responsibly) can. The existential *understanding* that belongs to resoluteness – . . . just *is* perseverant being toward death.[51]

Thus, on Haugeland's account, 'being-towards-death' in *Being and Time* means working steadfastly to preserve one's identity and world, while also being able to give them up. For example, I have to be open to the possible collapse of my identity should my marriage fail or should my project to change my culture be no longer relevant. As Haugeland once said: 'Resolute Dasein sticks with its identity without getting stuck with it.'

Haugeland's use of Kuhn supports the interpretation that resolute Dasein must be sensitive to anomalies in its life and, moreover, be ready for a possible crisis in which these anomalies reveal that its identity is no longer livable.[52] In the face of such a crisis, resolute Dasein must lucidly accept the collapse of its world, its 'way of life,' so as to be open to disclosing a new world in which these anomalies make sense and are central.

Haugeland has not yet published the obvious extension of his analysis of Dasein's death as world-collapse to cultural epochs. In her book, White explicitly makes the move Haugeland is poised to make, and applies the Kuhnian model not just to individualized ways of life but also to cultural styles. She also takes an exegetical step beyond Haugeland in grounding the analysis they share in the relevant texts. She notes the following suggestive passage from an essay by Heidegger on Parmenides:

> [T]he essence of mortals calls upon them to heed the call which beckons them toward death. As the outermost possibility of mortal Dasein, death is not the end of the possible but the highest shelter (the gathering sheltering) of the mystery of calling disclosure (EGT 101/248).
>
> (0.4)

51 Haugeland, op. cit., p. 74.

52 For a more detailed account of the role of anomalies, see Charles Spinosa, Fernando Flores, and Hubert Dreyfus, *Disclosing New Worlds: Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), especially footnote 25 on p. 193.

Young would no doubt give this passage a metaphysical, quasi-Schopenhauerian, interpretation according to which the gathering sheltering that calls for disclosure would be other possible worlds, somehow waiting in the wings to be actualized. If one remembers, however, that gathering is for Heidegger the way the practices collect together to call to thinkers and artists to bring a new world into being,[53] one can understand the 'gathering sheltering' calling for disclosure as the marginal practices themselves moving towards a new coordination and thus bringing forth a new style.

The marginal practices, in Haugeland's terms the anomalies, draw the current world towards collapse, as well as being the reserve that will form the basis of a new one. As White puts it, 'It is being which "calls" to mortals, to ourselves as Dasein, disclosing itself in new ways and calling Dasein to its proper being.'[54] (0.4) The new world with its new possibilities arises from the collapse of the old world, and some day it too will die. That is, it will make sense no longer, become impossible, unthinkable, and so give place to new forms of intelligibility.

As White points out, already in *Being and Time* we hear that human beings sense (anxiously) that they live in a finite, ungrounded, and vulnerable world so that it is always possible that their world will cease to make sense. Human beings as cultural preservers therefore feel called to work hard to preserve the intelligibility of their current world. Indeed, they cannot preserve what they would otherwise take as fixed. They could not actively preserve marriage, for instance, if they thought that it was divinely created and preserved in heaven. They could only honor it. Only by knowing that everything human, cultural, and so forth is vulnerable does preserving or transforming it make sense. Thus, only if there is the constant possibility of their world becoming impossible is there room for human begins to fulfill their essential nature as world-disclosers. In Later Heidegger, the cultural world is seen to be ungrounded and so constantly threatened. Thus everyone is called to understand his or her self as a world-preserver, which also means each one must be ready to accept the pain of the collapse of the shared world and to begin anew.

White cites a convincing text that comes close to, but at the same time casts doubt on, Young's account of Otherness while supporting her interpretation of the relation of death and world-disclosing:

> In lectures in 1943 Heidegger warns us of the 'the suffering in which the essential otherness of what-is reveals itself in opposition to the tried and usual.' He adds: 'The highest form of suffering is the dying of death as a sacrifice for the preservation of the

53 When Heidegger wants to emphasize this nonmetaphysical sense of how new understandings of being arise, he calls the way practices gather into a new style to bring things out into their own, '*Ereignis*,' usually translated as 'the event appropriation.' Thus, in *Time and Being* he can say that the *Ereignis* sends being (op. cit., p. 19).

54 Even in very late Heidegger when he is talking of things thinging, mortals are described as those who die, which presumably means those who while contributing to the temporary world set up around a thing such as a celebratory meal, at the same time accept its ungroundedness and vulnerability. See Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Spinosa, 'Highway bridges and feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on how to affirm technology,' *Man and World*, Vol. 30 (1997).

> truth of being [i.e., being able to give up one's familiar world while being receptive to a strange new understanding of being – HLD]. This sacrifice is the purest experience of the voice of being' (P 166f./249f.).
>
> (2.2)

This passage also bears on Blattner's understanding of death as an anxiety attack. Readiness for anxiety would be readiness for a sudden and unmotivated breakdown of the world. It is hard to see what such readiness could be. How is it humanly possible to commit oneself to one's world (or identity) *and* at the same time envisage that at any moment it could stop making sense? It seems clear that, in the case of death, readiness for world collapse cannot mean imagining what it could be like and being ready to give up one's world, but, rather, being open to the vulnerability of one's world, and that means not building up defenses, that is not resigning oneself to living in the world of the Anyone. So far, Blattner, Haugeland, and White could all agree.

The important difference between Blattner and Haugeland/White is that, for Blattner, death as an anxiety attack is an unmotivated and sudden collapse of all meaning, whereas for Haugeland and White death or world-collapse is motivated by anomalies and takes place gradually, although, like any world transformation – like falling in love or grieving, for example – world-transformation, like a gestalt switch, takes place in a special temporal way that Kierkegaard calls an Instant (*Augenblick*). One can't experience it in incremental steps. Such a transformation requires a willingness to let the old world go, to make a *sacrifice* as Later Heidegger says above, which is not like being hit out of the blue. Blattner's account is true to early Heidegger's description of the phenomenon of anxiety, but that precisely precludes it being an account of the phenomenon of the death of cultural worlds – a phenomenon that both Haugeland and White argue Heidegger is groping towards in *Being and Time*. According to White, this is the phenomenon that Heidegger only finally succeeds in describing when he talks of the sacrifice involved in letting go of one's current cultural world to make way for another.

Thus, White goes beyond Haugeland's published account of death in *Being and Time* by seeing that comparing being-towards-death with revolutionary science is not just a way of getting a grip on what Heidegger means by Dasein's authentic being-towards-death as a way of life, as if being-towards-death were always someone's way of life. Rather, coming back to the death chapter in *Being and Time* from her reading of Later Heidegger, White sees both the parallel and the difference between individual being-towards-death as accepting the vulnerability of an *individual identity*, and world-preserving in the face of the vulnerability of *a whole cultural world*. She says:

> [T]hroughout Heidegger's discussion of the inauthentic and authentic views of death he tacitly relies on an analogy or proportion between my demise as a person and my existential death as Dasein. I am to my death qua person as Dasein [being in the world] is to its death qua Dasein [that is, world collapse]. In both respects I confront a 'nothingness' impenetrable to my understanding, and death constitutes a sort of 'other side' to what is. . . . The fact

analogy, which lets him say similar things about both conceptions, actually hinders the distinction from being as clear as it should be.[55]

To make Heidegger clear, White reverses Haugeland's approach. She contends that, from Later Heidegger looking back, we can see that ontological death does not have to do with the finitude of individual human lives at all, but solely with the fact that there have been a series of understandings of being in our culture, a series of cultural worlds, and each has died, that is, become impossible and given way to another. Because Heidegger was unclear about this distinction, she claims, his death chapter in *Being and Time* is murky and misleading, but he gets clear about the distinction later. His ontological account of death is only fully worked out and consistent once he has discovered the history of being and so discovered what it means for the style of the culture to become unintelligible or impossible, and so for a cultural world to die.

What, then, for White is death as a cultural way to be? A culture is an ungrounded world. (1) Ungrounded worlds harbor the constant 'possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all'. (2) Thus cultures require world-preservers who make sacrifices to keep them alive. But (3) being-towards-death is a world-preserver's readiness to give up a culture and let the world go, when the culture no longer makes sense. (4) This is a prerequisite for receiving a new understanding of being.

This might seem to make world-transforming by being receptive to a new understanding of being higher than world-preserving by being receptive to the current understanding of being. This may well be Nietzsche's view, but it is not Heidegger's. Being receptive to and acting on an understanding of being is as good as it gets for Heidegger. Sometimes for contingent reasons you can preserve; sometimes you've got to transform. These contingent reasons are the stuff of history.

According to White's retrospective reading of Heidegger's work, Heidegger, once he had discovered the history of being, sees that he should never have tried to present a phenomenological ontology of the death of individual human beings; rather, the proper subject of thought is the finite timeliness of shared human practices that make possible the birth and death of cultural worlds which, in turn, gives rise to the temporality of history. As she puts it:

> Now we can see why Heidegger thinks that fundamental ontology must include consideration of 'the problem of the finitude in man as the decisive element which makes the understanding of being possible' (KPM 240/225). Our finitude is not just an incidental feature of our being. It is established in our relationship to being, more particularly in the relationship between Dasein's timeliness [the temporal structure of shared human practices] and the temporality of being [the history of understandings of being] and the role existential death [world-collapse] plays at their intersection.
>
> (2.5)

55 Carol J. White, 'Dasein, Existence and Death,' p. 63, op. cit., p. 341.

IV. Summary

We have now examined eight different ways to interpret Heidegger on death and dying. To sum up, I'll group them by category in the order of their increasing plausibility.

I Death is the inevitable event that ends a human life, an event that Heidegger calls demise.
   a) The simplest and most clearly mistaken way to understand Heidegger on death is to think of death as the *event* at the end of a human life when that life is annihilated, and to think of dying as the name for this process. (Sartre, Edwards, Philipse)
   b) More sophisticated, but still repudiated by the text, is the view that, while demise is the end of Dasein's possibilities, *dying* is a way of life that takes account of the certainty of that final event. Thus, dying, or being-towards-death, as a way of life gives life seriousness, and a narrative structure, and so makes possible a life that makes sense in terms of a beginning, middle, and end. (Zimmerman and Guignon)

II Death is not demise at all.
   a) Death is the closing down of possibilities. Each choice I make makes some other courses of action impossible. (Carman)
   b) Dasein is essentially an ability-to-be and death is having an anxiety attack in which Dasein loses its ability to be. Dying would then be readiness for anxiety. (Blattner)

III Heidegger is formalizing death and dying, and so treats death as a structural feature of all human lives.
   a) The negative version sees death as the structural condition that an individual's identity can always be lost. Dying is, then, the resigned, heroic acceptance of this condition. (Dreyfus)
   b) The positive version holds that what is essential about human beings – that they are world-disclosers – survives individual death. So identifying oneself with one's capacity as a world-discloser makes possible a 'good death.' (Young)

IV Death is equated with world-collapse, and dying is understood as readiness for world collapse.
   a) Death is equated with the sort of world-collapse that can befall individual human beings, and dying is staking all on one's current world, while sensing its vulnerability and being ready and able to give it up if it can't be made to work. (Haugeland)
   b) Death is equated with the sort of world-collapse that can befall a cultural epoch, and dying is striving to preserve the culture's understanding of being while being ready to sacrifice it when confronted with anomalous practices that portend the arrival of a new cultural world. (White)

White sees the individual and the cultural accounts of death as opposed, and holds that Heidegger finally arrives at the latter view. 'Authentic Dasein is in fact a harbinger

of a new understanding of being,'[56] she contends, and she cites texts that clearly show that Later Heidegger thinks more and more about the death of cultures, and hardly at all about the death of particular human beings. Still, Haugeland is right that, while Heidegger in *Being and Time* is never concerned with the physical death of particular persons, he is, nonetheless, describing a possible way of life of individual human beings in the face of death.

To see how these two persuasive but opposed accounts of death can be related, it helps to spell out what White sees as the role of the individual in the 'intersection' of cultural Dasein's timeliness and the temporality of being. It turns out that, according to White, authentic dying requires a special relation of the individual to the vulnerability of the cultural style:

> For Heidegger dying is a particular way of existing. Dasein can die either authentically or inauthentically. As Dasein we always have to take up being-toward-the-end either by taking being for granted and thus simply moving within the possibilities of being that our culture has laid out, or by making an issue of it and thus determining where the limits of our cultural possibilities of being actually do lie.
>
> (2.7)

According to White, once we see how the dying of individuals relates to the death of cultures, we are in a position to grasp the understanding of death and dying Heidegger is groping for.

Standing with a foot on each of Haugeland's and White's shoulders, the reader, then, can see that they have each discovered *a general structure of finitude* which has both an individual and a cultural instantiation. Haugeland, on the one hand, focusing on *Being and Time*, tells us how authentic individuals can integrate the vulnerability of their identity into their way of life. He thus convincingly spells out the existential side of *Being and Time* while treating the cultural parallels, in this case scientific and cultural revolutions, as analogs. White, on the other hand, argues, on the basis of her retroactive reading, that, from the start, Heidegger meant to restrict his account of death to the collapse of cultural understandings of being and, as we have just seen, she contends that authentic dying is the way individuals relate to the finitude and thus the vulnerability of their culture.

The way authentic *individuals* live their death, then, is by total commitment that stakes everything on their individual identity. They then show steadfastness in working to bring out that individual identity while accepting its vulnerability. That is, they live in anxiety and thereby remain open to anomalies that can show that their current way of life is untenable. If their current way of life breaks down, they are already building on the anomalies to form a new one.

On the cultural level, authentic *culture preservers* sense that their culture's finite understanding of what is meaningful and worthy is not grounded in reason or God but depends on them, so they devote themselves wholeheartedly to articulating the culture's current understanding of being. Moreover, since such authentic world-preservers sense the vulnerability of their current understanding of being, they keep

---

56 Ibid., p. 64, op. cit., p. 342.

the culture open to the anomalies that may eventually lead to its collapse, at the same time remaining receptive to the marginal practices that may become central and ground a new world.

Once we appreciate the different phenomenon revealed by each interpretation, we can see that these phenomena are isomorphic so that one does not have to choose one interpretation at the expense of the other. Rather, we can abstract the structure of death and finitude from each interpretation and so see that, for each, death is world-collapse, and authentic dying means both resisting world-collapse by preserving and trying to make sense of anomalies, while at the same time remaining open to possible world-collapse, thereby being able, should it happen, to accept it as making possible a new beginning. If we are authentic, we are always actively preserving or transforming. Indeed, preserving and transforming each imply the other. One can only preserve what is transformable. One can only transform what requires preserving.

V. Conclusion

So far, all contributors to the above discussion of Heidegger's understanding of death either identify death with demise, or else deny that death as a structure instantiated in individual or cultural world-collapse has anything at all to do with the event at the end of a human life that Heidegger calls demise. But, if one is to do justice to the phenomenon and to the text, it is important to be clear that those who identify death with world-collapse need not deny that the structure of world-collapse can also be instantiated in a terminal condition coextensive with the event of demise in which, as in all instances of world-collapse, 'Dasein is no longer able to be there' (294).

We must bear in mind that, when Heidegger says that death is 'the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein,' he is not making the *biographical* point that Dasein's current world will some day collapse. Heidegger is clear that the *existential* possibility of death is a possibility that can never become *actual* in the way something understood as potential can finally be realized. Yet Dasein does finally cease to exist for good.

Thus, there seems to be an important difference between terminal death, so to speak, and all other forms of existential breakdown. Even if, as White so convincingly argues, by their very nature as disclosive, both an identity and a world must be vulnerable, still, an individual might be lucky enough *never to experience the failure of his or her identity*, and the members of culture need not experience culture-collapse. And conversely, one can actually *experience* identity and world collapse only if the collapse in question is not the terminal one.

One can, of course, abstract from these differences and arrive at a 'formal' existential ontological conception of death that covers both the repeatable and the final versions. What makes death 'possible,' in a special sense of possible, then, is not that it can never become actual, but that, like all forms of existential ontological vulnerability, it has to be taken up by Dasein and lived in a way that affects its life

from beginning to end. Heidegger tells us that, 'The authentic possibility of the being of death is grasped only when the relationship to this possibility is such that it is thereby understood as a certainty of my being.'[57] Death, then, becomes, as White puts it, a way of life. In this sense, all forms of ultimate vulnerability are equally certain. Still, there is something special about the *final* collapse of being-in-the-world; terminal death, unlike other forms of world-collapse, is *inevitable*.

Heidegger, true to the phenomena as usual, does not deny physical death's inevitability. Unlike all other forms of existential-ontological breakdown, Heidegger tells us 'Death is something *distinctively* impending' (294). And, indeed, when thinking of terminal death, Heidegger goes beyond speaking merely of certainty and says, 'death as the end of Dasein, is . . . certain . . . and *not to be outstripped*' (303 – some italics removed).[58]

Here death as *certain* and death as *inevitable* part ways. I can be certain of my *vulnerability* to identity or world-collapse as a *possibility* without ever experiencing it, but the terminal death that is co-extensive with demise, while, indeed, an instance of vulnerability, is inevitable, not just *possibly* inevitable. Thus, the existential death co-extensive with demise must be lived with a paradoxical combination of putting everything at stake in living one's identity, while at the same time acting in a way that is open to its *inevitable* (not just possible) final collapse.

Thus, something like demise comes back, requiring some interpretation. Even when we are clear that death can't be a future event, we are left open to Sartre's and Camus' conviction that, however one describes the non-event that terminates our lives, it might well make all our previous commitments seem absurd. Just how is one supposed to live steadfastly putting one's identity at stake while at the same time being open to its *inevitable* utterly final collapse? This is where phenomenology seems to leave off and ontology or faith must take over.

In the end, Heidegger eschews faith and turns to formalized ontology. But, as we have now seen, there is a tension in his ontology. There is a way in which *terminal* collapse has the same ontological structure and the same existential role in an authentic Dasein's life as do all other forms of existential-ontological breakdown. But there is also a way in which my final end is unique. In non-terminal breakdown, Dasein as

---

57 Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. Theodore Kisiel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 317.

58 Piotr Hoffman, 'Dasein and "its" Time,' *Blackwell Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Mark A. Wrathall (forthcoming) points out that Heidegger says in *Being and Time* that 'a "time" has been allotted to Dasein,' (463) and uses this quotation and others like it to support his claim that the sort of death Heidegger is analyzing in *Being and Time* must, like demise, be individual, inevitable, and terminal. But this notion of an allotted time alone does not distinguish individual death from cultural death. Cultures too have their allotted times and invariably die. But neither does the notion of an allotted time support the counter-claim that both the *inevitable* and final end of a human life and the *contingent* collapse of an identity or of a cultural world are instances of the same structure. Indeed, since Heidegger can't say that terminal death is *necessary* but only that it is *inevitable*, it is hard to see how to state the distinctive differences among the ways cultures *invariably* die, identities *possibly* die, and individual terminal death is inevitable.

an ability-to-be does, indeed, collapse, but something remains aware of the collapse and survives to open a new world.[59] In terminal breakdown, as far as we can tell, awareness and world-disclosing are over for good.

The deep confusion in the death chapter in *Being and Time* – a confusion that White notes but that her single-minded focus on cultural world-collapse doesn't allow her to see – is that sometimes Heidegger is proposing a formalized account of the essence of existential-ontological collapse *in general*,[60] and sometimes he is giving an account of the *distinctively final* character of terminal death, which, if *essential*, would prevent it from being merely another instance of existential-ontological breakdown. What White's approach does enable one to see, however, is that Heidegger may well have thought of distinctive, terminal, individual death as the essential or paradigm case, in *Being and Time*, but that Later Heidegger came to think of the death of cultural epochs as essential or paradigmatic.

Thus the complexity in the phenomenon itself leads Heidegger to lay out two existential-ontological accounts of how to live in the face of death that are in tension. The one White brilliantly works out and defends takes world-collapse as essential and so gives an account of demise merely as an instance of existential-ontological breakdown, ignoring the distinctive character of physical death's inevitability and finality. In White's version of Heidegger's account of finitude, one is called constantly to experience one's vulnerability with anxiety, but one also senses that this vulnerability is a necessary condition of the joy of being a world-discloser, so that, far from *fear* of my inevitable *demise*, Dasein's authentic attunement to the world while disclosing it is anxious joy. As Heidegger says: 'Along with the sober anxiety which brings us face to face with our individualized ability-to-be, there goes an unshakable joy' (358).

But Heidegger is rightly unwilling to take a stand on whether there is an afterlife waiting for something like Dasein. He is clear that 'if "death" is defined as the "end" of Dasein – that is to say being-in-the-world – this does not imply any ontical decision whether "after death" still another being is possible' (292). Heidegger is therefore not going to give us advice as to how to live our lives in the face of the *inevitability*

---

59 This raises the difficult question: just what survives world or identity-collapse so as to be aware that collapse has occurred? Clearly, Dasein, as being-in-the world is precisely no longer there. Heidegger would certainly resist the Cartesian claim that what survives is consciousness. What must survive, then, is what survives the breakdown of Dasein in an anxiety attack, the lack of a world, or what Heidegger calls naked thrownness or the that it is and has-to-be (174). Heidegger says all that is left in an anxiety attack is an 'individualized' *solus ipse*' (233), which we must presumably understand not as a self-sufficient Cartesian subject and not as part of some larger All, but as pure, isolated, world-needy mineness. But, here, even a master phenomenologist like Heidegger may have run up against the limits of phenomenology.

60 Blattner claims, in effect, that we should treat anxiety attacks, although they are neither inevitable nor terminal, and are not a response to the anomalies in the current world, as another form of world collapse related to death. That seems to be a plausible proposal, but it makes Heidegger's job of finding a formal ontological level of description that covers the essential features of all ways that Dasein becomes impossible, even more difficult.

of the terminal collapse of our being-in-the-world. He can say that we are called to live the possibility of this final collapse, as we are called to live the possibility of all forms of world-collapse, by breaking out of the inauthenticity of the Anyone that sees death as a future event that can be ignored for now. Thus, 'the analytic makes forerunning resoluteness basic as an ability-to-be which, in an existentiell manner, is authentic' (360). But, in the end, Heidegger was enough of a phenomenologist to realize that there was nothing *positive* he could say about how to live a life taking account every moment that it is bound to end in total annihilation. He does not claim that in this case existential-ontology can give us binding guidance. 'Existential Interpretation will never seek to take over any authoritarian pronouncement as to those things which, from an existentiell point of view, are possible or binding' (360).

Despite interpreters' attempts to find Heidegger's existentiell recommendation for how to live in the face of our inevitable final end, one finds not Sartrian denial, nor the traditional Christian belief in an afterlife, nor Kierkegaard's claim that, without belief in an afterlife, faith can still reconcile vulnerability and total commitment, nor secular heroic nihilism in the face of the absurd. One finds, instead, the suggestion that none of these responses to terminal death need undermine finite forerunning resoluteness with its joy in the possibility of either preserving vulnerable identities and cultural worlds, or letting them go and disclosing new ones. But, beyond that, it seems that each of us, without Heidegger's guidance, has to relate to the inevitability of finally no longer being able to be there in his or her own way. Carol White chose to spend twenty years laboriously writing a masterful meditation on finitude and death that will long outlive her.

Editor's Preface

Carol White died suddenly on 1 October 2000 from pneumonia. Before her death she was preparing to resume work on this book, which she started more than twenty years ago.

At the age of thirteen Carol was paralyzed by a tumor on her sixth vertebra, after which she lost full use of her hands and was unable to walk. For many years she wrote with the handle of a wooden spoon, which allowed her to type on a keyboard, letter by letter. However, writing in this manner became too painful and exhausting for her after a poorly executed surgery in 1997. At this time she began hiring students to help her type and collect research materials from the university library.

At the time of Carol's death I was working as her research assistant and typist. In hindsight it seems I was really working as Carol's student. That is, having a student worker in the house allowed Carol to do what she loved most: write about and teach Heidegger. One of her favorite passages in Heidegger's corpus was the following from the 'Letter on Humanism':

> To embrace a 'thing' or a 'person' in its essence means to love it, to favor it. Thought in a more original way such favoring [*Mögen*] means to bestow essence as a gift. Such favoring is the proper essence of enabling, which not only can achieve this or that but also can let something essentially unfold in its provenance, that is, let it be. It is on the 'strength' of such enabling by favoring that something is properly able to be.
>
> (LH 220)

This passage might serve as a perfect epigraph for this book. On the one hand, it seems to express the goal of most scholars: namely, to serve the very essence of one's subject. On the other hand, it also expresses an ideal important to most teachers: to enable one's students, as Pindar and Nietzsche would say, to become who they are, to develop the capacities and characteristics unique to them. Carol may accomplish both of these lofty goals with this book.

Mark Ralkowski

Heidegger's Texts and Translations

This two-part section provides the key both to the works by Heidegger cited in my discussion and to the translation of his important terms clustering around the German verb '*sein*' (to be) and those related to '*Zeit*' (time).

I. Translating 'Being' and 'Time'

Choosing a vocabulary in which to write about Heidegger's work is the most difficult decision facing an English-speaking author. I introduce most of my attempts to capture Heidegger's meaning as I need them, but I must begin with a few remarks about the words that cluster around the keynotes of his constant theme: being and time.

English versions of Heidegger's works translate the terms derived from the verb '*sein*' (to be) in different ways. I translate these terms as follows:

Sein	(the infinitive made a noun by capitalization) = being, to be
seiend	(participle) = being
das Seiende	(participle used as a noun) = what-is or (less frequently) the entity, depending on grammatical context
ein Seiendes	= something-which-is[1]

To remind the reader that we are talking about the significance of a verb when we ask the question of being, I will sometimes use the paraphrase 'what it is to be', although it is awkward English. The reader should be warned in advance, however, that, despite its usefulness in countering some misunderstandings of

1 [In her original manuscript, following what was once standard practice in Heidegger scholarship, the author translates *Sein* as 'Being' (with a capital *B*). However, as she herself warns, the upper-case initial can easily 'mislead one into thinking that Heidegger is talking about some kind of super-substance or thing, e.g. God.' That error is insidious and persistent, as Heidegger himself is often at pains to point out. Moreover, it should be recalled that all nouns are routinely capitalized in German; the only reason translators ever capitalized 'Being' in English was to differentiate it from (lower-case) 'being' for *Seiende*. Many English translations and scholarly works now dispense with the convention of capitalizing the word and instead seek alternatives for *Seiende* so as to avoid that lexical ambiguity. Since, as she explains below, the author translates that latter term by 'what-is,' we have changed 'Being' to 'being' throughout, to conform to current practice and to avoid unnecessary confusion. Finally, since the author herself sometimes uses 'entity' to translate *Seiende*, we have substituted that term for those few instances in which she has written (lower-case) 'being.' Editor's note.]

what Heidegger means by '*Sein*,' this paraphrase tends to lead us into the basic assumption of metaphysics which Heidegger is trying to counteract: the assumption that the meaning of 'to be' turns out to be a 'what,' that is, a thing, a property, and so on.

Heidegger's term '*das Seiende*' has been almost universally pluralized in translation as, for example, 'entities,' 'beings,' or 'essents.' Walter Kaufmann lent support for this pluralization when he reported that Heidegger 'enthusiastically approved' using 'Being' and 'beings' as translations for '*Sein*' and '*das Seiende*.' Kaufmann said that Heidegger actually thought that the English 'beings' was superior to the German '*Seiende*' because it better captured the Greek plural '*ta onta*' and his own meaning was derived from that of the Greeks.

I am rather skeptical about the accuracy of this report. First, Heidegger is as much or more concerned with the Greeks' '*to on*,' the singular entity, as with their '*ta onta*.' Second, if Heidegger wanted to capture the Greek plural, why didn't he pluralize '*das Seiende*'? The singular term is not a word used in common German discourse, and, if one is going to turn a word into a technical term, why not use the plural form ('*die Seienden*') rather than the singular if that is the meaning intended? Heidegger's notorious penchant for inventing his own lexicon or torturing ordinary German usage to fit his own seems to favor using the plural. However, he seems to emphasize the singularity of the singular. In one example in my Section 1.2 I quote a passage from Heidegger's own text where he clearly employs 'it' and a singular conjugation of the verb in reference to '*Seiende*.'

Even if it were appropriate to translate '*das Seiende*' as 'beings,' this would not settle the problem of the nature of its reference. Are 'beings' individual things such as hammers, dogs, rocks, and so on, or are they what-is ready-to-hand, what-is unready-to-hand, and what-is present-at-hand, Nature, and so forth? I argue for the latter in Section 1.2.

The most accurate translation of '*das Seiende*' would be 'the being,' and my hunch is that what Heidegger found superior in English and what he was unable to duplicate in German was the way the same English word 'being' paralleled the Greek word '*on*' with its verbal and substantive senses. The Greek '*on*' is both a participle describing the act of 'to be' and a noun indicating something which is. As I indicate in Section 0.3, Heidegger regards this grammatical fact as enormously significant for the development of philosophy. As with the Greek '*on*,' in English we can use one word, that is 'being,' where Heidegger uses two, '*Sein*' and '*Seiende*.'

However, translating '*das Seiende*' with 'being', as Terrence Malick does in his translation of *The Essence of Reasons*, frequently seems grammatically unclear and awkward. My translation of '*das Seiende*' as 'what-is' tries to capture the singular reference of '*Seiende*' as well as the fact that we are saying that this something 'is.' This translation is also used by William Lovitt in his translation of the Heidegger essays collected in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. At the risk of alienating those people who are already offended at Heidegger's hyphenated jargon, I insert the hyphen to remind the reader of the technicalness of the term and to help grammatically in such sentences as 'The being of what-is is revealed in a

flash of insight.' When grammar requires it, occasionally I use 'entity' as a substitute for 'what-is.'[2]

Another key group of words relates to the issue of time, or '*Zeit*.' These terms also require a special note, particularly for this book's discussion. I shall translate '*Zeitlichkeit*' as 'timeliness' and '*Temporalität*' as 'Temporality.' The latter translation is standard, but I propose the former at the risk of some confusion.

'*Zeitlichkeit*' has been traditionally translated as 'temporality,' but I have a number of reasons for preferring my proposed translation of 'timeliness.' First, the distinction between '*Temporalität*' and '*Zeitlichkeit*,' and hence an important aspect of the architectonic of Heidegger's framework of analysis, has gone unnoticed when the English terms are distinguished only by the initial capital letter. Indeed, perhaps this slight typographic distinction has encouraged the obliteration of the important conceptual difference. A recent translation has failed to distinguish the terms at all, translating both with 'temporality.' (See Theodore Kisiel's translation of *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, HCT, pp. 154/196 and 158/201.)

Not only does my translation make the distinction orthographically obvious, but, my second reason, it parallels the etymology of the German terms. '*Zeitlichkeit*' literally means timeliness, but our term 'temporality' is derived from Latin, as is the German '*Temporalität*.'

Thirdly, the ordinary sense of the term 'timeliness' captures an important feature of Dasein's *Zeitlichkeit* in its relation to the Temporality of being, as I will explain in the text. And finally, the use of 'timeliness' will continually remind the reader that I am advancing a new account of *Zeitlichkeit* which, unlike so many interpretations of Heidegger's notion of temporality, does not view it as simply an experience of or attitude about time.

I leave the initial 't' of 'Temporality' capitalized, following the practice of the common translation of '*Temporalität*,' in order to help prevent confusion of my use of the term with the usual translation of '*Zeitlichkeit*.' When I speak specifically of the 'Time' that characterizes the Temporality of being I also will capitalize the term in order to differentiate it from clock-time or the 'primordial time' of Dasein's timeliness. When quoting, paraphrasing, or referring to Heidegger's comments, however, I will leave the 't' uncapitalized. In Heidegger's works the 'z' of '*Zeit*' is, of course, always capitalized as the initial letter of a noun. Thus Heidegger's own vocabulary does not differentiate these different sorts of '*Zeit*' except indirectly.

II. Texts

References to works by Heidegger are included in the text in parentheses. When successive quotations or paraphrases in a paragraph come from the same passage, the reference is given after the last one. All emphasis in quotations is Heidegger's.

2 [We have substituted 'entity' for the author's original 'the being.' See note 1 above. Editor's note.]

Since so many of the references are to *Being and Time*, and since the pagination of the twelfth edition of *Sein und Zeit* is given in the margins of both the Macquarrie and Robinson translation and Joan Stambaugh's recent attempt, references to this work will simply give the page number of that German edition in parentheses. A numeral followed by an asterisk indicates the page number from the Appendix of the fourteenth German edition of *Sein und Zeit* where Heidegger's marginal notes on his own copy of the work are collected.[3]

For other works the parenthetical reference gives the initials of the English translation, and the two numbers that follow indicate the page in the English version and then the German. The key to the initials and editions is given below. When works by Heidegger are cited no more than once or twice, references are given in regular footnotes; I mention these works at the end of this biographical key for the sake of completeness.

For reasons of consistency, clarity, and correctness, in a few cases my own translations vary from those of the English version listed below. Any modifications are explained in the second part of this section or in the following text.

In addition to the occasional citation of Heidegger texts mentioned infrequently, regular footnotes are used for references to secondary sources and for elaboration upon points in the text.

List of Abbreviations for Heidegger's Works

AP 'On the Being and Conception of *Physis* in Aristotle's Physics B, 1,' translated by Thomas Sheehan, *Man and World*, IX (August 1976), pp. 219–270.

'Vom Wesen und Begriff der Physis. Aristoteles, Physik B, 1,' *Wegmarken*, Vol. 9 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Friedrich-Wilhelm von Herrmann. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976.

BPP *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, translated by Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982.

Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie, Vol. 24 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1975).

DOT *Discourse on Thinking*, translated by John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

Gelassenheit. Pfullingen: Neske, 1959.

---

3 Niemeyer republished the fourteenth edition of *Sein und Zeit* in 1972 and added the Appendix of Heidegger's marginal comments in 1977. Harper and Row published the translation by John Macquarrie and Edwin Robinson in 1962; Joan Stambaugh's effort came out through SUNY Press in 1996. The latter includes Heidegger's marginalia in their original location in his copy of the text.

EGT *Early Greek Thinking*, translated David Farrell Krell and Frank A. Capuzzi. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

'Der Spruch des Anaximander,' *Holzwege*, Vol. 5 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1977).

'Logos,' 'Moira,' and 'Aletheia,' *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 4th edition. Pfullingen: Neske, 1978.

EP *The End of Philosophy*, translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.

Essays drawn from *Nietzsche II*, 3rd edition. Pfullingen: Neske, 1961. Also 'Uberwindung der Metaphysik' from *Vorträge und Aufsätze*.

ER *The Essence of Reasons*, translated by Terrence Malick. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1969.

Vom Wesen des Grundes. The above edition includes the German text on pages facing the English translation.

ET 'On the Essence of Truth,' *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

'Vom Wesen der Wahrheit,' *Wegmarken*.

HCE *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, no translator identified. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

'Hegels Begriff der Erfahrung,' *Holzwege*.

HCT *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, translated by Theodore Kisiel. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, Vol. 20 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Petra Jaeger. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979.

HS *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, translated by Charles Seibert. University of Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1979.

Heraklit: Seminar Wintersemester 1966/67. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1970.

ID *Identity and Difference*. Translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

Identität und Differenz. The German text appears at the end of the above edition.

IM *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, translated by Ralph Manheim. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.

Einführung in die Metaphysik. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1953.

KPM *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, translated by James Churchill. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1962.

Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1973.

LH 'Letter on Humanism,' translated by Frank Capuzzi, in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

'Brief über den Humanismus,' *Wegmarken*.

LR 'Preface' (Letter to Fr. Richardson), translated by William Richardson. *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967. The original German text of this letter appears on pages facing the translation.

MFL *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, translated by Michael Heim. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.

Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz, Vol. 26 of the *Gesamtausgabe*, 1978.

N1 *Nietzsche: Volume One, The Will to Power as Art*, translated and edited by D.F. Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979.

Essays drawn from *Nietzsche I*, 3rd edition. Pfullingen: Neske, 1961.

N2 *Nietzsche: Volume Two, The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, translated and edited by D.F. Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984.

Essays drawn from *Nietzsche I* and *Vorträge und Aufsätze*.

N3 *Nietzsche: Volume Three, The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, translated by D.F. Krell, J. Stambaugh, and Frank Capuzzi, and edited by D.F. Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

Essays drawn from *Nietzsche I* and *Nietzsche II*, 3rd edition. Pfullingen: Neske, 1961.

N4 *Nietzsche: Volume Four, Nihilism*, translated by Frank Capuzzi and edited by D.F. Krell. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1982.

Essays drawn from *Nietzsche II.*

OWA 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, edited and translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

'Der Ursprung, des Kunstwerkes,' *Holzwege.*

OWL *On the Way to Language*, translated by Peter Hertz. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

Unterwegs zur Sprache. Pfullingen: Neske, 1959.

P *Parmenides*, translated by Arthur Schuwer and Richard Rojcewicz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.

PDT 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth,' *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, edited by William Barrett and Henry Aiken. New York: Random House, 1962.

'Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit,' *Wegmarken.*

PLT *Poetry, Language, Thought*, edited and translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. This collection of essays includes:

'The Origin of the Work of Art,' pp. 15–87, translation of 'Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes' in *Holzwege.*

'What Are Poets For?,' pp. 89–142, translation of 'Wozu Dichter?' in *Holzwege.*

'The Thing,' pp. 163–186, translation of 'Das Ding' in *Vorträge und Aufsätze.*

'Language,' pp. 187–210, translation of 'Die Sprache' in *Unterwegs zur Sprache.* Pfullingen: Neske, 1959.

QCT *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, edited and translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row, 1977. Essays include:

'The Question Concerning Technology,' pp. 3–35, translation of 'Die Frage nach der Technik,' in *Vorträge und Aufsätze.*

'The Turning,' pp. 36–49, translation of 'Die Kehre' in *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Pfullingen: Neske, 1962.

'The Word of Nietzsche: "God is Dead,"' pp. 53–112, translation of 'Nietzsches Wort "Gott ist tot,"' in *Holzwege*.

'The Age of the World Picture,' pp. 115–154, translation of 'Die Zeit des Weltbildes' in *Holzwege*.

'Science and Reflection,' pp. 155–182, translation of 'Wissenschaft und Besinnung' in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*.

TB *On Time and Being*, translated by Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

Translation of *Zur Sache des Denkens*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969.

One section of this book, 'Summary of a Seminar on the Lecture "Time and Being,"' is a translation of 'Protokoll zu einem Seminar über den Vortrag "Zeit und Sein."' Although not written by Heidegger himself, this summary prepared by Alfred Guzzioni was approved by him.

TPT *The Piety of Thinking*, translated by James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.

WAPF 'What Are Poets For?' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, edited and translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

'Wozu Dichter?,' *Holzwege*.

Way 'The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics,' *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, 2nd edition, edited by Walter Kaufmann. New York: New American Library, 1975.

'Der Rückgang in den Grund der Metaphysik: Einleitung zu: "Was Ist Metaphysik?",' *Wegmarken*.

WICT *What Is Called Thinking?*, translated by J. Glenn Gray and Fred Wieck. New York: Harper and Row, 1968.

Was Heisst Denken? Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1961.

WIM 'What is Metaphysics?' *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

'Was Ist Metaphysik?,' *Wegmarken*.

WIT *What is a Thing?*, translated by W.B. Barton, Jr., and Vera Deutsch. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1967.

Die Frage nach dem Ding, Vol. 41 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1984).

Works Cited Infrequently and by Name in Footnotes

Der Satz vom Grund. Pfullingen: Neske, 1957.

'Der Zeitbegriff in der Geschichtswissenschaft,' *Frühe Schriften*, Vol. 1 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1978).

Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit, Vols 29/30 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1983).

'Only a God can save us: *Der Spiegel*'s interview with Martin Heidegger,' translated by Maria Alter and John Caputo, *Philosophy Today*, Vol. XX (Winter 1976): 267–284. (A translation of 'Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten: Spiegel-Gesprach mit Martin Heidegger am 23 September 1966,' *Der Spiegel*, No. 26, 31 May 1976 (Hamburg): 267–284.)

'Nachwort zu "Was Ist Metaphysik,"' *Wegmarken* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1976).

'Nietzsche as Metaphysician,' translated by Joan Stambaugh, in *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Robert Solomon (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973), p. 108.

Author's Preface

Thomas Kuhn reports offering the following maxim to his students:

> When reading the works of an important thinker, look first for the apparent absurdities in the text and then ask yourself how a sensible person could have written them. When you find an answer, I continue, when those passages make sense, then you may find that more central passages, ones you previously thought you understood, have changed their meaning.[1]

Reading these remarks, I realized in retrospect that this is what happened to me in trying to understand Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* and the works that came after it.

In a way, I have Paul Edwards to thank for my insight into Heidegger's thought that led me to write this book. His antagonistic articles on Heidegger's notion of death make Heidegger's discussion suddenly seem absurd, trivial, and rather silly.[2] The plethora of replies to Edwards, each advancing quite a different message about what Heidegger's real point was, only made his discussion seem more puzzling.[3] Just what was Heidegger saying?

I looked at Heidegger's text again with Edwards's criticisms in mind, but, unlike Edwards, I was operating under the assumption that Heidegger was a sensible man.[4]

---

1 Thomas Kuhn, *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. xii.

2 Paul Edwards, *Heidegger and Death: A Critical Evaluation*, Monist Monograph Series (La Salle, Illinois: Hegeler, 1979). This monograph combines and expands two earlier essays:
_____. 'Heidegger on Death as Possibility,' *Mind*, LXXXIV (1975), pp. 548–566.
_____. 'Heidegger and Death: A Deflationary Critique,' *The Monist*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (April 1976), pp. 161–186.

3 See the following essays:
Lawrence Hinman, 'Heidegger, Edwards, and Being-toward-Death,' *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, XVI (Fall 1978), pp. 193–212.
John Llewelyn, 'The "Possibility" of Heidegger's Death,' *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (May 1983), pp. 127–138.
Jamshid Mirfenderesky, 'Concerning Paul Edwards' "Heidegger on Death": A Criticism,' *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (January 1979), pp. 120–128.
Dan Magurshuk, 'Heidegger and Edwards on *Sein-zum-Tode*,' *The Monist*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 1979), pp. 107–118.

4 Recent revelations about his political and social views may make me question his good sense in that realm, but his grasp of ontological issues and the history of philosophy is not so obviously biased and petty.

As a result, I noticed remarks to which I had never really paid attention before and confronted head-on a problem about the structure of *Being and Time* which had always vaguely bothered me.

The book had always seemed to fall apart into two halves. If we describe the view expressed in it as 'phenomenological existentialism,' then the first half seemed to be the phenomenology and the second the existentialism. The turning point comes at the discussion of death. From a discussion of tool-use, relations between human beings, language, and so forth, we seemed to turn abruptly to a discussion of how the individual ought to face death, the significance of conscience and guilt, and the nature of the experience of time. The subjective reorientation hinged on a rather fishy-sounding question about whether we could adequately analyze the whole phenomenon of human existence when that phenomenon always included the 'not yet' of death. Why should the fact that people die hinder our analysis of what it is to be here and now?

With the second half of *Being and Time* apparently going off into a discussion of how to live authentically, it seemed no wonder that so many commentators thought that in the course of writing *Being and Time* Heidegger backed himself into a dead end of subjectivity and could not proceed to answer his original, mysterious question about 'the meaning of being in general.' This, they explained, was why his half-finished book was dropped, its projected analysis never completed, and why he went on to try a radically different approach in later works.

How could an intelligent philosopher have gotten so sidetracked? A fresh and careful study of the text began to reveal quite a different issue than the one that the familiar accounts of the matter addressed. Absurdities dissolved, and trivialities disclosed what lay beneath their surface. The new meaning taking shape in the chapter on death began to reach out into the surrounding chapters, especially the ones on Dasein's experience of time. The ontological level of the whole discussion in the second half of *Being and Time* shifted from the personal and subjective to the cultural and historical. Soon it became clear that not only was the second half of the book a necessary extension of the first, but it tied directly into the works that followed throughout Heidegger's career.

My book is devoted to articulating the vision of Heidegger's work which grows out of a new understanding of what he was trying to address in his discussion of death. I acknowledge that the discussion of this issue in *Being and Time* is far from clear; its intentional false starts and dead ends easily mislead the reader. But a careful study of the distinctions he makes there show many common assumptions about his analysis to be problematic. Comments about death in his later works sharpen the issue and bring the discussion of *Being and Time* into sharper focus, perhaps even for Heidegger himself. The consistency that this new interpretation of death brings to that book in its internal structure and in its relation to subsequent works suggests that he was driving at this issue from the beginning, even if initially that drive was more of a grope.

This new interpretation of Heidegger also short-circuits many traditional criticisms of Heidegger's views, something which I occasionally indicate in the course of my exposition. Such criticisms are often the verdict on a view that is read into Heidegger

only to be then dismissed as wrong-headed, a process we might call circular criticism. While I may claim the virtue of greater consistency for my account, I also cheerfully acknowledge that Heidegger's own philosophy would suggest that we are all in a better position to understand his insights after fifty years because they have now become a part of the conventional wisdom of 'the Anyone,'[5] Heidegger's personification of the common opinion. His view shows up in accounts of knowledge in the physical sciences, in the assumptions of social sciences, in art and film, perhaps even in popular culture in general, but does so in ways ignorant of their origins.

Now that these insights into the nature of culture and history have filtered down into the culture at large, we can make Heidegger intelligible in a way that perhaps he himself could not. I have chosen to try to make the best possible case for Heidegger that I can, and, in doing so, to make him more intelligible to those people with a long acquaintance with his work, to those with a long aversion to it, and to those, most hoped for of all, who are just starting to pursue an interest in it. In the Introduction, I briefly place the problems with which Heidegger is dealing in the context of issues in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy in order to locate him for the latter two audiences. The approach and language of the book accommodate the novice, but the content offers food for thought for the Heidegger scholar.

My aim in this book is to make Heidegger's position as clear and as convincing as possible. I try to rest my case on works by Heidegger that are available in English translation in order to make him accessible to this wide range of readers. Many quotes are provided not only to back up my case but to show that Heidegger's convoluted remarks can be explained, even simply so. I quote freely from the whole chronological range of Heidegger's works since one of my basic premises, justified explicitly in Section 1.4 and tacitly throughout my whole analysis, is that he spent his life saying, to use his term, 'the Same.' There is no distinct 'early' and 'late' Heidegger, in my view, only earlier and later ways of saying the same thing.

It would be easy enough to criticize Heidegger repeatedly for his murky and cryptic writing and perhaps even his willful obscurantism. But in the end such criticisms are rather boring and beside the point if a philosopher has something interesting to say. Kant once remarked: 'There is no art in being intelligible if one renounces all thoroughness of insight.'[6] Heidegger does have something insightful to say, and his dense writing results from the complexity and depth of the issues with which he is dealing.

I do think that Heidegger has a very interesting vision of the nature and history of philosophy, and I think that this is the issue with which he is primarily concerned, even in the discussion of death and time. Reading him as any sort of an existentialist was a mistake on our part, as he himself repeatedly said. So that the reader has some taste of what is to come, let me say that I read Heidegger as being much less like Sartre and much more like Hegel and Marx than most commentators do. Neither is

---

5 Heidegger's term is '*das Man*.'

6 Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics*, translated by Thomas Abbott, 10th edition (Longmans, Green and Co., 1955), p. 31. I like this English translation's pithy version of this sentence.

Heidegger much like Husserl, in whom an interest in the history of philosophy and culture is almost totally missing.

I do not present my view of Heidegger's analysis of time and death as a comprehensive or final interpretation of his thoughts on these issues. In any philosopher worth his salt, and Heidegger is, there will always be something more and something new to see. As Heidegger himself says, there is no final interpretation of a thinker, no Plato or Kant 'in himself.' Such a Plato or Kant would be 'something dead' (MFL 71/88) – dead in a sense which this interpretation tries to clarify. Commenting about Parmenides, Heidegger amplifies: 'The dialogue with Parmenides never comes to an end, not only because so much in the preserved fragments of his 'Didactic Poem' still remains obscure but also because what is said there continually deserves more thought' (EGT 100f./248). My work pushes forward into the future the dialogue with Heidegger.

Introduction

Before we can deal specifically with Heidegger's analysis of death and the finitude of time we need a general account of Heidegger's philosophical project. In the first introductory section I discuss Heidegger's notions of 'being' and 'Dasein' and why he finds it necessary to pose the 'question of being.' In sections 2 and 3 I indicate the role that an understanding of being plays both in everyday life and in philosophy. The last section of the Introduction provides a glimpse of the issues of time and death on which our investigation will focus.

0.1 Being and Dasein

Throughout his philosophical career Heidegger posed what he calls 'the question of being.' We could also say that Heidegger poses 'the question of what it is "to be."'[1] As Heidegger suggests in the first section of his major work *Being and Time*, published in 1927, this now seems to us to be a curious, superfluous question. Do we not know what we intend to say when we use the various conjugations of the verb 'to be'? He points out, however, that the question did indicate a lively issue for debate amongst the 'giants' of Greek philosophy. Indeed, Heidegger begins *Being and Time* with one of Socrates' sly comments to an interlocutor: 'obviously you have long been aware of what you intend to say when you use the expression "being." We, however, who used to think we understood it, have now become perplexed' (1). Like Socrates, Heidegger wants to raise questions that will perplex us when we think about what things 'are.' He asks, what is the meaning of being?

Heidegger argues that we are distinct from other sorts of things precisely in that we ask the question of what it is to be. Other things just are; they do not reflect on their being. But we make an issue of both what it is to be them and what it is to be us. In fact, Heidegger says, in our 'very being, being is an issue' (11). Our very way of being places being in question. Furthermore, we do not just ask the question of being, we propose an answer to it by taking a stance toward the matter. Heidegger calls us '*Dasein*,' or literally 'being-there,' playing on the etymology of the term. We are the 'there' where being or what it is to be is revealed.[2]

---

1 The word 'being' translates Heidegger's infinitive '*Sein*.' See 'Heidegger's Texts and Translations' for an explanation of my translation of '*Sein*' and related terms.

2 In Heidegger's words, the '*Da*' where '*Sein*' or the 'to be' is revealed. His term '*Dasein*' has been imported into English to capture this meaning.

This unique way of being Heidegger labels 'existence,' again playing on the supposed etymology of the word.[3] The prefix 'ex-' indicates 'out' or 'from,' and the root of the word comes from the Latin verb '*sistere*' which means 'to make stand.' Dasein both 'stands out' from being or makes an issue of it and takes a stand toward being or answers the question of being in a particular way. In Heidegger's vocabulary, only Dasein 'exists' as taking a stand toward or understanding being. Other creatures, for example, rocks, trees, horses, and God, *are*, but they do not 'exist' (Way 272/374f.). To emphasize the technical meaning of the term, Heidegger will later spell it 'ek-sistence.' As we shall see, Dasein has given various answers to the question of being since it was first raised in ancient Greek culture.

Heidegger's notion of being does not refer to some ethereal, other-worldly substance or property or to something independent of our ways of dealing with things. Being is the being of the things we find around us. As Heidegger puts it, being is always 'the being of something-which-is' (9).[4] '*Das Seiende*,' Heidegger's term for 'something-which-is' or 'what-is,' is one of Heidegger's more crucial terms, and a term which is difficult to translate and to grasp.[5] We will discuss its meaning in detail in the second section of Chapter 1. Roughly put, the term refers not just or simply to individual things, such as a rock or a tree or a hammer, but to a thing or kind of thing distinguished by a certain way of being. Thus, for Heidegger, nature, history, God, space, and number are each a type of 'what-is' (BPP 10/13). When we ask the question of being, we are asking both what makes things distinct from one another and what makes them the same.

Still, the question Heidegger poses about being is far from clear. What does it mean for anything 'to be'? What are we asking when we ask what it is to be? We can receive some initial guidance by considering another question which Heidegger considers the 'leading question' of metaphysics as the formal investigation of the being of what-is. Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is there what-is at all and not rather nothing (WIM 112/122)? For Heidegger this is not a question about the origin of the universe.[6] The universe would be empty of what-is if no Dasein was around to understand its being. The animal's world lacks 'what-is,' though of course it is full of all sorts of things which animals eat, climb, walk on, live in, play with, and so on. Animals establish all these relationships to things without having any understanding of the being of what-is.[7]

---

3 His term is '*Existenz*.'

4 Heidegger's phrase is '*das Sein eines Seiendes*.'

5 See 'Heidegger's Texts and Translations' for an explanation of my translation of '*das Seiende*.'

6 In a discussion of this leading question of metaphysics in *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger comments that a claim such as 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth' in no way answers the question of why there is what-is rather than nothing, and it is not even related to it. Cf. IM 7/6.

7 Perhaps this is unfair to animals. Heidegger usually takes the position that animals do not have any understanding of being or language, or any 'world' in his technical sense. (See PLT 73/61, LH 206/326, WIT 221/171f., WIC 61/27, and IM 83/62f.) At other places, however, he remarks that while plants are 'world less,' animals are 'world poor,' suggesting that animals

Only humans say 'is': we say, for example, 'The cat is on the mat,' 'Her house is yellow,' 'The ship is moving at ten knots,' 'This portion is equal to that one,' 'Mary is like her mother,' and 'Venus is the Morning Star.' In saying 'is' we describe things in certain positions, attribute properties to them, equate them with other things, identify them, and so forth. Individual things, such as cats, houses, portions, Mary, are not the only things which 'are.' So are the characteristics which we attribute to them, for example location, color, motion, equality, resemblance, identity, and so on. Of course, the different senses of 'is' used in these sentences have long been discussed philosophically. Heidegger is well aware of the different semantic uses of 'is,' but this is not the only issue he has in mind when he asks what it is 'to be.'

Heidegger wonders why we encounter things which *are* – things in the broad sense which includes properties, activities, processes – rather than the 'no things' of the animal's life. The question that guides metaphysics is a question about the character of such things and our relationship to them. Why do human beings encounter what-is, raising tacit or explicit questions about what things are, while animals merely eat things, climb them, and so on?

Heidegger answers this question by suggesting that a distinctively human activity lets us encounter what-is rather than 'no thing.' Most philosophers immediately assume that this distinctive characteristic of human beings is our apparently unique form of self-conscious consciousness and our ability to formulate thoughts. We not only are aware of things; we are aware of our own awareness and can conceptualize it into explicit thoughts such as 'the cat is on the mat.' However, Heidegger denies that consciousness is the most basic, original way that we encounter things. He says: 'Consciousness is only possible on the ground of the *there*, as a derivative mode of it.' The 'there' is the 'there' of 'being-there,' of the Da-sein in which being is revealed. Heidegger insists Dasein's 'existence' involves at its most basic level a 'standing open for' things which is quite different from being conscious of them. He comments: 'The *there* is the clearing and openness of what-is, as which a human stands out. Representation, the knowledge of consciousness, is something totally different' (HS 126/202f.).

The knowledge of consciousness is the explicit representation or thinking that 'x is y.' Heidegger claims that both explicit consciousness itself and its representative power are only possible on the 'ground' or against the 'background' of an understanding of being as it reveals itself in the 'there' of Dasein. We understand the being of things not primarily by thinking about them explicitly but rather by dealing with them in our everyday activity. In his *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* Heidegger gives us his most concrete description of this activity. He suggests that philosophers tend to overlook its occurrence because they focus on our conscious representation and explicit thinking. Heidegger comments that Fichte's philosophical

---

do have some sort of minimal context of significance. (See his extended discussion in *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, Vol. 29/30 of the *Gesamtausgabe* (1983), Part Two, Chapters 2 and 3: 261-293. Compare PLT 45/31.) Animals may have a rudimentary network of significance grounded in their 'practices' (or ours), but they do not have a language which gives them an understanding of being.

advice to his audience to 'think the wall and then think the one who thinks the wall' indicates the typical approach of philosophers. He remarks:

> There is already a constructive violation of the facts, an unphenomenological beginning, in the request 'Think the wall.' For in our natural relationship to things we never think a *single* thing, and whenever we seize upon it explicitly for itself we are taking it *out* of a context to which it belongs in its real content: wall, room, surroundings.
>
> (BPP 162/231)

In our everyday encounter with things, we do not 'think' them or consciously represent them as particular things. Rather, our understanding of them is embodied in our practical dealings with things. Things show themselves as what they are in the context of practical activity.

Heidegger describes this context of activity:

> Sitting here in the auditorium we do not in fact apprehend the walls – not unless we are getting bored. Nevertheless the walls are already given even before we think them as objects. Much else also gives itself to us before any determination by thought. Much else – but how? Not as a jumbled heap of things but as an environs, a surroundings, which contains within itself a closed, intelligible context . . . What is primarily given instead – even if not in explicit and express consciousness – is a thing context.
>
> (BPP 163/231f.)

This context of activity is the background against which we can become explicitly conscious of objects, but, when we shift our awareness of them, we change the basic phenomenon of our encounter with them and thus make an 'unphenomenological beginning.'

This context of activity is 'unthought':

> The view in which this equipmental context stands at first, completely unobtrusive and unthought, is the view and sight of practical *circumspection*, of practical, everyday orientation. 'Unthought' means that it is not thematically apprehended for deliberate thinking about things: instead, in circumspection, we find our bearings in regard to them. Circumspection uncovers and understands what-is primarily as equipment. When we enter here through the door, we do not apprehend the seats, and the same holds for the doorknob. Nevertheless, they are there in this peculiar way: we go by them circumspectly, avoid them circumspectly, stumble against them and the like.
>
> (BPP 163/232)

This context of activity is what Heidegger calls Dasein's 'world.' The world has a structure of significance according to which we use things, avoid them, find our way about, and so forth.

This understanding of being is, Heidegger claims, *a priori* both in relationship to our dealings with specific things and our explicit thinking about them. That is, it is a necessary precondition of such individual relationships. Calling upon Kant's notion of the *a priori* for support, he adds that '*a priori* means that which makes what-is as what is possible in *what* and *how* it is' (BPP 324/461). But for Heidegger,

the *a priori* arises out of the requirements of involved activity, not, as for Kant, those of knowing objects as a spectator. Elsewhere, in the context of a discussion of Plato, he explains:

> . . . from the point of view of being itself – that is, viewed from the presence of what endures in the unconcealed – likeness or equality, for example, is *proteron*, previous, compared to things that are alike. Equality already unfolds essentially in the unconcealed, likeness 'is' before we, with our perceiving, *explicitly* view, observe, and indeed consider like things as alike. In our relationship to similar things, equality has already come into view in advance.
>
> (N4 161f./217)

In Heidegger's terminology, the 'unconcealed' is the realm of practical activity where things can show themselves as doorknobs, seats, walls, and so on. Heidegger argues that our ability to deal with things indicates an *a priori* or 'in advance' understanding of what they are. Explicit perception of the likeness of things or of their being can only occur on the basis of our relating to things 'in advance' as equal or as things with a certain sort of being, as, for example, we do when we use doorknobs in the same way.

0.2 Cultural Background Practices

Heidegger calls Dasein 'being-in-the-world' in order to indicate how essential this involved, practical 'know how' is to its way of being. As being-in-the-world Dasein 'stands open' for the being of what-is. What-is reveals itself as, for example, 'ready-to-hand' as doorknobs, seats, walls, steps, and so on, when we turn them, sit on them, find our way about, and accomplish our projects.[8] Even before we explicitly think of what they are, things reveal themselves as rich with significance. Doorknobs refer us to doors, keys, movements of our bodies, possibilities of privacy, and so on. Heidegger calls this feature of Dasein's being 'transcendence.' Having specific conscious beliefs, desires, and so on, about things derives from our activities in this network of significance. Intentionality, which involves specific conscious relationships to represented states of affairs, is 'founded on Dasein's transcendence and is possible solely for this reason' (BPP 162/230). We use doorknobs *as* doorknobs and on this basis come to have certain beliefs about them.

Heidegger would agree with Wittgenstein's remark that 'children do not learn that books exist, that armchairs exist, etc. etc., – they learn to fetch books, sit in armchairs, etc. etc.'[9] When Wittgenstein asks two paragraphs later, 'Does a child

---

8 What-is is 'ready-to-hand' as we use it as a tool to accomplish our tasks. The same thing becomes 'present-at-hand' when simply observed as a discrete, independent object. An item of nature such as a rock is ready-to-hand when used as, for example, a hammer, but is present-at-hand when viewed as just an isolated entity. For further discussion of this distinction, see Chapter 1, Section 1.2.

9 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright and translated by Denis Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 62e, entry 476

believe that milk exists?,' he seems to find the alternative answers puzzling.[10] The child has not formulated conscious beliefs about the milk, and it is pointless and misleading to say that the child either believes or does not believe that milk exists. The child simply drinks the milk. And, as we shall see, according to these two philosophers, the adult's behavior is also not appropriately described as founded upon a running commentary of beliefs, either conscious or unconscious ones.

The process of learning how to deal with things is the process of learning how to be human according to our culture's understanding of being.[11] The effect of this enculturation process is evident in early infancy. In summarizing studies comparing Japanese and American infants Helmut Morsbach reports:

> By the age of 3–4 months, US babies showed more gross bodily activity, play, and happy vocalization; Japanese babies seemed more passive and had a greater amount of unhappy vocalization. Caudill concluded that the US mother seemed to encourage her baby to be more active and vocally responsive (leaving it alone in a room for lengthy periods), whereas the Japanese mother acted so as to soothe and quieten the baby, staying with it almost continuously.

On the basis of such studies, American babies are described as more active and independent, Japanese babies as more passive and dependent.[12] As one might expect given these value-laden characterizations, the researchers were American psychologists. The danger of such ethnocentric description is indicated by the response of a Japanese-American woman to Morsbach's conclusions. She commented that the Japanese babies' vocalizations were not unhappy, just Japanese.[13]

My point here is simply that an understanding of what it is to be, including what it is to be human, is inculcated at a very early age, although this illustration also indicates that such understanding is relative to the culture in which one is raised. The enculturation process is not a matter of consciously or explicitly learning rules for dealing with things. In regard to the vast game of culture Heidegger would agree with Wittgenstein's point about games in general: they 'can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules.'[14] We learn much by watching and

---

10 Ibid., p. 63e, entry 478.

11 I am using the word 'cultural' simply to locate and identify the scale or scope of the social practices. Heidegger himself uses the term 'culture' to refer to a particular epoch in the history of being when the arts and 'cultured' life were taken to be the 'crowning glory' of social activity. See 'Metaphysics as History of Being,' EP 13/412f. and 22/423f.

12 See Helmut Morsbach, 'Major Psychological Factors Influencing Japanese Interpersonal Relations,' *Studies in Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. II, edited by Neil Warren (New York: Academic Press, 1980), p. 320. The two main studies to which Morsbach refers are: W.A. Caudill and H. Weinstein, 'Maternal Care and Infant Behavior in Japan and America,' *Psychiatry*, 32 (1969), pp. 12–43, and Caudill and C. Schooler, 'Child Behavior and Child Rearing in Japan and the United States: An Interim Report,' *Journal of Nervous Mental Disease*, 157 (1973), pp. 323–338. I am indebted to Hubert Dreyfus for this reference.

13 I am also indebted to Hubert Dreyfus for this anecdote. The remark was made to him in a conversation.

14 Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 15e, entry 95.

doing, not by explicit and formal instruction. Indeed, what we learn tacitly and informally is more essential to our acquisition of an understanding of being than anything we can learn by conscious deliberation or a process of rational inference. Even Aristotle, who is associated with the view that human distinctiveness consists of rationality, commented that 'Man differs from other animals in that he is the one most given to mimicry and learns his first lessons through mimesis.'[15]

We may not think about, or even be able to describe, activity we engage in constantly. For example, we learn very quickly that the socially appropriate distance between two persons in a conversation depends on the age, sex, and relationship of the people who are talking and the nature of the conversation, for example whether it is a matter of business, gossip, discipline, or courting. Most of us are not even aware of the variation of distance and would be hard put to conceptualize it in all its nuances even if it is pointed out to us.

Pierre Bourdieu, a French anthropologist who studies North African cultural groups, provides examples that illustrate Heidegger's notion of an understanding of what it is to be human. He says succinctly: 'What is essential *goes without saying because it comes without saying*.'[16] No one is ever told what the appropriate conversational distance is. An outside observer like an anthropologist, or sociologist, or psychologist, can formulate a rule which describes a person's actions, for example that Mary stands twice as close to family members as to fellow workers. However, Bourdieu suggests that such talk of rules hides, even from the people themselves, the fact that their practical mastery is a '*learned ignorance*,' 'a mode of practical knowledge not comprising knowledge of its own principles.'[17] To support his point, Bourdieu notes that the 'moves' in the 'game' of maintaining one's honor in such societies are not formally or explicitly learned. Bourdieu comments about this 'game' of honor:

> . . . the driving force of the whole mechanism is not some abstract principle (the principle of isotimy, equality of honour), still less a set of *rules* which can be derived from it, but the sense of honour, a disposition inculcated in the earliest years of life and constantly reinforced by calls to order from the group, that is to say, from the aggregate of individuals endowed with the same dispositions . . .[18]

This notion of a 'disposition' is similar to Heidegger's concept of 'foundedness' or 'situatedness,' which refers to how things matter to Dasein or how it finds itself caring about things.[19] In response to the situation, Dasein's 'understanding' projects the types of actions that are possible responses to the demands of one's sense of honor.[20] As Bourdieu suggests, a set of rules or a 'mechanical model' constructed by

---

15 Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b.

16 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practices*, translated by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 167.

17 Ibid., p. 19.

18 Ibid., p. 14f.

19 Heidegger's term is '*Befindlichkeit*,' which I will translate as 'situatedness.'

20 Heidegger's term is '*Verstehen*.'

an outside observer 'would at best be to the man of honour's regulated improvisation what an etiquette handbook is to the art of living or a harmony treatise to musical composition.'[21]

Such practical activities not only do not arise out of conscious or explicit thinking or knowledge of rules; the activities in fact underlie and make possible the particular concepts we use. The well-known relativity of language to culture provides simple illustrations of this point. The old saying that Eskimos have two dozen words for different types of snow, which seem indistinguishable to people in warmer climates, tells us something about the cultural activities and 'situatedness' of this group of people. The Paiute Native Americans have a language which allows them to discriminate topological features in a highly refined and exact way, much more so than in English. Their life depends on such descriptions since in their barren, desert homeland 'complex directions may be required for the location of water holes.'[22] It is also not surprising that the Navaho, another desert people, would use the same word for our 'gray' and 'brown' and another single word for our 'green' and 'blue.'[23] Their activities take place in a world where grays and browns run together in infinitely subtle shades and plant life is severely restricted. Why would they need to discriminate these colors? What use would such a discrimination have? Wittgenstein comments: 'A child must learn the use of color words before it can ask for the name of a color.'[24] The need for the discrimination of colors arises in our cultural practices.

In regard to a more sophisticated level of practices, Thomas Kuhn has pointed out that a scientist's use of a particular apparatus in his attempts to discover the nature of things 'carries an assumption that only certain sorts of circumstances will arise.'[25] For example, Kuhn suggests that Priestly's commitment to his original test procedure was 'simultaneously a commitment to the non-existence of gases that behave as oxygen did.'[26] Only a change of procedure allowed oxygen to reveal its nature. Heidegger makes this point but at a much more general level. Our cultural practices, the tools we use, and how we use them in even the most mundane things like cooking dinner or driving a car, carry with them a commitment to what and how things will reveal themselves to be.

The notion of cultural background practices and their role in our conception of what things are as well as in our use of language has come under investigation in the last fifteen or so years in philosophy in general. Philosophers working in the Anglo-American tradition have recognized their importance. Since Heidegger's views are often regarded by people in this tradition as bizarre or outrageous, the parallel is worth drawing at length, with some examples. In an article which denies that sentences

---

21 Ibid., p. 11.

22 Paul Henle, editor and author of the sections from which these quotations come, *Language, Thought, and Culture* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 5.

23 Ibid., p. 7.

24 Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 72e, entry 548.

25 Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 56.

26 Ibid., p. 60.

have any literal meaning apart from such a background context, John Searle comments:

> For most sentences of the 'Cat is on the mat', 'Bill is in the kitchen', 'My car has a flat tire' variety, the background assumptions are so fundamental and so pervasive that we don't see them at all.[27]

Here Searle suggests that 'assumptions' about, for example, the working of gravity, which keeps cats on mats and not floating half an inch above them, make us confident that in the normal context of life on Earth we do not have to examine more closely what we seem to see before we assert that 'The cat is on the mat.' However, in the context of rocket ships in outer space or stage props and cats rigged for Peter-Pan-like feats, the meaning of our sentence changes.[28]

In his more recent book *Intentionality* Searle argues that it is misleading to suggest that this background context is made up of 'assumptions,' as if it consisted of a set of beliefs which become unconscious through long duration. Searle suggests that terms such as 'assumptions' or 'presuppositions' must be 'literally wrong, because they imply the apparatus of representation with its propositional contents, logical relations, truth values, directions of fit, etc.' Still, Searle uses the label 'preintentional assumptions' or 'preintentional presuppositions,' which he himself regards as 'apparently oxymoronic,' in order to avoid terms like 'practices' or 'stances' which he considers inadequate because they do not indicate that the phenomenon in question is mental.[29] Now Heidegger would disagree with Searle on this point. Since his notion of Dasein is intended to undercut the traditional mind/body dualism, he would not argue that the phenomenon is mental as opposed to bodily. But otherwise, their notions of the background and its relation to explicit conscious or representational thought are quite similar.

For example, Searle distinguishes two important theses:

> I am claiming first that Intentional states are in general parts of Networks of Intentional states and only have their conditions of satisfaction relative to their position in the Network. Versions of this view, generally called 'holism', are quite common in contemporary philosophy; indeed a certain effortless holism is something of a current philosophical orthodoxy. But I am also making a second, much more controversial claim: in addition to the Network of representations, there is also a Background of nonrepresentational mental

---

27 John Searle, 'Literal Meaning,' in his *Expression and Meaning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 133. Searle articulates an increasingly Heideggerian view in his works. His philosophical discussions with Hubert Dreyfus, who developed the interpretation of Heidegger which connects the understanding of being with cultural background practices, have proven very beneficial to both the analytic and the continental strands of contemporary philosophy. For a similar analysis applied to the issue of artificial intelligence, see the 'Introduction to the Revised Edition' of Dreyfus' *What Computers Can't Do*, revised edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1979).

28 Ibid., p. 1231.

29 Searle, *Intentionality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 156.

> capacities; and in general, representations only function, they only have conditions of satisfaction that they do, against the nonrepresentational Background.[30]

Except for Searle's insistence on the 'mental' character of the 'Background,' this notion is quite similar to Heidegger's notion of the 'unthought.' For both of them, intentional states such as beliefs and desires are only possible against this background context.

Searle agrees with Heidegger and Wittgenstein that it is not appropriate to describe what is happening in terms of unconscious beliefs. A person could certainly entertain a belief that oranges are peelable, or tables are hard, or milk exists, and he might say he does have such beliefs if asked about it by some philosopher. But what an odd – what a philosophical – question is being asked, and how odd the conscious thought is. Searle, like Heidegger, suggests that skills, not unconscious representational commentaries, are the basis for our beliefs. Searle puts it: 'For me the hardness of tables manifests itself in the fact that I know how to sit at a table, I can write on a table, I put stacks of books on tables, I use a table as a work bench, and so on. And as I do each of these things I do not in addition think unconsciously to myself, "it offers resistance to touch."'[31]

When we do try to uncover the significance embedded in our cultural practices or our 'preintentional assumptions,' both Heidegger and Searle agree that we face a difficult task. Searle comments about the preintentional assumptions:

> It takes a conscious effort to prise them off and examine them, and, incidentally, when one does prise them off it tends to produce an enormous sense of annoyance and insecurity in philosophers, linguists, and psychologists – or at any rate such has been my experience.[32]

Someone might suggest that one reason why people in such disciplines become annoyed when these background 'assumptions' are pointed out is that they seem so trivial. Of course, to use another one of Searle's examples, when you order a hamburger you expect that it will not be six-foot wide or come encased in lucite. But such contemporary disciplines have never been averse to trivia if it is seen as helping build some secure, solid foundation for analysis. In his earlier essay, 'Literal Meaning,' Searle seems to suggest that explicating such assumptions is a never-ending task and that we will never find some secure foundation that uniquely determines a sentence's meaning in every context. As the context shifts, so does the meaning. In his later book the whole project of making such 'assumptions' explicit comes into question since their dissimilarity to beliefs, desires, and so on, is now clearly recognized.[33]

---

30 Ibid., p. 20f.

31 Ibid., p. 142.

32 Searle, 'Literal Meaning,' p. 133.

33 In the earlier essay, Searle's view sounds at times more like Husserl's than Heidegger's. He seems to suggest that one can achieve some sort of solid ground by making the 'assumptions' explicit, as if they were beliefs that provided the support for one's current assertions or acts, but that the assumptions are infinite and so is the task of analyzing them. He leaves open the

In another recent work Richard Rorty acknowledges the emotional response to another, similar discovery. He suggests that the 'horror which greeted Quine's overthrow of the dogmas and Kuhn's and Feyerabend's examples of the "theory-ladenness" of observation' was a result of the fear that we could no longer use 'contact with the real as the touchstone of truth.' Rorty explains:

> For if we once admitted that Newton was better than Aristotle not because his words better corresponded to reality but simply because Newton was better able to cope, there would be nothing to distinguish science from religion and politics. It was the ability to tell the analytic from the synthetic and the observational from the theoretical that was all that stood between us and 'irrationalism.'[34]

This 'horror' arises from a fundamental question about how words relate to the world, how concepts and theories let us talk about things, how beliefs about what things are relate to how things are.

Heidegger would find such 'annoyance' and 'horror' a manifestation of the anxiety that arises when the meaning of being is brought into question. And he thinks that philosophers are not going to solve the problems that cause such heart-felt reactions until they confront the question of being head-on. He remarks:

> Ever since idea and category became sovereign, philosophers have tormented themselves in vain, seeking by every possible and impossible stratagem to explain the relation between statement (thinking) and being – in vain because they never again carried the question of being back to its native ground and soil, thence to unfold it.
>
> (IM 190f./145)

Ideas and categories became sovereign with Plato and Aristotle, and Heidegger thinks that ever since then philosophers have been oblivious to the question of being which stirred their predecessors. Why is the question of being forgotten? Why does its neglect lead to the quest for an absolute foundation for philosophical thought, a '*fundamentum inconcussum*,' to use Descartes's classic term? Are all theories to be judged only by whether they make us 'better able to cope,' or is this criterion itself only a product of a 'theory'? As an alternative to irrationalism does Heidegger only offer a mystical historicism? We will now sketch the issues in Heidegger's thought which this book will specifically address.

---

question of whether such an analysis can be carried out to any significant degree. For a similar view about the infiniteness of the endeavor but a more positive view about its feasibility and importance, see Husserl's comments in 'Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man' about the 'infinity of tasks' that await a philosophy that would become the foundation of the scientific endeavor. Cf. *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, translated by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 167, 174, and 177f.

34 Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 287.

0.3 Philosophy and the Understanding of Being

For Heidegger philosophy in its traditional garb as metaphysics rests on a particular cultural understanding of what it is to be. Philosophy is a unique endeavor which began in Ancient Greece because of the understanding of being which arose there.[35] To this day both philosophy and Western civilization have remained within the circuit set up by that understanding.

Dasein only becomes 'authentically' Dasein when it explicitly places being in question and becomes aware of its understanding of being.[36] Heidegger comments: 'the ek-sistence of historical man begins at that moment when the first thinker takes a questioning stand with regard to the unconcealment of what-is by asking, what is it?' (ET 128/189). Posing the question of being is 'the fate of the spiritual history of the West' (IM 86/65). Heidegger argues that 'a people posits for itself the degree of its Dasein. The Greeks saw the entire nobility of their Dasein in the ability to question; their ability to question was the standard for distinguishing themselves from those who could not and did not want to question. They called them barbarians' (WIT 42/40).

Unlike the Dasein of Western culture, 'primitive Dasein' or the Dasein of ahistorical cultures has an understanding of being but has never placed this understanding in question. Heidegger remarks: 'The mythic Dasein in its foundation has the peculiarity of not being conscious of itself in its way of being (which is not to say that it lacks self-awareness)' (MFL 138/174). People in 'primitive' cultures can be self-conscious of themselves as individuals and members of a particular group, but Heidegger thinks that they are not aware of having a particular understanding of the being of things or a particular view of what 'is.'

Heidegger clearly regards the Dasein of Western culture as the 'highest' sort of Dasein. Cultures in which there is no questioning of what it is to be do not live up to Dasein's being as the entity which makes an issue of being. Our understanding of being has highest rank 'provided that our Dasein, which always is an historical Dasein, does not remain indifferent to us. Yet even in order that our Dasein should remain for us an indifferent being, we should have to understand being. Without this understanding we should not even be able to say "no" to our Dasein' (IM 83/63). For Heidegger, the rank of our Dasein is highest because our understanding has kept being in question and remained open to having being reveal itself in new ways.

The history of Dasein is, as we shall see, the history of our changing understanding of being. Cultures such as Ancient Egypt and India, which Heidegger would consider 'primitive' Dasein, were 'historical' in the simple sense of keeping chronological record or even taking an interest in their past. But these other cultures had an understanding of being which allowed them to say 'no' to any change or historical

---

35 In a remark about 'Western-European philosophy,' Heidegger comments in an aside that 'there is no other, neither a Chinese nor an Indian philosophy.' Western-European philosophy, he suggests, is defined by its concern with the difference between what is and its being (WIC'T 224/136).

36 See Section 1.3 for a discussion of Heidegger's notion of authenticity.

development. Life in them could go on in the same routines century after century, millennium after millennium.

Of course, in Western culture we are not always explicitly making an issue of what it is to be. In Heidegger's view most of us never do so consciously. To be Dasein is to have an understanding of being, but most of the time a particular understanding of being is taken for granted. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger comments that the question of what it is to be is 'a hidden ground of our historical Dasein. This it remains even, and particularly, when, self-satisfied and busy with all kinds of things, we move over this ground as over a flimsily-covered abyss' (IM 93/71).[37] However, the questionable character of things can become manifest at any moment. Suddenly, in anxiety, we wonder what things *are*.

But what starts people questioning what it is to be? How did Dasein receive a 'foundation' in Ancient Greece which nevertheless kept it in continual suspense for the following 2500 years? How does philosophy arise out of such questioning? Heidegger's answer to these questions depends on one of his most important but most obscure notions, that of 'the ontological difference.'

Heidegger talks about 'the *difference* between being and what-is' (ID 50/116). The context of our cultural practices differs from the things that show up in it. Such a difference is, he argues, 'pre-ontological.' It is apparent in Dasein's understanding of being as we go around the world in our daily business, whether or not we formulate a conception of what it is to be or explicitly develop an ontology. However, since the distinction is latent in Dasein's way of being, it 'can become an *explicitly understood difference*.' When the distinction between being and what-is is explicitly grasped, Heidegger calls it the 'ontological difference' (BPP 319/454). The ontological difference both inspires and grounds ontology or thought about the being of what is.

The difference between being and what-is is, put another way, the difference between the 'unthought' context of activity and things as we think about them.[38] For Heidegger the relationship underlies the history of the understanding of being and the history of philosophy which responds to it. In 'The Onto-theological Constitution of Metaphysics,' Heidegger contrasts his position with Hegel's in a way that illuminates this point. He suggests Hegel sees the impetus for thinking about the nature of what-is as lying in what has already been thought about it while he himself 'does not seek that force in what has already been thought' but rather looks for it 'in something that has not been thought and from which what has been thought receives its essential space' (ID 48/114).

Hegel thinks that the force of each thinker's thought lies in the ways it can be incorporated into Absolute Spirit as one of its stages. What has been thought has significance in so far as it can be taken up into the next stage of thought, just as, for example, the contradictions of stoicism were taken up and resolved by skepticism,

---

37 The word 'Abyss' translates Heidegger's '*Ab-grund*,' losing some of its etymological connections and richness of meaning in the process, including its connection with '*Grund*,' which is translated as 'ground' at the beginning of the quotation.

38 'Unthought' does not mean 'unconscious.' We are quite conscious of the doorknob, chairs, and so on; otherwise we would never find our way around.

which in turn was taken up and transformed by other-worldly Christianity. What cannot be thus taken up falls by the wayside on the march of Spirit.

But Heidegger thinks that the force of philosophical thought, as well as what 'forces' or leads to it, lies in the 'unthought.' In involved activity we are being ourselves and letting other things be themselves, and both are made possible by our pre-ontological understanding of what it is to be. What-is can only show itself to our explicit thought about *what* it *is* on the basis of this *a priori* understanding of being. Thus, the articulation of an ontology is supposed to be grounded in our practical dealings with things.

This ground is not something that philosophy can take into itself, as, for example, an explicit set of presuppositions or axioms. The ground is not a set of beliefs, explicit or otherwise, but rather the background of cultural practices which expresses Dasein's understanding of being. For the sake of an introductory glimpse of this aspect of Dasein as the 'there' of being, we can capture Heidegger's idea in image. In his postscript to the essay 'What is Metaphysics,' he calls on Descartes's image of the tree of philosophy in which, in Descartes's words to Picot, 'the roots are metaphysics, the trunk is physics, and the branches that issue from the trunk are all the other sciences.' Heidegger asks, 'In what soil do the roots of the tree of philosophy have their hold? Out of what ground do the roots – and through them the whole tree – receive their nourishing juices and strength?' (Way 265/365). He answers his question by suggesting that a revelation of being is the ground which 'roots' metaphysics.

Heidegger makes the point with the metaphor:

> The tree of philosophy grows out of the soil in which metaphysics is rooted. The ground is the element in which the root of the tree lives, but the growth of the tree is never able to absorb the soil in such a way that it disappears in the tree as part of the tree. Instead, the roots, down to the subtlest tendrils, lose themselves in the soil.
>
> (Way 266/366)

As we will see in the next section, Heidegger also thinks that this soil is not some rock-bottom *fundamentum inconcussum* – unshakable foundation – that Descartes sought but a bed which shifts with time. Dasein is rooted in the Temporality of being. The changing revelation of being gives Dasein its possibilities: what it is able-to-be. The way being withholds itself imposes Dasein's impossibilities: what it is not able-to-be, at least not yet.

The background practices go unnoticed despite their fundamental role in articulating our world into constituents about which we can explicitly think and talk. What is 'unconcealed' is what we deal with in various ways: doorknobs, seats, walls, ways of maintaining one's honor, and so forth. Being itself is not what shows itself; it is concealed, not 'unconcealed.' But Heidegger calls being the 'unconcealing' since it lets what-is show up.

This point leads us to the more controversial aspect of Heidegger's general thesis about philosophy's relationship to an understanding of being. Thus far we have a point with which, at least on its most general level and divested of its obscure

language, Wittgenstein, Searle, and Rorty might agree. But Heidegger thinks that there is more to the relationship between being and what-is than this distinction between background practices and explicit thought about the nature of things. Here we get a more distinctively Heideggerian point, and one that is harder to buy. He is committed to the notion of a history of being.

Heidegger believes that half way between the phenomena of being and what is, neither unconcealed nor irretrievably concealed, lies the being of what-is. Being bridges the difference between being and what-is by manifesting itself as the being of what-is, something which changes historically. After suggesting that Dasein receives its 'foundation' in 'the West for the first time in Greece,' Heidegger comments:

> What was in the future to be called being was set into work, setting the standard. The realm of what-is thus opened up was then transformed into what-is in the sense of God's creation. This happened in the Middle Ages. This kind of what-is was again transformed at the beginning and in the course of the modern age. What-is became an object that could be controlled and seen through by calculation. At each time a new and essential world arose.
>
> (OWA 76f./64f.)

The being of what-is shows up in different ways in our history, and in this passage Heidegger argues that the understanding of being has undergone two major transformations since the days of the Ancient Greeks. For the Greeks, what-is was something that came forth and showed itself as *phusis*; for people in the Middle Ages what-is was what was created by God; for the modern age what-is is what can be manipulated and dominated by the human subject. Being is 'set into work' in, for example, a work of art, to which Heidegger refers here, or poetry, a philosopher's writing, or even the founding of a state, all of which serve to focus the culture's understanding of the being of what-is and bring it to our attention.

Understanding the being of what-is does not necessarily mean being explicitly aware of it, any more than we are explicitly aware of the doorknob as a thing when we deal with it. Most of the time we relate to what-is as having a certain way of being without explicitly recognizing this being. Heidegger says:

> . . . it is not necessary that the relationship to what-is, even though it understands the being of what-is, must explicitly distinguish this understood being of what is from that something-which-is to which it relates itself, and it is still less necessary that the distinction between being and what-is should be comprehended conceptually at all.
>
> (BPP 318/454)

The being of what-is is 'most apparent, and yet we normally do not see it — and, if we do, only with difficulty' (WIC"T 110/47).

A people's understanding of the being of what is is apparent in the way they deal with things. Treating what-is as God's creation is quite different than treating it as stuff to be dominated and manipulated for our own purposes. According to Heidegger, the different ways that things appear to us, and hence invite these different responses,

are not just a matter of our personal attitude toward them or how we explicitly think about them. According to Heidegger, it is a matter of how being 'comes to be' as the being of what-is, of how it lets what-is show itself in the 'there' of Dasein.

Most of us deal comfortably with what-is without ever needing to think about its being explicitly. But this being becomes an issue for those individuals who contemplate the nature of reality. It becomes an explicit issue for metaphysical thinking. Heidegger describes metaphysical thinking as 'the kind of thinking that thinks what-is as a whole in regard to being' (HS 75/123). Metaphysics, as expressed in the philosophical tradition from the Greeks down to at least Nietzsche, is an attempt to make explicit the being of all the domains of what-is.

But why should anyone think that what-is forms some sort of whole which exhibits a common being? The attempt to think the being of what-is as a whole is the 'leap' of thought made by the Ancient Greeks. Although Heidegger sees this leap as the ultimately inexplicable, fundamental mystery of philosophy, he argues that the early Greek thinkers found their inspiration in one Greek word: '*on*.' He comments that since the Greek term '*on*' is both a noun designating what-is[39] and a participle referring to the action of being, 'it is possible to gather the "*on*" as what-is in terms of its "being." In fact, because of its double meaning, the *on* as what-is is already gathered into its beingness' (HCE 106/176).[40] That is, the double use of the term '*on*' as both noun and participle did not just make it possible for the Greeks to think of what-is as having some sort of common character of 'beingness.' The double meaning of the term indicates that the Greeks in their tacit understanding of being already understood what-is as gathered into some sort of commonality. With this cultural inspiration, the pre-Socratic thinkers began the search for the pervasive being of what-is.

In order to prepare for the more detailed discussion to come, we need a brief indication of Heidegger's basic verdict on the metaphysical thinking which begins with Plato. Parmenides is the last thinker who adheres to the ambiguity of the *on* and lets us at least glimpse the relationship between being and what-is. Heidegger thinks that Plato and the philosophers who came after him ask us, like Fichte, to 'think the wall,' though each in his own way. As we noted earlier, Heidegger says that this sort of thinking involves 'a constructive violation of the facts' which rips things out of

---

39 The Greek term '*to on*' is appropriately translated as 'what-is,' not 'thing.' Eric Havelock comments:

> Strictly speaking, Greek has no equivalent for the English word (or the German or French for that matter) 'thing,' and in the singular it was not easy to designate 'a thing,' for '(*to*) *on*' meant 'what really exists' and what this was depended on the metaphysics of the speaker.

See Havelock, 'The Linguistic Task of the Presocratics,' in *Language and Thought in Early Greek Philosophy*, edited by Kevin Robb (La Salle, Illinois: The Hegeler Institute, 1983), p. 63.

40 The awkward 'beingness' translates Heidegger's '*Seiendheit*,' avoiding the even worse 'what-is-ness.' Heidegger notes in this quote that he uses the idea of 'gathering' to capture the Greek notion of '*legein*.'

their immediate context of significance and, in doing so, forgets being as the 'unthought.' Heidegger insists that the relationship between what-is and being remains unthought in this metaphysical approach.

With Plato and the thinkers who came after him, being is regarded as just one more something-which-is. Heidegger does not simplistically argue that philosophical thought turns being into an object. The term 'what-is' refers to universals as well as individuals – to essences, properties, conditions, and processes as well as 'things' in the narrow sense. For example, Plato thinks of the being of what-is as *idea*. Heidegger suggests that, when being itself is thus regarded as the most universal genus, the distinction between being and what-is appears to consist in 'looking away from ("abstracting") all the particularities of what-is in order to retain the most universal as the "most abstract"' (N4 156/211). Hence being is regarded as the most abstract something-which-is. The verb 'is,' in this view, appears as the most abstract, most universal characteristic that you can attribute to something-which-is. We say 'is' about things as diverse as Mary, colors, motion, equality, numbers, and so on, so this 'isness' must be something very general for so many different sorts of things to have it in common.

In metaphysical thinking, being has 'come to be' as the being of what-is in various ways. Being has elicited the response from thinkers that it is *idea*, *ousia*, *substantia*, *actualitas*, *perceptio*, the transcendental making possible of the objectivity of objects, the dialectical mediation of Absolute Spirit, the historical process of production, and the will to power positing values (TB 7/7 and 56/62). All of these insights are small steps within the three major epochs in the understanding of being: the Greek, the medieval, and the modern. We will explore them and their origin in more detail later in Chapters 6 and 7.[41] But now I simply want to make Heidegger's point that the thinkers have always thought of the being of what-is by assimilating it to the what-is side of the ontological difference while the background context is ignored.

The forgottenness of being to which Heidegger continually refers is not, however, a result of some simple absent-minded forgetfulness or ignorance on the part of the philosophers. Rather 'the forgottenness of being belongs to the self veiling essence of being' (EGT 50/364). The 'unthought' is the background against which all explicit thinking about what-is comes into focus. But if the background is ignored, then what shows itself in the foreground seems as arbitrary and ultimately inexplicable as Rorty thinks all philosophy is.

Heidegger believes that the distinction between being and what-is is both the impetus and the ground of ontological thinking, whether or not it is recognized as such. Heidegger comments:

---

41 [Because Carol's White's book was incomplete at the time of her death, the unfinished final two chapters (Chapters 6 and 7) could not be included in the present edition. However, in order to preserve as much as possible of Carol's intended argument, we have made the unfinished chapters available online at the following website: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* and we have retained all of her references to them in this publication. In the event that this link does not work at some time in the future, an updated link can be found on the Santa Clara University Philosophy Department webpage – Editor's note.]

> The differentiation of being and what-is – although taken for granted everywhere – is the unknown and ungrounded ground of all metaphysics. All enthusiasm for metaphysics and all efforts to produce 'ontologies' as doctrinal systems, but also every critique of ontology within metaphysics, all these attest to an accelerating *flight* in the face of the unknown ground. (N4 155/210)

What would happen if we did not take this distinction for granted? Why do we flee it? What is involved in recognizing the distinction *as* a distinction? Evidently something more is involved than just recognizing the role of being in the manifestation of what-is since Heidegger credits the pre-Socratic thinkers with this insight but denies that they explicitly recognized the distinction as a distinction.

The above quote gives us a clue. It is not enough that we recognize that the difference between being and what-is 'grounds' what-is and that this distinction itself is the ground of metaphysical thinking. We must recognize that this ground is itself 'ungrounded.' Being is not some stable and permanent background which, once its relationship to what-is is recognized, can provide the sort of secure foundation which metaphysical thinking seeks. Heidegger's own contribution to the thinking of the ontological difference is his discovery that being is itself only played out against the horizon of time. In order to grasp the distinction between being and what-is as a distinction we must think of it as an active, changing differentiation in which being is continually unconcealing what-is in new ways.

As we noted earlier, Heidegger thinks that the possibility of relating to what-is demands an *a priori* understanding of being. But he also thinks that this understanding of being itself 'demands in its turn a precursory projection upon time' (BPP 325/462f.). Heidegger insists that 'only because ontological propositions are Temporal propositions' can they be and must they be *a priori* propositions (BPP 324/462f.). Heidegger thinks that, when the *a priori* character of being is properly conceived, it reveals a sort of time more profound, and more profoundly important to metaphysical thinking, than the time we measure on clocks. It reveals the Time of being. Heidegger comments that his contemporaries do not wish to see this more profound sort of time because then 'they would have to admit that the foundations on which they continue to build one form of metaphysics after another *are no foundations at all*' (N4 163/219).

0.4 Time, Existence, and Death

A few introductory remarks about Heidegger's notions of time and death may provide an overview of the detailed account which follows. In the Introduction to *Being and Time* Heidegger describes time as the 'horizon for all understanding of being and for any way of interpreting it' (17). He suggests that Temporality is 'the meaning of being in general' (19).[42] Although he begins discussions of the 'meaning of being' in

42 I follow the common procedure and translate Heidegger's '*Temporalität*' as 'Temporality.' See 'Heidegger's Texts and Translations' for the explanation of my translation of terms related to '*Zeit*' or 'time.'

a number of works by raising questions about the significance of the verb 'to be,' in all of them he gradually shifts to quite a different, special notion of 'meaning.'[43] Heidegger thinks that, once we realize that the significance of our own verb lies in the language and thought of Ancient Greece, 'at one stroke our search for the definition of the sense of the word "being" becomes explicitly what it is, namely, a reflection on the source of our hidden history' (IM 92/70).

As a first approximation we can assimilate Heidegger's notion of meaning to Kant's idea of the transcendental.[44] Both refer to a 'condition' which makes possible an aspect of our fundamental relationship to the world, though for Heidegger the relationship is one of involved activity and for Kant it is representational knowledge. Temporality refers to 'the way in which being and its modes and characteristics have their meaning primordially determined by time' (19).

How can time serve this function? Clearly the word 'time' does not have its usual sense. It refers neither to time as we ordinarily conceive it, for example, as what we measure on clocks, nor to our experience of such time, although both clock time and our experience of it are, Heidegger argues, dependent upon time in this more profound sense. The novice entering into Heidegger's labyrinth of jargon should keep in mind that for Heidegger, as we saw in the quotation above, the reflection on time as the meaning of being turns out to be a reflection on the source of our history.

Indeed, this more profound sense of time might initially be best captured by a notion of history. But, as we already glimpsed, this is not history in the sense of a chronology of events, nor even an explanation of why such events happened. It is the history of our changing understanding of being as articulated by philosophy and other works of Dasein's insight. Temporality is the condition for the possibility of this history. In his description of the proposed but never written Part Two of *Being and Time*, Heidegger announced that he would use 'the problematic of Temporality' as the clue for tracing the history of ontology back from Kant to Descartes and the medieval scholastics and then on to Aristotle and ancient ontology (39).

Temporality and ontology are intimately bound together. As we saw in the last section, philosophy responds to the way the being of what-is shows up in cultural practices. Temporality conditions the way the 'modes and characteristics' of being show up (19). Modes of being such as nature, God, and number, as well as present-at-hand and ready-to-hand things around us, show up in various ways in

43 Once Heidegger clarifies the sort of 'meaning' which his question seeks, he uses two different words for these two different sorts of 'meaning': '*Bedeutung*' and '*Sinn*.' Failure to see the distinction between the 'meaning' ('*Sinn*') of being and the 'sense' ('*Bedeutung*') of a word leads to the mistaken view that Heidegger is seeking something like the definition of a word that will once and for all tell us what it is to be.

44 Heidegger's own explanations of the sense of his term 'meaning' are far from lucid. For example, what is 'meaning' if it is, in Heidegger's paraphrase, 'that wherein the understandability of something maintains itself' and the 'upon which (*Woraufhin*) of a projection' (151)? We can begin to get an idea of what he has in mind if we know that the 'projection' or 'laying down' of ways of dealing with things is the function of the understanding of being. The 'upon which' of such a projection is its ground or what enables it to be in the way that it

different periods of our history. The being of what-is as a whole has shown up as, for example, *idea*, creation, and will to power.

Heidegger thinks that the history of our own particular mode of being, Dasein, turns out to be founded on time in this most basic sense. The Temporality of being makes possible the 'timeliness' of Dasein, the kind of time which has received all the attention in discussions of Heidegger's views.[45] The crucial relationship between Temporality and timeliness is ignored in most discussions of Dasein's timeliness. Perhaps this was inevitable since the published portion of *Being and Time* culminates with the analysis of Dasein's timeliness and breaks off before the discussion of the Time of being to which Dasein makes its timely response. But an analysis of the relationship does much to clarify the relationship between being and Dasein which is at issue in all of Heidegger's works.

Just as Temporality is the meaning of being in general, timeliness is the meaning of Dasein's being (17). Heidegger comments that: 'In its ecstatic character timeliness is the condition of the constitution of Dasein's being' (BPP 267/378). Playing off the Greek version of the term 'existence' now instead of the Latin, Heidegger suggests that Dasein's timeliness involves 'standing out from' its own being in such a way as to make this being possible. Dasein's existence as a 'standing out from' or 'standing toward' being requires that it be timely in response to the changing revelations of being. An ahistorical culture or 'primitive' Dasein is not 'timely' in the same way Western culture is, a point which I shall discuss in Chapter 5.

The timeliness of Dasein and the Temporality of being are not, however, two entirely distinct phenomena. In his *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger says that Temporality 'signifies timeliness insofar as timeliness itself is made into a theme as the condition of the possibility of the understanding of being and of ontology as such' (BPP 228/323). As we shall see, Temporality and timeliness are more like the same phenomenon viewed from two importantly different perspectives: that of an account of being and that of an account of Dasein. After all, Dasein *is* the 'there' in which being is revealed. Thus the Temporality of being and the timeliness of Dasein are like two sides of the same coin – a coin whose thickness is created by the being of Dasein as the entity which makes an issue of being. In its authentic way of being, Dasein is the means by which the history of being becomes the history of Dasein.

Another image, this one borrowed from Wittgenstein, can illustrate the closeness of the relationship between the Temporality of being and the timeliness of Dasein. Wittgenstein talks about the 'mythology' of a culture or the 'stories' we tell ourselves to articulate our form of life. He remarks:

> The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the river-bed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself, though there is not a sharp division of the one from the other.[46]

---

45 Heidegger's term is '*Zeitlichkeit*.' See 'Heidegger's Texts and Translations' for the explanation of my translation.

46 Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 15e.

Heidegger makes such a distinction, too, and perhaps for similar reasons. If the being of what-is is manifest in the 'bed' of cultural practices, then Temporality is analogous to the movements of the river-bed which show up in its shifts and erosion. In comparison, Dasein's timeliness is the clear water rushing over the river-bed and seeking its new twists and turns. There would be no river-bed without a river, nor a river without a river-bed.

One other aspect of Dasein makes possible its understanding of being: its finitude. Heidegger comments that the finitude in man is 'what is decisive in making the understanding of being possible' (KPM 240/225), and he points to an 'essential connection between being as such (not what-is) and the finitude in man' (KPM 229/215). That finitude should play such a role in the understanding of being, in Dasein's very ability to deal with things and understand them as what they are, indicates that the finitude of Dasein's understanding is not a matter of proneness to error, ignorance, and prejudice, even if innately so. Finitude is the 'constant, though generally concealed, shudder that pervades existence' (KPM 247/231).[47] This finitude is an aspect of both Dasein and the being which it understands, and, as I will argue, the way the finitude of Dasein is related to Dasein's timeliness is similar to the way the finitude of being is related to the Temporality of being.

Here we must keep in mind what Heidegger means by his special term 'existence.' This shudder that pervades existence does not come in the face of any precariousness that haunts actuality. 'Existence' refers to neither the actuality of the '*ego cogito*,' that is, individual consciousness, or humankind (LH 222/343 and 207/326f.). Thus, the finitude of existence is not a matter of coming to an end in the sense of ceasing to be actual. Dasein does 'not have an end at which it just stops but rather *exists finitely*' (329). As if to remind us of the technical sense of his term, at the beginning of Division Two of *Being and Time* Heidegger comments that "The term "exists" formally indicates that Dasein *is* as an understanding able-to-be which in its being makes an issue of this being itself' (231).[48] We should keep this in mind when he goes on to conclude, after some tentative and misleading preliminary discussion, that death is the 'possibility of the impossibility of existence in general' (262). The existence which is impossible is not the continued actuality of some individual person but Dasein's 'standing out' into the openness of being.

In the second half of *Being and Time* Heidegger discusses Dasein's 'being toward death' or 'being toward the end.' Long misunderstood as a matter of how we relate to our physical death, being toward the end is a fundamental aspect of Dasein's being as an understanding of being. The possibility of Dasein's 'dying' in Heidegger's

---

47 Kierkegaard's influence on Heidegger is evident at any number of points in both his theory and his terminology. Heidegger's comment about the 'shudder of existence' is made in the midst of a discussion of anxiety. In Kierkegaard's book on the concept of anxiety he discusses what he calls 'objective anxiety.' He describes it as the 'reflection of possibility' and 'shudder of complicity' which comes over creation with man's assertion of his freedom in the Fall. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 52.

48 Giving in to the jargon, I translate Heidegger's '*Seinkönnen*' as 'able to be.'

sense is grounded in its being as 'care' (252), not in the biological liabilities of the human beings in which Dasein is embodied. Dasein's dying arises in its relationship to being.

If existence is a matter of standing 'out' into the revelation of being and being open to the openness of being (Way 271f./374), that is, letting the being of what-is reveal itself in various ways, then the finitude of this existence indicates a fundamental limitation in our relationship to being. There are two aspects of this limitation, one on the side of Dasein and one on the side of being. Dasein is finite as an understanding of being; its explicit grasp of the ground upon which it stands comes to an end at the limits of the 'there' of Dasein. The background practices escape our explicit grasp, and so do the possibilities of being beyond our limited understanding. The Greeks could no more understand what-is as stuff to be manipulated than we can understand it as *phusis*.

The other aspect of this limitation is the finitude of being itself; in the modern era being has run out of possibilities of showing itself in new ways. Metaphysics, the concrete articulation of Dasein's understanding of being, records the history of its changes, but this history is coming to an end and so is metaphysics. Heidegger comments:

> Where history is genuine it does not pass away by merely ceasing; it does not just stop living like the animals. History only dies *historically*.
>
> (IM 189/144)[49]

Like Socrates, Heidegger thinks that philosophy is the 'practicing of death' but in quite a different sense of the phrase.[50] Dasein 'uses up' the possibilities that being offers it. As Heidegger says about Trakl's notion of death in his poem 'Seven-Song of Death,' this death is not decay but rather a matter of leaving behind the form of man which has decayed (OWL 167f./46). In Western history, the rational animal died for Dasein to become the image of God; God's favorite creature died for Dasein to become the conscious subject. Old possibilities are left behind in this transformation, and new ones take their place in the 'there' of being. But finally the ground becomes too shallow and sterile to support the tree of philosophy. Then metaphysics comes to an end, and only a move to radically new ground can resurrect Dasein.

This view of death is far from clear in *Being and Time*, but its radicalness becomes apparent in later works. In an essay on language Heidegger makes a connection between language, death, and being that would seem inexplicable if death were simply our physical demise. He comments that 'In death the supreme concealedness of being gathers' (OWL 200/23). Death is that realm of being that proves impenetrable to our understanding. Heidegger also connects Dasein's death with its understanding

---

49 The phrase 'does not pass away' translates Heidegger's '*geht . . . nicht zugrunde*' which, literally translated, means 'goes not to ground.' Heidegger's wordplay on the idea of 'grounding' is important for his conception of death, but we lose this in the translation.

50 See Socrates' comments in the *Phaedo* 64A.

of its own history as manifest in the permutations of metaphysics. As we noted in the Preface, he comments that 'The dialogue with Parmenides never comes to an end, not only because so much in the preserved fragments of his "Didactic Poem" still remains obscure but also because what is said there continually deserves more thought.' What is significant about Parmenides' thinking, or Greek thinking and culture in general, is something that changes with the changing perspective in our culture on what is at issue in our being. This need for more thinking, and for new thinking, is not a sign of a finitude that is a failing or a lack. 'It is a sign of the boundlessness which . . . nourishes the possibility of a transformation of destiny' (EGT 101/248).

This 'boundlessness,' though, continually remains within the bounds of death. Anyone who expects that thinking will achieve total clarity or security about itself is, Heidegger adds, expecting thinking to annihilate itself.

> The demand appears in a strange light if we consider that the essence of mortals calls upon them to heed the call which beckons them toward death. As the outermost possibility of mortal Dasein, death is not the end of the possible but the highest shelter (the gathering sheltering) of the mystery of calling disclosure.
>
> (EGT 101/248)[51]

It is being which 'calls' to mortals, to ourselves as Dasein, disclosing itself in new ways and calling Dasein to its proper being.

---

51 In German the last sentence reads: '*Er ist als äusserst Möglichkeit des sterblichen Daseins nicht Ende des Möglichen, sondern das höchste Ge-birg (das versammelnde Bergen) des Geheimnisses der rufenden Entbergung.*' Heidegger is creating a new meaning for the term '*Gebirg*,' which ordinarily means 'mountain range,' by playing it off against the meaning of '*Bergen*' and '*Entbergung*.'

Chapter 1

The Existential Analysis

Before we can analyze the finitude of Dasein we must get clearer about the nature of this entity. For the purposes of my discussion of time and death, I do not need to go into all the details of the first division of Part One of *Being and Time*, the early work that provided an 'existential analytic' of Dasein's being and set up Heidegger's lifelong task in philosophy. But we do need an account of the general project and structure of the published work, which I provide in Section 1.1. Sections 1.2 and 1.3 examine Dasein's selfhood and the difference between authenticity and inauthenticity. The fourth section examines the issue of the 'turn' or 'reversal' in Heidegger's thought and the relevance of his later work for understanding what is at issue in *Being and Time*.

1.1 The Project of *Being and Time*

In *Being and Time* Heidegger suggests that we should start a discussion of the nature of what it is 'to be' by examining the entity that is asking the question about the meaning of being. If we ourselves ask the question, we must have some idea, however vague, of what can count as an answer. And it is we who understand what things 'are' and constantly speak of them using conjugations of the verb 'to be.' Indeed, according to Heidegger's definition of Dasein, our very way of being consists of having this 'pre-ontological' understanding of what it is 'to be.' An understanding of being 'constitutes' our being (12); our way of being is 'existence' as a 'standing toward' being. In this early work Heidegger does not argue that we would fail to discover the meaning of being if we started by examining the being of things which we encounter, and he does use this approach in later works when, for example, he investigates the nature of the work of art and what it is to be 'a thing.' But in *Being and Time* he concentrates on the being of Dasein, since we ourselves are the ones asking the question and hence must have some vague, 'pre-ontological' understanding of what would count as an answer.

Heidegger calls his investigation of Dasein 'fundamental ontology' (13). He later admits that the term is misleading since it suggests that he still is engaging in a traditional kind of ontology, one which will find some hidden presupposition or secure ground that earlier ontologies failed to discover (Way 276f./380). He does not, however, seek some rock bottom, rock solid 'foundation' from which all ways of being will be derived once and for all, as if there is ultimately one right answer to the question of what it is to be. Indeed, his claim that Temporality is the

meaning of being implies that there is no such foundation – or no such right answer.[1]

The phrase 'fundamental ontology' as applied to the analysis of Dasein is also misleading in so far as it suggests that Dasein's invention of ontologies for the other realms of what-is *makes* things what they are. Disputants in the current controversy over Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis frequently make this implied subjectivist, voluntaristic view the link between Heidegger's philosophy and Hitler's effort to re-make Germany. Indeed, this view is so common that Luc Ferry and Alain Renault call it the 'orthodox position.' They suggest its advocates can excuse Heidegger's involvement with the Nazis on the grounds that in the early 1930s he was still beguiled by the metaphysical quest of Western culture. According to this view, in the latter part of the decade he would begin to cleanse himself from this contamination in his lectures on Nietzsche and Hölderlin in which he refers to the Nazi ideology as the ultimate expression of the last metaphysical epoch, the epoch of the Nieztschean 'will to power' and the technological drive to organize all things to serve self-chosen ends.[2]

However, in this chapter I will tacitly argue that this assumption about the 'subjective' and 'voluntaristic' nature of *Being and Time* is mistaken. The first stage of this argument is to clarify the level of analysis on which it operates. Drawing on his characterization of Dasein's being as 'existence,' he sets out to look for the 'existential structures' manifest in this being.

A simple way to comprehend the analysis of Dasein presented in Division One of *Being and Time* is to see it as going through a series of layers or excavations prompted by the question, what makes this aspect of Dasein's being possible?[3] In the Introduction Heidegger posits what could be taken, depending on one's sympathies, as either a fundamental fact or a definition, perhaps an arbitrary one. He declares that Dasein is the entity that makes an issue of being (11f.).

---

1 Charles Guignon's otherwise excellent *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983) illustrates this misunderstanding. See p. 219 and p. 208. In later acknowledging the inappropriateness of the term 'fundamental ontology,' Heidegger indicates that he never sought, as Guignon apparently thinks, 'a secure foundation for the regional sciences' or 'a basis for arriving at a final answer to the question of being.' The existential analytic was never supposed to reveal the 'timeless, immutable structures' that Guignon argues are necessary to 'lay a firm foundation for ontology' and hence to justify Heidegger in his attempt to provide such a final answer.

2 See Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *Heidegger and Modernity*, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), Chapter 2, section 'The Orthodox Position,' pp. 31–43, especially pp. 39 and 41.

3 One could think of these steps as a series of transcendental arguments in a Kantian style, but I should stress both that I simplify the text by fitting it into this pattern and that I am using the term 'transcendental' in a simple, rather loose way. Although in some sense each of the structures unearthed at each level serves as the condition of the possibility of the next structures of the next level and a useful order is imposed on the text by sorting the different structures in this way, they come as a 'package deal' and the initial claim doesn't have the *a priori* character that Kant's arguments assume.

If this is to be taken as an indisputable fact, one would appreciate being told more about how the phenomenological analysis uncovers it. Heidegger notes that science, a particular creation of Dasein, has undergone revolutions when it has questioned the being of the things it investigates, but he argues that Dasein in its 'everydayness,' not just its revolutionary periods, exhibits at least a tacit questioning of being. But this is not at all obvious. On the other hand, if the declaration is offered as a definition of what human beings are, or what they have been in Western culture, one would appreciate some justification of its adequacy and accuracy. How does it differ from defining humans as the rational animal or the self-conscious one?

Since the whole of Heidegger's philosophy depends on the truth of this initial, foundational claim, some readers might want to block the building of Heidegger's 'house of being' right here. But, once this premise is accepted, Heidegger's version of a transcendental argument can get off the ground. In the following chapters, he proceeds to ask, how is Dasein's way of being possible?

The 'existential analysis' of Part One of *Being and Time* examines the 'ontological structures' of Dasein's way of being, that is, of 'existence' in Heidegger's technical sense. Such a structure is referred to as an 'existentiale,' the adjective turned into a noun. Existential understanding of Dasein's being at this level is contrasted with the 'existentiell' understanding of any particular Dasein in its quest to answer the question of being (12). An existentiell understanding takes a particular stance toward what it is to be, including what it is to be us.[4] We all share an understanding of ourselves and what-is: 'Every Dasein moves in such an interpretation, which for the most part coincides with the way the generation of a particular time has been interpreted and which changes with the time' (HCT 270/372).

As we read through the six chapters of Division One, Heidegger uncovers successive 'layers' of Dasein's being. Given the peculiar being of its object, Heidegger's phenomenology cannot just describe the facts of experience; it must interpret something whose very being is constituted by an understanding of being. Heidegger claims that the phenomenology of Dasein is 'hermeneutical.' Hermeneutics is the study of the principles of interpreting texts, and discovering the meaning of Dasein's being is analogous to discovering the meaning of a text.

Although the 'meaning' of Dasein's being and the 'meaning' of being in general are not equivalent to the 'meaning' or 'significance' of the verb 'to be,' or the meaning

4 I take 'existentiell' understanding to be a particular, culturally shared understanding of being, not a unique personal understanding of oneself, as Heidegger's notion is usually interpreted; it is my understanding of what-is as stuff to be manipulated, not just my understanding of myself as a teacher or middle-aged. The notion is posited in *Being and Time* but not really explained. Later, in arguing that Kant's notion of 'world' signifies 'the existence of man in the historical community,' he refers to 'this existentiell concept of world' (ER 77/76). He also says that the concept of existentiell understanding only becomes explicit with Schelling (EP 71/477), and he argues that 'the existentiell is merely the intensification of the role of anthropology within metaphysics in its completion' (EP 73/479). All three claims suggest that the cultural reading is valid. (We will discuss the significance of the last remark in Chapter 7 of this book.) [The unfinished Chapter 7 has not been included in the present edition but is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm*. Editor's note.]

of any words in any language, understanding them involves a similar process. The meaning of a word must be determined in the context of a sentence; the meaning of a sentence in the context of a paragraph; the meaning of a paragraph in the context of a passage; and so on. Hermeneutics neither begins nor ends with what is self-evident. The data for interpretation can only be understood against the background of a context which can itself only be interpreted against a broader context, that is, against its own 'horizon.'

What is the condition for the possibility of Dasein asking the question of being? The first regressive argument is that, to make an issue of being, Dasein is 'being-in-the-world.' This being-in-the-world depends on 'being-at-home-with'[5] things around us, 'being-with' others, and 'being-itself' as Dasein. Next Heidegger argues that the condition for this three-faceted being-in-the-world is Dasein's understanding, situatedness, and discourse.[6] Understanding, as I suggested in the Introduction, refers to the way that Dasein 'projects' its dealings with things and people on the basis of its comprehension of what-is; situatedness refers to this understanding's personal and cultural embeddedness in ways of responding and acting; and discourse refers to the way the significance of the world is articulated, both literally in language and practically in the involved activity on which it is based.[7]

In Chapter 6, completing the excavation of the layers presented in Division One, Heidegger argues that these aspects of Dasein are made possible by its being as care. Dasein's being is a caring for things, other people, and its own being. Things matter to it, and this sets up the context of concern in which we move every day. 'Care' is a technical term: things and people can matter to us in hate and indifference as well as the liking or affection we ordinarily call 'care.'

Chapter 6 introduces the phenomenon of anxiety in which Dasein's understanding of being is brought into question and its being as a 'standing toward being,' as simply caring, revealed most starkly. The other important feature of the last chapter of Division One is its re-description of understanding, situatedness, and discourse as aspects of care having an orientation toward the past, present, and future dimensions

---

5 Heidegger's phrase is '*Sein-bei*.' The German preposition '*bei*' means 'at,' 'by,' or 'alongside.' Since it also means 'at the home of' like the French '*chez*,' following Hubert Dreyfus's suggestion I translate '*Sein-bei*' as 'being-at-home-with' in order to capture Heidegger's notion of familiar dealings with things.

6 Heidegger's terms are '*Verstehen*,' '*Befindlichkeit*,' and '*Rede*.' '*Befindlichkeit*,' the term here translated as 'situatedness,' should not be translated as 'state-of-mind' as Macquarrie and Robinson have it. Besides the fact that Heidegger specifically says that '*Befindlichkeit*' is prior to cognition (136) and the word 'mind' suggests otherwise, 'state-of-mind' suggests a subjective feeling determined by introspection, not a way of pre-reflectively encountering things within the world.

7 Division One explores these subjects in the following steps. Chapter 1 discusses the basic nature of Dasein and distinguishes Heidegger's approach from that of anthropology and other social sciences. Chapters 2 and 3 explore Dasein as being-in-the-world. Chapter 4 analyzes Dasein's being-with and being-itself. Chapter 5 examines understanding, situatedness, and discourse.

of time. This makes his task in Division Two much easier; in fact, he may seem to stack the deck so that its cards will fall easily into place without much argument.

When Heidegger wants to show us that the meaning of Dasein's being is timeliness, he can draw directly on his earlier analysis. Understanding has been correlated with care as being 'ahead-of-itself,' that is, being ready to deal with whatever is yet to come. Situatedness refers us to Dasein's past in that care is being-already-in a context of mattering; we always find ourselves already possessing a certain understanding of being and 'attuned' to things in certain ways. In Heidegger's famous way of putting it, we are 'thrown' into our world; we appropriate the complex significance of social practices as we are trained to be human according to our culture as we grow up. Discourse is the articulation of the significance of this present world.

This anticipation of Division Two's discussion of timeliness serves as a reminder that the transcendental layers of Dasein's being do not come to an end when we discover that behind understanding, situatedness, and discourse stands care. The second division of Part One begins by noting that, so far, the analysis has only considered Dasein in its everydayness and inauthenticity (332–33). The existential generality of Division One's discussion, with its focus on everyday activities, has neglected Dasein's authentic being-itself; the 'layers' unearthed so far are necessary aspects of any Dasein's being. What further conditions make possible the being of authentic Dasein? We now know what it means to have an understanding of being, but how is it possible for Dasein to make an issue of being or change its understanding of being? These questions refer us to Dasein's finitude and timeliness, which in turn lead to a discussion of its historicality. These subjects occupy Division Two of the text.

Before turning to a more detailed analysis of the level of Heidegger's analysis, though, we should pause to consider its initial assumption. By analyzing Dasein in its 'everydayness,' Heidegger hopes to bring out structures common to every Dasein and avoid any bias introduced by a particular existentiell understanding of what it is to be human. Certainly it seems harmless to think that any Dasein, no matter what its time, place, or culture deals with tools, relates to other humans, understands itself in a particular way, and so forth.

However, Heidegger seems to have no *a priori* guarantee that his own philosophy is not another episode in the history of being, one which clearly finds its roots in the history-conscious culture of his age. John Caputo argues that the conclusion of Heidegger's analysis of culture should be the discovery that no epoch is privileged.[8] So why assume that his own account of the structure of Dasein, for example, is not biased by his own particular, historical understanding of being? This is not a problem to which Heidegger is oblivious. It is the problem of justifying an interpretation, the problem of the 'hermeneutic circle,' which he says we cannot get out of but rather must 'come into' in the right sort of way (153). Any interpretation picks out the evidence it considers relevant according to the conclusion it is advancing. Heidegger's hermeneutic of Dasein seems to aim for a level of abstraction where differences

8 See John Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

in Dasein's self-interpretation are irrelevant. Hence he avoids analyzing either authentic or inauthentic Dasein, Dasein that questions being, or Dasein that takes an understanding of being for granted, and chooses instead to focus on everyday activities common to both and necessary in any culture.[9]

Yet such an analysis performed from within the understanding of being of the Middle Ages would surely not have considered historicality as a structure of our existence, even though the people of that time lived within a tradition to an extent unsurpassed by any previous or subsequent phase of culture. This culture's answer to the question of being presupposed its timelessness as well as its finality.

Heidegger himself acknowledges that myth-oriented culture or 'primitive Dasein' has its own distinct form of everydayness (313), thus suggesting that everydayness is always the everydayness of a particular culture. Everyday routines of work, cooking, eating, and so forth, take place as aspects of a whole way of understanding being which also sets up its distinctive possibilities for non-everyday behavior such as sacred rituals, mourning, and celebrations (51). The self-understanding of a myth-oriented or an Asian culture may set up quite different ways of relating our activities. Looked at from the perspective of his own later work, Heidegger's own analysis in *Being and Time* can be seen as focused on our twentieth-century understanding of ourselves and things around us. For example, we are the Dasein that regards a forest as timber, a mountain as a quarry, a river as water-power (70).

1.2 What-is and Individuality

The persistence of an 'individualistic' or 'personalistic' interpretation of the level of discussion in *Being and Time* hinders an adequate understanding of Heidegger's conception of both Dasein and being. The prevalent English translation of the singular term '*das Seiende*' as the plural 'entities' or 'beings' has helped to reinforce this misunderstanding.[10] Even more influential than the translation, though, and perhaps influencing it, is our own pervasive tendency, diagnosed by Heidegger, to think of everything on the model of what-is present-at-hand, that is, as discrete, independent things. Under both influences, people reading the work in English are inclined to think that when Heidegger speaks of the 'being of entities,' he is talking, for example, about what makes this hammer a hammer or this screwdriver a screwdriver. Each thing was a different entity, and the being of the hammer was different from the being of the screwdriver and indeed perhaps each item had its unique 'being.' Then when we read that 'we are ourselves the entities to be analyzed,'[11] we assume that each person is an 'entity' and that 'Dasein,' the subject of the analysis, is just another

9 See *Being and Time*, pp. 16–17 and 43–44, for Heidegger's justification for basing the existential analytic on a description of Dasein's 'everydayness' or average, 'undifferentiated' mode of being.

10 See 'Heidegger's Texts and Translations' for a discussion of the translation of '*das Seiende*.'

11 See p. 67 of the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of *Being and Time*.

name for 'a person' or 'a human being.' No matter how much the scholar purports to be avoiding this equation, the personalization shows up in what sorts of characteristics are attributed to Dasein and to its possibilities and choices.

According to this view, the being of 'the entities to be analyzed' is unique to each one, and the investigation focuses on particular things. Instead of viewing Heidegger as a curious admixture of Kierkegaard and Husserl, we should read Heidegger as a descendant of Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant. His discussion moves on an ontological level similar to that of the great traditional works of metaphysics. He focuses on being 'in general'[12] and the being of 'what-is' rather than what makes the hammer a hammer and not a screwdriver, or me *me* and not you.

In Division One of *Being and Time* Heidegger analyzes the way Dasein encounters things in the world in three basic ways of being: the ready-to-hand disclosed in active involvement, the unready-to-hand manifest when things resist our use of them, and the present-at-hand that shows up in detached reflection.[13] The same particular thing can exhibit any of the three ways to be depending on the being manifest at a particular moment. A thing is ready-to-hand when used as a tool or an item of gear in Dasein's practical activities, but it can shift to being present-at-hand when regarded as merely a discrete, independent thing. For example, a hammer pounding in a nail is what-is ready-to-hand for the carpenter, but when regarded by a philosopher as an discrete thing with particular properties of color, shape, and weight, a 'mere thing' independent of any practical involvement, it becomes what-is present-at-hand.

Heidegger distinguishes a number of 'domains' of 'what-is' with different kinds of being as well as three different ways they can be. In *Being and Time* he lists nature, history, space, Dasein, and language as domains of what-is (9). In the *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* he asks:

> What can be given apart from nature, history, God, space, number? We say of each of these, even though in different senses, that it *is*. We call it *what-is*.
>
> (BPP 10/13)

In Heidegger's vocabulary the term 'what-is' does not usually refer directly to a particular thing, for example, a hammer, a rock, or the number twelve, but rather to things with the same type of being considered collectively or as a mode of being. Consequently, Heidegger uses the singular term '*das Seiende*' and the singular verb 'is.' Thus, Dasein, nature, or number collectively is an 'it' which we call 'what is' and can be disclosed as ready-to-hand, unready-to-hand, or present-at-hand.

Understanding the ontological level of Heidegger's discussion helps clarify his account of the being of what-is. The domains of what-is are formally analogous to types of Cartesian substances. Descartes focused on criteria for distinguishing thinking substance from material substance, not criteria for distinguishing one

12 '*Sein überhaupt*' might also be rendered being 'above all' except that this might suggest a highest entity or superior status.

13 'Ways of being' translates Heidegger's term '*Seinsart*.' 'Mode of being' would perhaps be a less cumbersome translation, but perhaps it carries too much philosophical baggage

thinking thing from another, or rock from water. Similarly, Kant's *a priori* category of 'substance' enables us to discriminate a thing as a thing, not a dog as a dog. Something more is needed for recognizing the latter, specifically an empirical concept acquired through encounters with different dogs. Heidegger comments that for Kant 'what-is' is 'nature' or 'that which can be determined and is determined in mathematical-physical thinking' (IM 197/151). A dog is an item encountered in this nature in so far as it has mass, falls under the laws of Newtonian physics, and so on.

Contrary to the usual explanation of his notion of 'what-is,' Heidegger is in fact not focusing on the being of particular things. He expects, however, that the question he poses will lead to an explanation of the 'more' that allows us to understand each thing. In one of his most lucid and straightforward books, *What is a Thing?*, he comments that he poses the question 'what is a thing?' not to differentiate particular things from each other but to determine what it is to be a thing. Becoming lyrical, he adds:

> And nevertheless, we pose the question only in order to know what a rock is, and a lizard taking a sunbath on it, a blade of grass that grows beside it, and a knife which perhaps we hold in our hands while we lie in the meadow.
>
> (WIT 8f./8f.)

Although Heidegger focuses on the fundamental question, it is easy enough to infer from Division One of *Being and Time* what the 'more' would be that differentiates particular things, especially in regard to what-is ready-to-hand. A hammer and a screwdriver in use are both 'what-is ready-to-hand.' What makes a hammer or a screwdriver the thing it *is* involves its 'position' in the network of significance which makes possible the being of what-is ready-to-hand, in this case the connections between boards, nails, screws, carpenters, houses, and so on. The totality of significance laid out by Dasein's activity constitutes its being-in-the-world.

Heidegger makes this point in lecture notes written during the period in which he was preparing *Being and Time*:

> The specific *thisness* of a piece of equipment, its *individuation*, if we take the word in a completely formal sense, is not determined primarily by space and time in the sense that it appears in a determinate space-and-time position. Instead, what determines a piece of equipment as an individual is its equipmental character and equipmental context.
>
> (BPP 292/414f.)

By this definition, two identical hammers, for example, would be the same piece of equipment – the same 'individual' in this formal sense.

Significantly, one distinguishing characteristic of what-is ready-to-hand is that it can vanish as a separate 'thing.' For example, the hammer in use becomes a transparent extension of the user's body; we are focally aware not of the hammer as a particular thing but rather of the nail and the wall toward which our activity is 'aimed.' And we are not even explicitly aware of the nail and wall as separate, discrete things but only in terms of their significance in an overall project.

In light of this, we can see how a rock used for pounding, two identical hammers, or a hammer and a screwdriver all can have the same way of being, that is, the being of what-is ready-to-hand. They can also all be what-is present-at-hand, but Heidegger argues that our understanding of them as ready-to-hand is primary. Our understanding of things as present-at-hand derives from our grasp of what-is ready-to-hand since involved activity sets up our 'classifications' of things as 'things' – as rocks, hammers, screwdrivers, and so forth – and such a thing can then be viewed disinterestedly as a discrete object whose properties of color, weight, and so on, are simply observed.

Recognizing the '*en masse*' or 'as a whole' character of what-is ready-to hand and present-at-hand brings us one step closer to seeing the commonalities in what Heidegger calls 'domains' of what-is and the 'being of what-is.' Particular things are not isolated in a unique atom of being. Rather, they are already joined as a type of what-is, for example, nature, number, language, gear, and encountered as ready to-hand or otherwise. With this idea in mind, a shorter step then takes us to the being of what is in general, the character of historically determined 'commonality' that sparked Heidegger's interest.[14] Presumably the Greeks and medieval Christians learned to distinguish a dog from a cat or a hammer from other tools in the same way we do, that is, by learning how to deal with them in a context of practical activity as well as distinguishing the characteristics found in different kinds of things. And both cultures dealt in a unified way with Nature, number, language, the divine, and other domains of what-is. But, according to Heidegger, the Greeks and the Christians understood the being of what-is quite differently. To inquire how this is possible is to inquire into the 'meaning of being.'

1.3 Dasein's Selfhood

Now that we have an idea of the ontological level of Heidegger's discussion, we can get clear about the sort of 'individual' that is under analysis in most of the published portion of *Being and Time* – 'the entity' that 'we ourselves always are' (41).[15] 'Dasein' is not equivalent to 'a human being' or 'a person,' any more than 'what-is ready-to-hand' is equivalent to 'a hammer.' Human beings are Dasein, just as hammers in use are ready-to-hand, but this tells us something about their being and not what differentiates a particular human being from another or a particular hammer from another. The quantifying 'a' demands other criteria of differentiation than just a characterization of the thing's being. Heidegger very rarely speaks of 'a Dasein', or of 'Daseins' in the plural, and the few times he does he seems to be speaking of interrelationships between things with the being of Dasein rather than

14 I use the term 'commonality' with reservations. It suggests a common property or character, and, while this is how the being of what is has been understood in the history of philosophy, Heidegger's aim is to bring this assumption into question.

15 Heidegger announces, '*Das Seiende, dessen Analyse unsere Aufgabe steht, sind wir je selbst*.'

simply a person or a collection of them.[16] Later he writes of 'the Dasein in man,' as if to correct the misunderstanding that the term 'Dasein' is equivalent to 'a person.' For example, he comments that the Dasein in man 'is the essence that belongs to being itself' (N4 218/358). Pluralizing 'Dasein' in this usage would be like pluralizing a property or feature just because more than one thing exhibited it. Yet Dasein is 'the entity' we are, not just a way of being; its way of being is 'existence,' to stand toward being (BPP 28/36).

When Heidegger speaks in *Being and Time* of 'individuating' Dasein, as for example in his discussion of authentic being toward death, the issue is not the difference between two human beings but rather the difference between Dasein and other domains of what-is. In introducing the section where he provides us with an outline of the projected analysis to be carried out in the format of *Being and Time*, Heidegger remarks:

> The question of the meaning of being is the most universal and emptiest of questions; however, at the same time, in it lies the possibility of its own sharpest individuation in the actual Dasein.
>
> (39)

We are actual Dasein, and as such we can either question being or take an understanding of being for granted. The Dasein who makes an issue of being is authentic; the one who lives comfortably in the current understanding is inauthentic.

An understanding of being is not what differentiates some particular person from another, as if we each have our own different, 'individual' or 'personal' understanding of being. On the other hand, Heidegger clearly thinks that our contemporary understanding of being is very different from the understanding of being possessed by the Ancient Greeks or medieval Christians. We who are 'actual Dasein' share an understanding of being because of such phenomena as falling and inauthenticity, which we discuss in Section 1.4, while anxiety and being toward death are phenomena which 'individuate' us precisely as the entity which can make an issue of being.

In his impressive recent studies of the development of Heidegger's thought in the years before he published *Being and Time*, Theodore Kisiel notes that as early as 1919 Heidegger was groping his way toward an understanding of the character of Dasein as being-in-the-world, but Kisiel seems to see the personal 'I' as built upon an 'impersonal' subject who experiences the happening of a world. While each person individually is certainly 'deeply involved' in the world, the 'it' through which the world happens is the community, and more expansively, the culture. Through the

16 For example, in lecture notes from a class in the summer semester of 1927 Heidegger occasionally uses the expression '*ein Dasein*' (BPP 27/36, 208/296, 210/299) and of communication between '*Daseins*' (BPP 210/299, 277–79/392–96) but not in a way that diminishes the communality of 'the entity' that we are or suggests that we become who we are (or an 'I' becomes a person) by the accumulation of individual experiences building from an impersonal but still subjective 'I' to a personal 'I.' We begin and end as 'being in the world.' See discussion below.

world we come to experience ourselves as an individual personality. The 'it' of the world is not 'an experience proper to me,' as opposed to anyone else, or unique to 'my life, my full historical I,' but the context of significance, of roles, goals, and ways of comportment in which we first discover ourselves.[17] In *Being and Time* Heidegger tries to express this relation not, as Kisiel says, by claiming that 'Dasein is at once One and the Other,'[18] but by saying that 'proximally and for the most part' Dasein's self is '*das Man*,' the Anyone.

Division One of *Being and Time* considers the ontological character of Dasein as the entity that understands being by examining its manifestation in our use of tools and dealings with other people. The analysis of being toward death, timeliness, and historicality which follows in Division Two is an investigation of what makes *our* being possible and not just of what makes personal individuality possible, as I argue in the following chapters. Such notions as 'repetition' and 'guilt' do not refer us to the uniquely personal events of an individual's life but to the 'existence' – the standing toward being – of Dasein, a way of being that extends from Ancient Greece to today. In Heidegger's 'fundamental ontology' we investigate the historicality of 'the entity that we are,' not primarily or even simply the individual personality. Getting clear about this would enable us to see Heidegger's project as unfolding and deepening from 1919 onward; no retreat from or retraction of the basic points of *Being and Time* is necessary.[19]

Heidegger notes the difference in these levels in a remark about Nietzsche's philosophy: '. . . *Ecce Homo* deals neither with Nietzsche's biography nor with the personality of "Mr. Nietzsche." It deals with a "destiny" – not of the fate of an individual but rather of the history of the modern era as the end of Western culture.'[20] Similarly, as I will go on to argue at length, Heidegger's own analysis of 'being towards death,' 'destiny,' and 'fate,' does not deal directly with the individual personality. Heidegger quotes one of Nietzsche's own remarks, perhaps apropos with his goal: 'Enormous *self-reflection*! To become conscious not as an individual but as mankind. Let us reflect, let us think back: let us go all the small and great ways!' (WIT 43/41).[21]

Of course, I do not want to deny that Dasein is personal in the sense that, in speaking of Dasein, we are always speaking of particular people. Dasein is, Heidegger

17 Theodore Kisiel, 'The genesis of *Being and Time*,' *Man and World*, 25 (1992), p. 34. I quote from Kisiel's article for its succinct way of expressing the points I address. For his fuller account of this issue, see his *The Genesis of Heidegger's 'Being and Time'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), for example Part One, 'The Breakthrough to the Topic,' pp. 15–20.

18 Kisiel, ibid., p. 29.

19 Kisiel suggests that *Being and Time* is an 'aberrant' path leading away from Heidegger's initial insights of 1919, and that, realizing its failure, Heidegger's famous 'turn' is a turn back to those earlier probings. Kisiel, ibid., pp. 33–34.

20 Heidegger, 'Nietzsche as Metaphysician,' translated by Joan Stambaugh, in *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Robert Solomon (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1973), p. 108.

21 The passage appears in Nietzsche's *Will to Power* as aphorism 585.

says, 'always mine' (41).[22] Unlike other things, whose being can change from, for example, ready-to-hand to present-at-hand, we are always Dasein, even when we think of ourselves as present-at-hand. Hence Heidegger constantly refers to Dasein's '*jeweils*' or '*jemeinig*' character. Correlatively, Dasein is always the Dasein of particular people; it is not something beyond them, or over and above them, as some Absolute Spirit or transcendent ideal. Thus, Heidegger can use the term to refer to persons or personal activities, for example, he can speak of Dasein taking a trip (250). Dasein itself must always be addressed, Heidegger comments, by personal pronouns such as 'you' and 'they' (42). This latter point would not need to be made, indeed it would be a very odd point to make, if 'Dasein' simply denoted 'a person.'

This notion of 'mineness'[23] tries to capture the peculiar relation which exists between the species human being and its individual members, or, rather between Dasein and we who are Dasein. 'Species' is a misleading term in this context since it suggests a purely biological category, and a person is not related to Dasein in the same way that a human being is related to the species *Homo sapiens* or a dog is related to its species. We are concerned about what it is to be us, that is, what it is to be human, and this concern constitutes our connection to our 'species being.' Our relationship to our 'essence' is one of self-understanding, or, in Heidegger's vocabulary, 'care,' not class membership. People take up an understanding of being in learning to be human according to their culture, and, without this understanding, an individual would not be Dasein even if he or she was biologically human, as is, for example, a profoundly retarded child or the legendary 'wild child' raised by apes or wolves.

We each take up the same understanding of being, yet we each do so in our own way. We can make an analogy with a comment that Heidegger makes about our being-in-the-world. He says: 'The surrounding world is different in a certain way for each of us, and yet we move about in a common world' (BPP 164/234).[24] The world of a poet is different from the world of a car mechanic; the world of a quadriplegic is different from the world of a marathon runner. But each person's surrounding world fits together and is intelligible to others because we share a common world. Since Dasein is 'always mine,' Dasein is in a certain way different and yet the same for each of us. We each take up the patterns of significance, the roles, goals, and standards, laid out by our culture in a different way, but we are each members of one culture.

This notion of 'mineness' is not new with Heidegger. He seems to borrow it from Kierkegaard, who says in *The Concept of Anxiety* that 'At every moment, the

---

22 Heidegger's phrase is '*je meines*.' Macquarrie and Robinson translate it as 'in each case mine,' and other translators follow their lead. This translation re-enforces the view that 'Dasein' means 'a person,' that is, Dasein occurs in discrete 'cases.' I think that translating '*je*' as 'always' captures a different meaning in the text since '*je*' also means 'ever,' 'at all times,' as well as 'at a time,' 'each' 'apiece,' and is in keeping with the discussion in the paragraphs following the introduction of the term, as I explain below.

23 Heidegger's term is '*Jemeinigkeit*' or literally 'always-mineness.' I sometimes shorten the term to avoid jargon; its meaning should be clear from the surrounding discussion.

24 'Surrounding world' substitutes for Heidegger's term '*Umwelt*.'

individual is both himself and the race.'[25] Kierkegaard is protesting Hegel's neglect of the particular person in favor of the Spirit working through him or her. For Heidegger, too, the particular person is always the one who understands, makes decisions, and acts, whether these decisions and actions simply define us as individual people or help bring about a change in significance for the culture as a whole, as did Nietzsche's self-reflection. Only in the latter case they are decisions within the realm of authenticity.

Comments in later works about the '*je meines*' character of Dasein seem prompted more by a desire to correct misunderstanding than to go back and fill in the idea. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger says that 'always mine' does not mean 'posited through me' or 'apportioned to an individual ego' (IM 28f./22). By then he had realized that such terminology would inevitably be interpreted through the modern understanding of human beings as subjects or particular consciousnesses, and he preferred to drop the word.

Dasein's character as 'always mine' is closely related to its selfhood, another notion that we must see in a new light. The term 'self,' like 'existence,' has an accepted meaning in both ordinary speech and more theoretical investigations, but it is another term to which Heidegger gives his own particular meaning. The 'self' of Dasein is not identical with the self of a particular person in the sense of the personality or the unity of characteristics that a person manifests. Just as Dasein is something we all share in common, Dasein's self is not something which differentiates one person from another but rather what makes us both Dasein. Using the term 'man' instead of 'Dasein,' in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger comments:

> Man's selfhood means this: he must transform the being that discloses itself to him into history and bring himself to stand in it. Selfhood does not mean he is primarily an 'I' and an individual. This he is as little as he is a we, a community.
>
> (IM 143f./110)[26]

Dasein is neither simply an individual 'I' nor a collection of such 'I's,' even closely interacting ones, but rather the being of such 'I's.' At a point in the text of *Being and Time* where Heidegger refers to Dasein existing 'as itself,' he later added the marginal notation 'However not *qua* subject and individual or *qua* person' (146 and 144). He will also comment in his 'Letter on Humanism' that it is a mistake to pose the question of Dasein's being in such a way that we expect to find as our answer 'something like a person or object.' He adds:

---

25 Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, translated by Reidar Thomte (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 28f. Perhaps this borrowing accounts for the obliqueness of Heidegger's comments on the subject. In *Being and Time* he mentions 'mineness' but does not really develop the idea. In a footnote in the book he admits that one can 'learn philosophically' from *The Concept of Anxiety*, and one thing he evidently learned was the cultural character of the personal self. See *Being and Time*, pp. 235 and 494.

26 Ideally, if not by the conventional rules of either German or English grammar, the 'hims' and 'hes' should be replaced by 'its' since the personal pronoun only obscures the remark's point.

> . . . the personal, no less than the objective, misses and misconstrues the way of being of ek-sistence as being-historical.
>
> (LH 207/327)[27]

Dasein's self is the existential self, not the personal self, though it is the prerequisite for understanding oneself as a particular person. We must have an understanding of being in general and our own being in particular in order to differentiate ourselves as particular persons.[28]

In *The Essence of Reason* Heidegger explains:

> Only because Dasein is determined by selfhood can an I-self relate 'itself' to a thou-self. Selfhood is the presupposition of the possibility of being an 'I' which is revealed only in the 'thou.' Selfhood is never related to a thou; it is neutral toward I-being and thou-being, and even more toward 'sexuality,' since it is what makes them all possible in the first place.
>
> (ER 87/86)

As Heidegger suggests in his lectures on logic, this sort of shared metaphysical 'individuality' in his formal sense is the precondition for any sort of communication 'between Dasein and Dasein' (MFL 209/270). This is true not just in regard to communication between particular people within a culture where we understand each other because we share the same understanding of being, but in regard to communication between Dasein and Dasein in the collective sense, that is, communication between people in different cultures.[29] Because human beings engage in similar practices at a fundamental level, for example, getting food, building shelter, creating families, worshipping, we have some leverage for understanding the activities and language of another culture. Without this, we might as well be confronting aliens from another planet. Remember Wittgenstein's comment that, 'If a lion could talk, we could not understand him.'[30]

Heidegger's additional comment about selfhood's relation to sexuality is not explained. Two reasons besides the social reserve of his time may account for his reticence. First, the remark seems to refer to the role embodiment plays in the development of the sense of 'I-ness.' In his attempt to break down Cartesian dualism with his concept of Dasein, Heidegger evidently prefers to avoid discussing the role

---

27 The phrase 'way of entity' translates Heidegger's term '*das Wesende*.'

28 In his *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, composed shortly after *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls this sort of self 'neutral Dasein' (MFL 136–138/171–173) and the 'metaphysical self' (MFL 188–190/242–245).

29 In the cited passage in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* Heidegger calls for a 'metaphysics of myth' before describing 'metaphysical individuation' as the 'presupposition for the primordial commerce between Dasein and Dasein' (209/270). These remarks are further confirmation of the ontological character of individuation and the collective character of Dasein. People in our society can understand a myth-oriented culture because of the similarity of basic human practices, although, of course, that understanding may be more or less accurate, more or less biased by our own worldview.

30 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 223e

of the body in the acquisition and expression of an understanding of being. Even just the use of the terms 'body' or 'embodiment' suggests this dualism by implying that consciousness is the other feature of human beings and one which somehow gets absorbed in a body. In *Being and Time* Heidegger's only comment about the body is that Dasein's '"bodily nature" hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here' (108).

A more likely reason for Heidegger's silence about how sexuality can be the precondition for personality is his direct reliance again on Kierkegaard's ideas from *The Concept of Anxiety*. Kierkegaard suggests that the 'fall' into personal self-awareness involves the recognition of one's sexuality, but his remarks on the subject are even more obscure than Heidegger's, especially since they are couched in the imagery of the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. But for both philosophers, at the most fundamental level personal self-awareness involves an understanding of oneself as female or male and, more exactly, femininity or masculinity. Such understanding is culturally dependent. Understanding oneself involves understanding the 'race' through an appropriation of the roles and goals, the practices and responses, designated as appropriate to being feminine or masculine. However, unlike Kierkegaard, Heidegger has little interest in the details of a person's understanding of herself. He aims at 'suggesting, methodologically, an extreme existential ontological model' (MFL 190/245), not giving his readers advice on how to live, as Kierkegaard did.[31]

Once the existential character of Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's selfhood is grasped, or, more to the point, once the existential character of Dasein's self is recognized as well as the nature of its 'individuality' as a domain of what-is, a common criticism of Heidegger's early work falls by the wayside. Calvin Schrag asks whether an ontology which 'takes its point of departure from a singular Dasein uniquely my own' can 'arrive at an adequate sense of the communal?'[32] But there is simply no such point of departure in Heidegger's work. Ross Mandel suggests that many of the defects of Heidegger's view 'arise from the fact that Dasein is identified with the self of each of us and the understanding which reveals ourselves and things within the world.' He suggests that 'the transcendental structures are largely centered about the individual . . . there persists a sense of numerically distinct worlds with no visible means of coordination.'[33] On the contrary, Dasein is not identified with the person or the individual in Mandel's conception of this. Heidegger's universe of existential discourse has only one world, and we are all Dasein as being-in-the world, even if that world changes historically with time. Heidegger distinguishes but also connects

---

31 In this passage from his lectures in the summer of 1928 Heidegger rails against egocentric misconceptions of his notion of the 'self' evidently already plaguing *Being and Time* and passed along the academic grapevine disseminating his thought. He takes pains to differentiate his existential project from Kierkegaard's existentiell investigation.

32 Calvin Schrag, 'Heidegger on Repetition and Historical Understanding,' *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. XX, No. 3 (July 1970), p. 291.

33 Ross Mandel, 'Heidegger and Wittgenstein: A Second Kantian Revolution,' in *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, edited by Michael Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 269.

Dasein's self and the self which says 'I,' and no numerically distinct worlds need to be coordinated. Heidegger himself, though, realized that the distinction and the connection was far from clear in the early work.[34]

1.4 Authenticity

Heidegger introduces his notion of authenticity in the midst of the discussion of the nature of Dasein. He comments:

> Since Dasein is always essentially its possibility, it *can* in its very being 'choose' itself to win itself; or it can lose itself, i.e., never and only 'seem' to win. It can only have lost itself and still not have won itself in so far as it is in its essence something possibly *authentic*, i.e., something of its own.
>
> (42)

When Dasein 'chooses' itself, it is authentic and makes its being its own.[35] Dasein is authentic precisely when it 'chooses' its 'ownmost' being and makes an issue of what it is to be. The scare quotation marks which Heidegger puts around 'choose' ('*wahlen*') in the text should be carefully noted since he is warning us that his notion of 'choice' is not the ordinary one. In questioning what it is to be, we 'possibilize' an understanding of being (268) and open ourselves up to new possibilities of the being of what-is, which for Heidegger amounts to 'choosing' ourselves as Dasein.[36]

When Heidegger introduces his notion of authenticity and inauthenticity he warns us not to jump to any conclusions hinging on the ordinary use of the words or on popular conceptions.[37] Authentic Dasein is 'essentially' or 'intrinsically' Dasein,

---

34 In his marginal notes on his own copy of *Sein und Zeit* he reminds himself: '*schärfer klaren: Ich-sagen and Selbstsein.*' (318/445*).

35 Heidegger is playing off '*eigentlich*' ('authentic') and '*eigen*' ('own'), and many of his points tacitly appeal to the etymological connections of the '*eigen*' words he uses. I am tempted to translate all the '*eigen*'-rooted words with terms related to 'proper,' that is, to use 'proper' and 'properly' instead of 'authentic' and 'authentically,' 'appropriate' instead of 'own,' and 'most proper' instead of 'ownmost' ('*eigenst*'). This would have the very distinct advantage of linking them all etymologically, both with each other and with '*das Ereignis*' as 'Appropriation,' as they are in German.

The proposed translation would also have the advantage of emptying the words of all the meaning associated with 'authentic' as the term has been used by other philosophers, psychologists, and assorted commentators. 'Ownmost' in particular suggests the subjectivistic and personalistic against which I am arguing. However, the usual translations of these terms are well entrenched, and I am already asking readers to re-set their minds for one key word from *Being and Time*, that is, to think of '*Zeitlichkeit*' as 'timeliness,' not 'temporality.'

36 In *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger uses the terms 'decision' and 'will' in an even more misleading reference to this same notion of choice. For an extended discussion of the basic concept, see my analysis of resoluteness in Chapter 3, especially Section 3.3.

37 Heidegger says that the expressions '*Eigentlichkeit*' and '*Uneigentlichkeit*' are picked for their strict literal sense; and, as noted above, '*eigen*' means 'proper' or 'own,' so quite

but, as he immediately adds, inauthentic Dasein does not have any 'lower' or 'less' being (43). Inauthentic Dasein is not somehow defective or 'not really' Dasein (176). Most of us are inauthentic Dasein for all our lives. And even inauthentic Dasein makes an issue of being, but it does so in a particular way (44).

Inauthentic Dasein does not so much question being as question what is in order to see if things fit its presupposed understanding of what they are, the understanding anyone has. Heidegger personifies this common understanding of things as '*das Man*,' or, as we shall translate it 'the Anyone.'[38] Heidegger's German term is the indefinite or impersonal pronoun used in German constructions similar to our English 'one eats with a fork, not one's fingers' or 'one shouldn't judge a book by its cover.'

When we are under the domination of the Anyone, we do 'what one does' or 'what anyone does' according to the current understanding of things, their nature and their purposes, that we share with others. Even the person who realizes that being is an issue in the deeper sense will be inauthentic, as Heidegger says, 'when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment' (43). When we are absorbed in our day to day routine, when things demand our attention, we take the particular common understanding of being for granted and are not authentically Dasein. Heidegger thinks that 'the Anyone' is a structure of Dasein's being as existence.[39]

Given this brief sketch of Heidegger's notion of authenticity and inauthenticity, we can see why in works following *Being and Time* Heidegger took pains to try to correct a widespread misreading of his view. He specifically denied that the terms indicated some 'moral' or 'anthropological' distinction (LH 212/333). A particular view about right or wrong behavior or views about how different groups of people behave presuppose a particular conception of what it is to be human and an understanding of being in general. This more basic phenomenon, its origin and nature, is the subject of Heidegger's analysis. He does not condemn inauthenticity as something 'wrong' or something we should avoid,[40] but rather shows that it is inescapable. Inauthenticity is not some 'bad and deplorable ontic property' which

---

literally '*Eigentlichkeit*' means 'properness,' 'own-ness.' In ordinary German '*eigentlich*' means 'proper,' 'true,' 'authentic,' 'essential,' or 'intrinsic.'

38 I follow Hubert Dreyfus's suggested translation.

39 Heidegger calls such a structure an 'existentiale,' as we noted in Section 1.1. Thus he puts the Anyone on a par with such dimensions of Dasein's being as understanding and situatedness.

40 A detailed example of the morally-tinged view of inauthenticity common in the scholarly literature can be found in Michael Zimmerman's book *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981). Zimmerman describes inauthenticity as a 'greedy,' 'selfish,' 'egoism.' (See especially pp. 48–49.) While this may seem to be an accurate description of the Dasein immersed in the modern understanding of being, in which we see ourselves as conscious egos whose relation to things is one of dominance and manipulation, it was certainly not true of the inauthentic Dasein of the Middle Ages, when the 'ego' had not even been discovered yet. The devout, ascetic Christian of the thirteenth century, for example, may be treating what is with the respect it deserves as God's creation and still be 'inauthentic' in Heidegger's sense.

'perhaps more advanced stages of human culture might be able to rid themselves' (176). Unless a particular understanding of being is taken for granted, we would have not culture but chaos.

Heidegger describes inauthentic existence as 'fallen' into or 'addicted to' a particular understanding of being.[41] Given our own cultural concerns and Heidegger's negative remarks about the phenomenon, it was easy for us to 'fall' into a moralistic reading of the notion, as if it encouraged us to exhort others to escape a sheep-minded conformity to social standards. But, in fact, Heidegger is not moralistically condemning falling but arguing for its necessity in cultural existence. The notion concerns not so much our personal lives or the particular things we do as the understanding of being which they manifest. It plays an important role in an ontological investigation, not a sociological critique of the annoying behavior of our fellow humans. For example, in his *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* Heidegger mentions 'falling' in connection with Husserl's 'assumption of the tradition of Descartes and the *problematic of reason* stemming from him' (HCT 129f./179f.). Everyone, including philosophers, has a difficult time breaking away from old ways of looking at things. At its worst, falling levels off the ways things can show themselves into a bland and banal sameness such that we cannot imagine any other way of understanding them. One of the dangers of the current epoch of being, Heidegger thinks, is the entrenchment of banality.[42]

If Heidegger seems sometimes to be exhorting the reader to be authentic, one has to remember that *Being and Time* is an ontological investigation and authenticity is an ontological concept. The goal of the published portion was to achieve a thorough grasp of the nature of the entity that is asking the question of being. Beyond that, as Heidegger reminds us again and again throughout the book, our ultimate aim is to uncover what makes an understanding of being possible. He is not advising us how we ought to live our personal lives – a matter for ethics – but rather inviting us to follow his phenomenological investigation of the 'meaning' of being in general. Only if we have an adequate grasp of Dasein's being in its modes of authenticity and inauthenticity will we be ready to proceed with this task, or at least so Heidegger thought when he wrote the published portion of *Being and Time*.

The Anyone, as the personification of a particular 'existentiell' understanding of what it is to be, does promote conformity, but for Heidegger it is a conformity of ontological rather than ethical significance. In making an issue of 'averageness' or conformity to the given understanding of being, rather than being itself, the Anyone levels off the more subtle facets of any understanding of being.

> In this averageness with which it prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore . . . Overnight everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known.
>
> (127)

---

41 Heidegger's term is '*verfallen*.'

42 See Chapter 7, Section 7.3 for a discussion of this danger of the technological era. [Chapter 7 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/Q-White.htm* – Editor's note.]

Authenticity, in contrast, reaches down into the 'primordial' roots of Dasein's being beneath the leveled surface of the Anyone.

Heidegger thinks that this surface is especially hard to penetrate today in our age of mass media and mass production, and therefore authenticity is increasingly difficult to achieve. The understanding of being which takes things as mere 'stuff' to be manipulated and used for the satisfaction of our needs (which themselves are also determined by this very understanding) becomes more and more pervasive, spreading from Western culture across the Earth. Practices and attitudes which still linger from an earlier understanding of being, for example, the 'respect for the Earth' movement, or other attempts to break with the current technological understanding of being, quickly become publicized and commercialized and so acquire their own prescriptions for 'what one does' in the technological world. In the second half of the twentieth century we can see the process at work in regard to particular roles such as beatnik, hippie, punk, rapper, skinhead, and other such supposed nonconformists.

Given the common interpretation of Heidegger, it is worth emphasizing further that the contrast he makes is not between doing 'what one does' and doing something unique or nonconformist. Neither is he contrasting being 'other-directed' and being autonomous. For him, the 'autonomous' person may be following a role prescribed by the Anyone just as much as the 'other-directed' person. The 'nonconformist' may march to the tune of a different drummer, but the Anyone still orchestrates all the parts of this symphony of roles, goals, and standards.

I should also stress that understanding what authentic Dasein is, however, differs from being authentic. Exhorting someone to 'Be authentic!' makes as much sense, or as little, as exhorting them to be another Plato or Nietzsche. Nor should one expect to be able to tell when someone is authentic by the way they behave. The difference in existence may not be visible in the personal life of any particular Dasein. 'When busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment,' when in social situations of any sort, we all tend to do 'what one does.' Nietzsche is cited by Heidegger as an example of authentic Dasein, someone who has made an issue of being, but yet, as is well known, Nietzsche's new conceptualization of the being of what-is as will to power found scant manifestation in his own sickly, shy personal life and his public persona fitted the model of the 'Herr Professor' of the age.

In denying that authenticity indicates a moral distinction, Heidegger can legitimately claim that he is trying to analyze a relationship that has hitherto been concealed from philosophy. From Plato on down, philosophers have always given advice on how we ought to live our lives. The advice has been given from a particular perspective on what it is to be human. But Heidegger is trying to explain how such perspectives emerge in the first place: what we humans must be like for this to happen, what the world must be like, and so forth. For the emergence of such perspectives, death and timeliness are necessary aspects of the being of Dasein, as we will see in the following chapters, not features of personhood which refer us to the interiority of an isolated consciousness or unique features of a personality.

Over two decades ago James Demske argued in his book on Heidegger's conception of death that 'my being is unique and specific to me alone' and that I can succeed or fail at the task of being who I really am. If I succeed, Demske argues,

I am authentic; if I fail and let other people determine who I am, then I am inauthentic.[43] However, I am arguing that seeing myself as such a unique 'given' which I must discover and to which I must live up is in fact an escape from Dasein's ownmost being, which is not a 'given' but a question. More recently, John Caputo in his 1990 book *Demythologizing Heidegger* claims that we each have our own essential being and that freedom means the freedom 'to seize upon one's essential possibility, to find one's essence, to forge one's fate for oneself.' Even though Caputo acknowledges that this individual fate is in some way bound up with the destiny of a community or culture, the implication is that each person's essence is still unique, personal, and voluntarily chosen and that owning up to our future non-actuality frees us to seize this fate.[44]

1.5 The 'Turn' in Heidegger's Thought

Before I begin discussing the issues in Division Two of *Being and Time*, I should justify drawing on Heidegger's later works to illuminate his analysis there. Forty years after Heidegger wrote his 'Letter on Humanism,' we still find that, as Heidegger said then, 'it is everywhere supposed that the attempt in *Being and Time* ended in a blind alley' (LH 222/343). Years ago commentators such as James Collins and Otto Pöggeler concluded that Heidegger could find no way to proceed from the 'existential analytic' of *Being and Time* to his projected analysis of the 'meaning of being.'[45] The view is still popular today and frequently invoked to explain Heidegger's attraction to the Nazi ideology.[46] Many commentators argue or simply assume that Heidegger had to change his early conception of human nature in order to escape the 'subjectivism' and 'voluntarism' which set up a roadblock on the path of his early thinking.[47]

---

43 See James Demske, *Being, Man, and Death* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970), p. 19 and p. 22.

44 See John Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*, pp. 78–80. He argues that freedom means the freedom 'to seize upon one's essential possibility, to find one's essence, to forge one's fate for oneself' (80).

45 See James Collins, *The Existentialists* (Chicago: Regnery, 1952), p. 175, and Otto Pöggeler, *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers* (Pfullingen, Germany: Gunther Neske, 1963), p. 176.

46 Ferry and Renault describe this 'orthodox position' in the passage cited in Section 1.1 in footnote 2.

47 Both quoted terms come from Michael E. Zimmerman, who has argued more extensively for this view. The most concise and simple statement of it is in his article 'The Foundering of *Being and Time*,' *Philosophy Today*, XIX (Summer 1975), pp. 100–107. In it Zimmerman argues that *Being and Time* lies half way between the metaphysical thinking of traditional philosophy and Heidegger's later, new way of thinking (102). He contends that '*Being and Time* founders for two reasons. First, it was unable to completely pass beyond the subjectivist kind of thinking which characterizes the history of metaphysics. Second, it failed to recognize from the beginning the historical nature of being and the function of Dasein to bring being to appearance' (102).

Heidegger does speak of a 'turn' or 'reversal' which occurred in his thought some years after the publication of *Being and Time* (LH 208/328).[48] Certainly the works that follow this book exhibit a change of focus and vocabulary. Heidegger no longer concentrates on examining everyday human activity or exploring the aspects of Dasein that he analyzed in *Being and Time* such as being-with others, death, resoluteness, guilt, conscience, and timeliness. Though these notions are at least touched upon tangentially in his later works, he increasingly focuses on being and its history, and his pronouncements become increasingly idiosyncratic and obscure.

Commenting on Heidegger's 1962 essay 'Time and Being,' Peter McCormick says: 'Now much of this defies critical understanding. We seem to be lost in what Pöggeler calls Heidegger's *Topologie des Seins*, wandering in some imaginary country mapped in inexhaustible detail by a philosophical Tolkein.'[49] I think the only way that we can begin to find our way through the thicket of dense jargon and obscure remarks is to take our bearings from the map sketched out in Heidegger's early work. Only then can we determine whether Heidegger is a philosophical Tolkein or a Columbus – or simply a cartographer of Western history who needed to develop his own symbol system to chart the territory he surveyed.

Heidegger himself has claimed that the 'turn' which his thought underwent in the years following the publication of *Being and Time* was in fact prepared for in that work and was the working out of the answer to the question of the meaning of being which it posed. He says:

> The thinking of the turn *is* a change in my thought. But this change is not a consequence of altering the standpoint, much less of abandoning the fundamental issue of *Being and Time*. The thinking of the turn results from the fact that I stayed with the matter for thought, 'Being and Time,' by inquiring into the perspective which already in *Being and Time* (p. 39) was designated as 'Time and Being'.
>
> (LH xvi/xvii)

According to the original outline of *Being and Time*, the section designated 'Time and Being' was to have appeared as Division Three of Part One. Heidegger indicated that there, after Division Two's explication of timeliness as the 'meaning' of human existence, he would examine 'time as the transcendental horizon for the question of

---

In the article Zimmerman argues that Heidegger's notion of '*Jemeinigkeit*' and Dasein's selfhood kept him from escaping the 'subjectivist' view that we are at bottom isolated, Cartesian consciousnesses. As I try to show in this chapter, neither concept, properly understood, refers us to the subjectivity or consciousness of the individual personality.

Zimmerman's book the *Eclipse of the Self* provides a more extended, detailed account of both the continuity and the difference in Heidegger's early and later thought. In it he argues that Heidegger's thought manifests a gradual development, not the abrupt break of a dead end and a new direction.

48 Heidegger's term is '*Kehre*.' He utilizes both its meaning of 'turn' and of 'reversal' in the sense of a turn about, and we will use both words.

49 See Peter McCormick, 'A Note on "Time and Being"', *Philosophy Today*, XIX (Summer 1975), p. 99.

being' (39f.). We would have gotten to the final layer explaining how being can 'be' and how Dasein can have an understanding of it.

The published text, however, breaks off with Division Two. In the 'Letter on Humanism,' Heidegger tells us that Division Three of *Being and Time* was withheld from publication because 'the thinking failed in the adequate saying of this turning and did not succeed with the help of the language of metaphysics' (LH 208/328). Even though Heidegger himself describes *Basic Problems in Phenomenology* as a 'new elaboration' of the subject of the unpublished Division Three, it and other works based on lecture courses given around the time he published *Being and Time*, such as *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* and *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, break off just as he reaches the same general issue despite each course's repeatedly announced intention to complete the analysis. His remarks as well as the truncated character of each of these projects are taken as an admission of the failure of his own thinking on the subject of the relationship of being and time. The admission supposedly indicates that Heidegger had to change his approach radically in order to give adequate treatment to the question of being or, more specifically, to the claim that Temporality is the meaning of being.

In light of such an interpretation of the development of Heidegger's thought, his own remarks about the consistency of his standpoint are taken as an attempt to gloss over important changes in his thought in order to avoid admitting that he had been 'so far afield' in his earlier work.[50] Rather than thinking that Heidegger's remarks about his own work must be 'taken with a grain of salt'[51] or believing that he has 'reworked his thought, indeed to an almost scandalous extent,'[52] I want to take seriously the author's comments about what he was trying to say and show how his writings bear him out. He may not have been perfectly clear about what he was trying to say at the time he wrote these early books and the 'saying' may have been somewhat inept, but his work can be seen as a unified whole.

Heidegger's comments about the consistency of his work indicate that the turn in his thought was projected and prepared for by the published portion of *Being and Time*. Although Heidegger does acknowledge that he was 'not capable of a sufficient development of the theme designated in the title "Time and Being"' at the time he published the truncated torso of *Being and Time* and that the essay published later with that title can no longer be regarded as a continuation of his earlier work, he still insists that the basic question being addressed remains the same (TB 83/91), and that, if anything, the 'fundamental flaw' in the book was that he 'ventured too far too early' (OWL 7/93). He may have set up a project more ambitious than he could complete or at least complete fast enough to avoid misinterpretation. However, I want to show not only that the question of both the 1927 book and the 1962 essay indeed is the same, which is not obvious, but also that the answer in both works remains within the framework established in *Being and Time*.

---

50 John D. Caputo, 'Time and Being in Heidegger,' *Modern Schoolman*, L (May 1973), p. 335.

51 Zimmerman, *Eclipse*, p. 77.

52 John D. Caputo, 'Time and Being in Heidegger,' p. 339.

If Heidegger was 'not capable' of adequately letting the subject matter of 'Time and Being' show itself, this was not because his preliminary analysis of human being sidetracked him or even derailed him from his original project of finding the meaning of being. Rather, as he suggests in his letter to Professor Richardson, 'a good number of years are needed before the thinking through of so decisive a matter can find its way into the clear' (LR xvi/xvii). If the 1962 essay 'Time and Being' cannot be simply tacked on to the text of *Being and Time*, this is not because of a change of mind but rather because of a change of method and a change of language to one not so easily accommodating the metaphysical misreading that has plagued that early work.

It was not just Heidegger's thinking that 'failed' in the 'adequate saying' of *Being and Time*. Adequate saying requires adequate listening. In 'The Letter on Humanism,' where he admits that 'the thinking' (note, he does not just say 'my thinking') failed, he also comments:

> . . . in order to make the attempt at thinking recognizable and at the same time understandable for existing philosophy, it could at first be expressed only within the horizon of that current philosophy and its use of familiar terms.
>
> In the meantime I have learned to see that these terms were bound to mislead immediately and inevitably into error. For the terms and the conceptual language corresponding to them were not rethought by readers out of the particular matter to be thought; rather the matter was conceived according to the established terminology and its customary meaning. (LH 235/357)

The customary meaning of the current philosophical vocabulary had been established by 2500 years of metaphysical thinking, some of the latest episodes of which were Husserl's phenomenology and the tradition of existentialism. By using such terms as 'self,' 'choice,' 'death,' 'guilt,' and 'conscience,' Heidegger seemed to be offering another particular understanding of what it is to be, specifically the existentialist one emphasizing subjectivity and personal choice. Indeed, he was prompted to write the 'Letter on Humanism,' from which many of the above quotations come, in order to dissociate himself from the existentialism of Sartre, with whom he had been indiscriminately lumped by many people.[53] Perhaps in order to avoid such misunderstanding as well as to express his insights more adequately, Heidegger's use of language becomes more and more inventive and idiosyncratic until his later philosophy may seem to preclude any understanding at all.

---

53 Sartre misunderstands Heidegger's claim that 'the "essence" of Dasein lies in its existence' (42). Although Sartre does have the notion that what we are is a product of our self-understanding, he sees this in an individualistic and ahistorical way. His dictum that 'existence precedes essence' seems to presuppose the traditional notion of 'existence' as 'actuality', or what Heidegger calls 'presence at hand,' rather than the idea of a 'standing toward' being. In Heidegger's view of him, Sartre is one more metaphysician offering a particular understanding of what it is 'to be.' Like Kierkegaard, Sartre primarily thinks on the existentiell level, not the existential. Their philosophies are expressions of their times, not analyses of what makes these different cultural epochs possible.

Heidegger himself should have been the first to see that there are good philosophical reasons why his own thinking may have been unfortunately affected by the heritage of significance attached to terms borrowed from the traditional philosophical vocabulary. But I also think that he is not being disingenuous when he says that he was trying 'to say something wholly different' with this traditional vocabulary (N4 141/194). Once we understand both the early and later vocabularies, especially such notions as 'death,' the 'timeliness' of Dasein, and the 'Temporality' of being, we will be able to see how the later essay 'Time and Being' can be regarded as the missing section of *Being and Time*, at least in content if not form.

If the 'turn' in Heidegger's thought is to be called a 'reversal,' we should keep in mind what is being 'reversed.' It is not a reversal or retraction of a particular claim or position. Rather, as Heidegger suggests in the above quotation from his letter to Professor Richardson, the turn or reversal is a change in perspective within the analysis of two issues: time and being. In the published portion of Part One of *Being and Time* we looked at the relationship between Dasein and being from the perspective of Dasein, and then, in the projected Division Three, we were going to look at the relationship from the perspective of being. Part Two would have applied this perspective to the history of Western philosophy. For Heidegger, the horizon of Time forms the background context for both perspectives, and the 'turn' was 'in play within the matter itself' that was – and was supposed to be – considered in the book. Rejecting the common assumption about the path of his thinking, Heidegger insists that 'the question of *Being and Time* is decisively fulfilled in the thinking of the turn' (LR xviii/xix).

Again and again throughout his early stage-setting work, Heidegger reminds us that the existential analysis of the being of Dasein is only preparatory for posing the question of the meaning of being. Years later he could still assert in retrospect that the real and only question of *Being and Time* was the meaning of being (Way 275/378). There are fewer reminders in that unfinished torso that the analytic of Dasein cannot be complete, nor the being of Dasein fully understood, until we have addressed this issue. Still, they are there. Note, for example, Heidegger's warning at the end of Section 35 on 'Dasein as Understanding,' in which he argues that Dasein's understanding cannot be simply equated with cognitive thought but rather is the 'projection' of the possibilities of existence in our 'stand toward' being:

> The existential meaning of this understanding of being cannot be satisfactorily clarified within the limits of this investigation except on the basis of the Temporal interpretation of being.
>
> (147)

The adjectival reference to the Temporality of being reminds us of the proposed content of the missing section 'Time and Being.'

The last sentences of the published portion of *Being and Time* conclude its discussion of the timeliness which makes Dasein's being possible, but they also pose the rhetorical questions which would have led into that missing section:

> *How is this disclosive understanding of being at all possible for Dasein?* . . . The existential-ontological constitution of Dasein's totality is grounded in timeliness. Hence the ecstatical projection of being must be made possible by some primordial way in which ecstatic timeliness times itself. How is this mode of the timing of timeliness to be interpreted? Is there a way which leads from primordial *time* to the meaning of *being*? Does *time* itself manifest itself as the horizon of *being*?
>
> (437)

The time which is the horizon of being is not just the time of Dasein's being but the Time of being in general. Indeed, I shall show that Dasein's authentic timeliness and the Time of being are grounded in the same basic phenomenon when viewed from the perspectives before and after the 'turn.'

Placed in the midst of the published portion of *Being and Time*, these warnings support Heidegger's retrospective claim that his original project was not trapped by a 'subjective' notion of Dasein which made being the 'willed' product of human thought. Justifying his claim that the proposed section 'Time and Being' would have 'turned' the 'whole' around, Heidegger later argues:

> One need only observe the simple fact that in *Being and Time* the problem is set up outside the sphere of subjectivism – that the entire anthropological problematic is kept at a distance, that the normative issue is emphatically and solely the experience of Da-sein with a constant view to the question of being – for it to become strikingly clear that the 'being' into which *Being and Time* inquires cannot remain something which the human subject posits. Rather being, stamped as presence by its time-character, approaches Dasein. Consequently, even in the initial steps of the question of being in *Being and Time* thought is called to a change whose movement corresponds to the turn.
>
> (LR xviii/xix)

With notions like 'existence' left underdeveloped, we might conclude that Dasein's being is a matter of subjectivity or attitude, as if the 'standing out' toward being is just our consciousness of things 'outside' of us or our attitude about them. Only later are we explicitly told that this 'standing out' is a matter of 'standing open' for the 'openness' of being (Way 271f./374). The openness of being is the disclosure of being through the way things invite our dealings with them. Such openness makes possible our understanding of being, our 'standing open' for its changing manifestations.

Because Heidegger did not carry off the turn in the format of that early investigation, he expresses dissatisfaction in other works with the account of the relation between being and human being given in *Being and Time*. Looking at Dasein's relationship to being only from the point of view of Dasein gives an 'inadequate' conception of the relation as a whole (OWA 87/74). It does not capture how Dasein's understanding of being changes in response to the Temporal revelation of being.

What is at issue in the 'turn' of *Being and Time* is what I will call the 'phenomenological turn.' It is required both by the phenomenon under investigation in the published parts of *Being and Time* and by the method of investigation, that

is, the hermeneutic phenomenology which uncovers deeper and deeper layers of Dasein's being. In the process of making the turn, however, Heidegger comes up against the limits of this initial method and its language. The phenomenological turn ultimately involves a turn away from phenomenology. In his later works he no longer tries to provide a transcendental excavation of the phenomenon of being, perhaps because he sees the structure and aim of his earlier argument, with its attempt to get to the bottom of things, as a holdover from metaphysical thinking, even if its content was an attempt to say something 'wholly different.'

For Heidegger the completion of the analysis of Dasein and of its relationship to being is not important just for its own sake, that is, for the sake of providing a complete representation of Dasein and its relationship to being, nor for correcting or complementing current views. Rather, he says that his completed analysis concerns a 'turn' in which 'what is at stake is a transformation in man's being itself.' In this sort of turn 'man comes into question in the deepest and broadest, in the authentically fundamental perspective: man in relation to being' (LR xx/xxi).

The 'turn' to which Heidegger refers here is not the phenomenological turn; it is the turn which is the transformation of man's being. This turn is, for example, the subject of Heidegger's lecture 'The Turning' given in 1949. Some of the confusion surrounding the notion of a turn in Heidegger's thought is caused by his use of the same word for both the change in perspective in his analysis and the change in the relationship between man and being. The former turn is carried out in his comprehensive analysis of Dasein and being, but the latter turn is something that has not taken place yet. This turn is 'the turn about of the forgetfulness of being into the truth of being' (QCT 44/42). This turn is a turn which happens or comes to pass in our understanding of being. The other turn is a matter for thought as interpretation or analysis; it involves no special kind of happening. However, Heidegger thinks that the turn which happens can only be 'thought out of the turn' which is no special kind of happening but rather is the change of perspective involved in carrying out the investigation into Dasein and being.

This other turn can be called, following Heidegger's Kierkegaard-inspired use of the term, the 'leap' of thought. Nothing foreign to the analysis of *Being and Time*, this turn is the extreme – the 'outermost'? – case of the moment of insight that authenticity holds 'ready to leap.' And the analysis of *Being and Time*, including its projected but not accomplished phenomenological turn, was supposed to prepare us for such a leap. Heidegger's own thinking cannot by itself accomplish this sort of turn, but even as early as this first, major book he saw his work as helping to prepare for it.

Indeed, Heidegger suggested in the second part of the Introduction to *Being and Time* that the interpretation of Dasein as temporal and historical would necessarily lead us into the question of the historicality of being. We would be obliged, he thought, to make the turn toward being. Furthermore, this section of the Introduction set the task of investigating the history of the question of being not just for the sake of providing a complete, accurate representation of Dasein or being, or the relationship between them. Heidegger suggested that the investigation also prepares us for positively 'appropriating' our past and brings us into 'the fullest possession of the

most proper possibilities of such an inquiry' into being (21).[54] This possibility is precisely the transformation of our understanding of being and, with it, the transformation of our Dasein. 'To ask how does it stand with being means nothing less than to repeat the beginning of our historical-spiritual Dasein in order to transform it in another beginning' (IM 39/29). This turn of thought, which we will examine in Section 7.4,[55] is the turn away from the traditional, metaphysical understanding of being and, Heidegger hopes, a turn toward a new beginning for Western thinking which would be as radical as that of the Greeks.

54 'Appropriating' translates the term '*Aneignung*' which Heidegger uses in this part of the Introduction to *Being and Time*. This may seem to prematurely emphasize the word's connection with Heidegger's term '*das Ereignis*,' but Hans-Georg Gadamer thought that the content of Heidegger's lectures in 1919 indicated that he already had at least a sketch of the map that would lead to his famous '*Kehre*' or turn. In them he referred to the 'worlding' of the world and used the expression '*es er eignit sich*.' See Theodore Kisiel's discussion of this point in *The Genesis of 'Being and Time'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 16. Gadamer's remarks were made in his *Heidegger's Wege* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), p. 141 and 'Wilhelm Dilthey nach 150 Jahren,' in *Dilthey und die Philosophie der Gegenwart*, ed. E.W. Orth, Sonderband der *Phänomenologische Forschungen* (Freiburg: Alber, 1985), p. 159.

55 [Chapter 7 is available at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* – Editor's note.]

Chapter 2

The Death of Dasein

As we turn to a consideration of Heidegger's conception of death in Division Two of *Being and Time*, we must remember what the existential analysis has accomplished in Division One. As if to remind us, Heidegger immediately tells us in the first paragraph of Division Two that the preceding investigation took his technical definition of 'existence' as its clue to analyzing Dasein's being. The term 'existence' 'formally indicates that Dasein *is* as an understanding able-to-be, which, in its being, makes an issue of that being itself' (231). We must keep this definition in mind as we consider the death of Dasein that Heidegger describes as 'the possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all' (262). With this notion of existence, we should be better prepared to comprehend the claim that Dasein's 'death' or its ceasing 'to be' begins where its possibilities end: at the limit of its 'standing toward' being.

Sections 2.1 and 2.2 recreate the immediate and historical context of Heidegger's discussion of death by relating it to his overall project in *Being and Time* and to the conceptions of death of two of his most influential philosophical predecessors, Hegel and Kierkegaard. Section 2.3 discusses the problem of Dasein's 'wholeness' through which Heidegger raises the issue of death in the text, while 2.4 distinguishes the ends of various domains of what-is as well as differentiating the six different notions of Dasein's end that Heidegger confusingly deploys. Section 2.5 discusses death as the distinctive end of Dasein's being, the 'possibility of the impossibility of existence,' while 2.6 addresses the notion of 'being toward the end.' Sections 2.7 and 2.8 discuss Dasein's two ways of relating to its existential end, that is, inauthentically or authentically 'dying.'

2.1 The Context of the Discussion of Death

In the traditional reading of *Being and Time*, as I indicated in the Introduction, the book appears to consist of two quite distinct, even unrelated, analyses. Division One is a phenomenological analysis of everyday activity, and Division Two is an analysis of such 'existentialist' themes as death, conscience, guilt, and time-consciousness. The mystery is how Heidegger could have expected, as he originally planned, to address the 'meaning of being in general' and the history of ontology after an investigation of how we each should face our own death, how our conscience speaks to us, how we are 'guilty' for our personal character and actions, and how consciousness is temporally unified. As we saw in Section 1.4, most commentators think that Heidegger realized this excursion into personal life was in fact not just a sidetrack but a dead end and consequently broke off *Being and Time*, leaving us

with a truncated torso while he went on to execute the 'turn' and try a radically different approach.

The view of death presented here lets us see how Heidegger could have thought that its analysis was a necessary step toward the overall goal of *Being and Time*, that is, determining the meaning of being in general. Heidegger reminds us of this goal in the opening paragraphs of Division Two, before he starts his investigation of death.

> What we are *seeking* is the answer to the question about the meaning of being . . . But to lay bare the horizon within which something like being in general becomes intelligible is tantamount to clarifying the possibility of having any understanding of being at all – an understanding which itself belongs to the constitution of the entity called Dasein.
>
> (231)

In lectures which anticipate the structure and content of *Being and Time*, Heidegger also presents the analysis of death as a station along the way toward answering the question of the meaning of being. He suggests that it is an important step toward determining the nature of Dasein's questioning of being, what it means to have a viewpoint and understand what-is, and the being of what-is in general (HCT 307/423).[1]

Later, in a book on *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Heidegger will suggest that fundamental ontology includes within its scope 'the problem of the finitude in man as the decisive element which makes the understanding of being possible' (KPM 240/225). In fact, he suggests that 'the comprehension of being itself is the innermost essence of finitude' (KPM 237/222). The conception of finitude which Heidegger says he is seeking, however haltingly in *Being and Time*, is not a dead-end sidetrack from the question of the meaning of being but instead is 'fundamental to the problematic of the laying of the foundation of metaphysics' (KPM 237/222f.).

Heidegger's analysis of the death of Dasein in *Being and Time* is his first major attempt to capture this notion of finitude. Death turns out to be connected not with the cessation of physical life or consciousness when we die nor with our attitudes toward this prospect but rather with Dasein's 'ownmost' being as an understanding of what it is to be. Heidegger comments that a consideration of the essence of finitude 'inevitably forces us to a consideration of the question of the conditions governing the possibility of a precursory orientation toward the object, that is, to a consideration of the question of the nature of the ontological turning toward the object in general which is necessary for this' (KPM 77/69). Heidegger asks us whether

---

1 This paraphrase comes from lectures given in the summer of 1926 now published as *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time*. In many ways the discussion of death in Heidegger's lecture course is similar to but not identical with the presentation of the issue in *Being and Time*, but the latter's distinctions are more refined and developed. But perhaps the most important difference is that the earlier analysis sought only a 'phenomenological conception' of death (HCT 312/431) while the later seeks an 'existential' one, that is, a concept capturing Dasein's being as existence. An aside below in footnote 35 in Section 2.5 points out one way in which the earlier approach to the subject is misleading.

our understanding reveals 'its deepest finitude' when it lets something be an object since then 'it betrays in a most primordial form the neediness of a finite essence' (KPM 79/72). His answer is 'yes,' and his analysis of death shows our need to let things be.

We should also keep in mind that in *Being and Time* the discussion of death comes immediately after Heidegger's explication of truth as unconcealedness at the end of Division One and before his discussion of the timeliness of Dasein which, as he has already told us, constitutes the meaning of its being, the condition for its possibility. For Heidegger, truth as *aletheia* or unconcealedness is more fundamental than truth as correspondence because a world must first reveal itself as a context of concern before we can make assertions about or have conscious representations of particular things which may then either correspond or not correspond to their properties.

Truth as unconcealedness is complemented by untruth as being closed off and covered up, a feature connected with Heidegger's notion of death. To truth belongs 'the reservoir of the not-yet (the un-) revealed in the sense of concealment' (OWA 60/48). As the following argument will show, the question of the death of Dasein explicitly addresses the issue of the 'not-yet' that forms an essential aspect of Dasein's understanding of being. Timeliness as the meaning of Dasein's being turns out to be the condition for the possibility of this 'not-yet' unfolding itself across the centuries of Western civilization.

Heidegger's analysis of death serves as a bridge between the issues of truth and timeliness. In lectures he gave shortly before the publication of *Being and Time*, he referred to his explication of death as a 'transitional consideration' (HCT 307/424). Shortly after the book came out, Heidegger may have realized that, as far as the reader was concerned, his approach served not to connect his train of thought but to derail it. In his lectures after the book's publication he says that he will try a new pathway to the subject of time, and he comments retrospectively: 'The pathway to the interpretation of time is not simple. The one I myself have taken is not the only one, but every pathway is long and runs into obstacles' (MFL 197/254).

Certainly Heidegger's discussion of the subject of death in *Being and Time* shunted too many readers down the wrong track, though he himself continued to see it as having a different aim. Heidegger could still comment late in his life that the discussion of death in that early work addresses 'the question of the timeliness of Dasein, of mankind,'[2] quite a different matter than an individual's attitude about physical death. In a remark that should certainly seem curious in light of the traditional interpretation of his views, Heidegger adds: 'This is another thought than that of Rilke, that everyone dies his own death.'[3]

Of course, the text left these distinctions far from clear and indeed invited the Existentialist misreading by the way Heidegger posed its problems as well as the

---

2 Note that, once again, Dasein is equated with 'mankind,' not the consciousness of subjects.

3 These remarks, which Heidegger made in a letter written to Jenny Hammett, are translated and quoted by her in her article 'Thinker and Poet: Heidegger, Rilke and Death' in *Soundings*, 60 (1977), p. 167. For Heidegger's comments about Rilke in *Being and Time*, see footnote 30 below.

terminology it used. He admitted that his retrospective claims about what he was trying to show presume a clarity that did not even exist in his own mind, let alone the text. The development of his views during this period was a 'tangled process, inscrutable even to' him and that both his language and his explanations do not adequately capture his intentions (LR xiv/xiii).

2.2 Some Historical Background

Examining the conceptions of death of two of Heidegger's most important predecessors, Hegel and Kierkegaard, will help prepare us for a discussion of his view of death. Perhaps Heidegger's philosophical use of the term 'death' will not seem so odd if we remind ourselves of its uncommon use in two of the thinkers to whom his work is indebted.

Of course, Hegel talks a great deal about the fear of death, in its ordinary sense, and the role it plays in human history and the stability of bourgeois society, both in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and other works, but there is a deeper, more fundamental notion of death in his conception of the development of Spirit and Nature. He argues that the ontological structure of finite things encompasses their end and allows for their alterability, perishability, and their being in time. As Werner Marx comments, in Hegel's view of a finite thing 'its being also is always already its "end" (as a something).'[4] In a passage in the *Science of Logic* on the nature of finite things Hegel comments:

> They *are* but the truth of this being is their *end*. The finite not only alters, like something in general, but it *ceases to be*; and its ceasing to be is not merely a possibility, so that it could be without ceasing to be, but the being as such of finite things is to have the germ of decrease as their being-within-themselves: the hour of their birth is the hour of their death.[5]

Because of their ontological structure, finite things must alter, and as alterable, they perish by going 'to their end.'

However, for Hegel, and Heidegger as well, the 'negative' such as death is not just an aspect of the being of particular things or kinds of things. Heidegger quotes Hegel's claim in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that German Idealism 'dared to think the negative as proper to being.' The 'monstrous power of the negative' turns out to be, for Hegel, especially important for us as finite creatures. He calls it, Heidegger emphasizes, 'the energy of thinking' (N1 61/73). Thought creates models of reality for itself, but then the 'negation' of these models by experience spurs thinking on to develop new models of reality.

---

4 Werner Marx, *Heidegger and the Tradition*, trans. T. Kisiel and M. Greene (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 65.

5 The quotation is from Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik*, Vol. I, 2nd edition (Leipzig: Meiner, 1948), p. 117. See the translation by A.V. Miller, *Hegel's Science of Logic* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), p. 129. It is quoted by W. Marx, ibid., p. 64. The phrase 'being within-themselves' translates the term '*Insichsein*.'

Heidegger quotes another passage from the *Phenomenology* which refers to the 'negation' of death:

> Death, if we want to name that unreality so, is the most frightful thing, and to hold fast to what is dead requires the greatest force . . . But the life of the Spirit is not one that shies from death and merely preserves itself from corruption; it is rather the life that endures death and maintains itself in death. Spirit achieves its truth only inasmuch as it finds itself in absolute inner strife.[6]

'Death' in this view is an aspect of the strife within Spirit, not a person's physical demise. Heidegger analyzes Hegel's notion of this inner strife of thought as the dialogue between natural consciousness and absolute Spirit.

Natural consciousness is the '*Zeitgeist*' or 'Spirit of the time,' the Spirit as it is historically given at any particular time with its specific conception of reality. The *Zeitgeist* confronts its death in the process of 'thoroughgoing skepticism.' Heidegger describes the process:

> The skeptic sustains from the outset the irresistible pull by which consciousness is violently carried beyond itself – by which, that is, natural is carried off into real knowledge. In this uprooting, natural consciousness loses what it takes to be its truth and its life. Hence, the uprooting is the death of natural consciousness.
>
> (HCE 80/160)

Natural consciousness is described by Heidegger as succumbing to anxiety for its own survival in the face of the 'violence' that overpowers it and 'carries it forth into its truth' (HCE 82/162). This survival is not the physical survival of a person but the survival of a way of thinking. When an understanding of reality is contradicted, natural consciousness loses its integrity. In this violence natural consciousness is 'violated,' but the violation comes from the Spirit working through consciousness, and Spirit is the truth or inner reality of consciousness itself. Spirit drives us to transcend limited knowledge in order to grasp the whole. The *Zeitgeist* sacrifices itself to gain itself and comprehend its own nature in the resurrection attendant to its death. In other words, natural consciousness as a particular understanding of reality dies so that absolute Spirit may live.

Heidegger describes the final, Hegelian victory of absolute knowledge:

> In the consummation of the dialogue of 'thoroughgoing skepticism' the words are uttered: 'It is finished!' They are uttered at that point where consciousness itself dies its own death, the death into which it is carried off by the violence of the Absolute. Hegel at the close of his work calls the phenomenology of Spirit 'the Golgotha of absolute Spirit.'
>
> (HCE 146/202)

6 Heidegger quotes these remarks in NI 61/131. The passage is from Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), p. 29[illegible]. See the translation by A.V. Miller, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 19.

The phenomenology of Spirit, which tests and rejects all the limited models of reality offered up by the *Zeitgeist*, is the site of the crucifixion of natural consciousness but also its means of resurrection into absolute knowledge.

For Hegel death is contained within the development of Spirit as the negation and end of natural consciousness but also its transformation. The dialectical struggle, the 'absolute inner strife,' is the struggle of life and death with the constant dying becoming a perpetual resurrection. At every point death itself is not absolutely 'other' to life. Rather life, that is, natural consciousness, encompasses its death, and death is what carries it off to the next stage of life. The models of reality which natural consciousness presents as knowledge contain within themselves the contradictions that lead to their downfall. The 'violence' which pulls natural consciousness toward its end is its own active life which has the goal of this end within itself. Consciousness by its nature strives to know reality.

The limit of this sort of death is already tacitly transcended at each stage of the *Zeitgeist* because of the inner nature of Spirit. Hegel's critique of Kant's notion of the thing in itself illuminates his own view of the life and death struggle of natural consciousness. As Gadamer puts Hegel's point, 'What makes a limit a limit always includes knowledge of what is on both sides of it. It is the dialectic of the limit to exist only by being removed.'[7] Heidegger comments about this process of the dialectic:

> If we may be permitted here to use as an expedient the language of mechanics, we might say: the progression in the history of the formation of consciousness is not driven forward by the actual shape of consciousness into the still undetermined, but is drawn by the pull of the goal which is already set. In that pull, the goal that pulls brings itself forth in its appearance and brings the course of consciousness from its start to the plentitude of its full status.
>
> (HCE 79/160)

For Hegel the concealedness of being is only a temporary concealment from thought, and thought tacitly comprehends what lies beyond the limit of its death. The shape of consciousness yet to come is already determined by the goal which has brought it this far, and that goal is for thinking to understand its own nature.

Heidegger comments that in Hegel's view 'being is the absolute self-thinking of thinking. Absolute thinking alone is the truth of being, "is" being.' Knowledge is complete when Spirit understands its own nature or when 'thought thinks itself.' Thus truth does not mean, as it did for Heidegger, an unconcealedness that arises in the involved activity of being-in-the-world, an activity which is not just a matter of conscious thought and cannot be made explicitly or transparently conscious. Rather for Hegel 'truth means always that the knowable as such is known with a knowledge absolutely certain of itself' (ID 43/109). Even the finitude of Spirit is overcome in the final stage of absolute knowing. Consciousness 'dies its own death' in the

---

7 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 307. Hegel argues that Kant cannot both claim that things in themselves exist and that we know nothing about them.

absolute knowledge in which it becomes utterly transparent to itself, knowing its own presuppositions and limits. Thus, it is not really dead, just resurrected in a transparent 'body'!

Werner Marx notes the difference in the relationship between the realm of untruth – death, evil, error – and the realm of truth as Hegel and Heidegger conceive of it. Switching from the imagery of life and death to the metaphor of light and darkness, as we will find Heidegger doing, too, in his discussions of death, Marx comments that Hegel 'does not let the dark remain dark but wishes to illuminate it by thought, by reason.' In contrast, Heidegger regards the concealed realm of death as remaining dark, unilluminated by Dasein's disclosing activity. If the darkness did not remain dark, a boundary which our knowledge cannot transcend, we would have no light. Truth as an unconcealing presupposes a concealedness, a darkness in this metaphor. Heidegger claims that finitude is essential to the 'ek-sistence' of an understanding of being. Werner Marx comments that, in contrast to Hegel: 'The decisively new factor in Heidegger's conception of *aletheia* as well as the truth of being generally is that he thinks of the "realm of darkness" and the "realm of light" as *equal partners* in the occurrence of being and that he conceives of their relationship to each other as a "strife" which keeps the character of the occurrence of presence radically "creative."'[8]

Spirit's journey involves no radical creation since its path is already mapped out by its inner logic. Hence for Hegel consciousness in undergoing death does not so much move from a lighted clearing into the dark as go from one lighted room to another with the lamp of reason already clearing its path. Supposedly, Spirit's inner logic finally brings it into a realm of total illumination, total transparency. Dasein will never achieve a complete self-knowledge that comprehends reality.

For Heidegger, as we shall see, we are making a leap into the dark in our being toward death. Because of its very nature as finite, Dasein's 'journey' through the 'stages of life's way' is bought at the cost of its being, its natural tendency to seek the safety of the Anyone. In lectures in 1943 Heidegger warns us of the 'the suffering in which the essential otherness of what-is reveals itself in opposition to the tried and usual.' He adds: 'The highest form of suffering is the dying of death as a sacrifice for the preservation of the truth of being. This sacrifice is the purest experience of the voice of being' (P 166f./249f.).

We should emphasize that, while Hegel promises the transparency of knowledge, Heidegger thinks he does not deliver it in his own philosophy, no more than any other thinker can. Heidegger playfully notes that the task of constructing metaphysics on the ground cleared by Kant's critique of pure reason is like that of jumping over one's own shadow. Kant realized that the *a priori* forms of knowledge cast their shadows wherever we look, preventing any lucid knowledge of things in themselves. Heidegger notes:

> Hegel alone apparently succeeded in jumping over this shadow but only in such a way that he eliminated the shadow, that is, the finiteness of man, and jumped into the sun

8 W. Marx, p. 117.

> itself. Hegel leaped over the shadow, but he did not, because of that, surpass the shadow. Nevertheless, every philosopher *must* want to do this. This 'must' is his vocation.
>
> (WIT 150f./153)

Every philosopher must want to make thought clear to itself; this goal is part of the project of traditional metaphysics. Heidegger thinks that Hegel's total illumination would be bought at the price of eliminating man *as* man, that is, as finite creature, and turning him into the sun-God. But, to Heidegger, Hegel's success is merely apparent, not real, since he leaped over the shadow only by promising an absolute knowledge which he did not deliver. Hence, he did not pass through the 'valley of the shadow of death' nor surpass the shadow. For Heidegger, one cannot leap over the shadow of death, but authentic Dasein pushes back its boundary by venturing into this valley.

Between Hegel and Heidegger stood Kierkegaard with his nagging little questions for the illustrious Herr Professor. Just who experiences the anxiety of natural consciousness in the face of its ontological death? Who lives through such a Hegelian death and achieves absolute knowledge? Who can live on the sun? Heidegger heeds Kierkegaard's message. He does not forget that Dasein is 'always mine' and 'being-in-the-world.' The illumination of the world leaves shadows that cannot be leaped over by particular individuals, and Dasein is never anything more than that. We also always inhabit a 'sphere of existence' which limits our understanding and our lives. For Kierkegaard our personal history cannot be 'outstripped' by either reason or will power, and for Heidegger the same is true of our cultural history.

Heidegger also learns something from Kierkegaard about leaping and dying. The individual who traverses Kierkegaard's spheres of existence is not following a continuous path whose track is laid out by some inner logic or reason. The 'leap' from the ethical sphere to the sphere of faith, for example, involves a radical transformation which is not intelligible from either the perspective before or after the leap. From the ethical sphere faith may appear as madness, and philosophy cannot hope to explain 'how one got into it, or it got into one.'[9] This is not, as is frequently thought, just because faith involves an 'absurd' set of beliefs. The leap of faith involves a profound change of self-understanding which is not a matter of nor explicable by reason.

In *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard refers to the moment of the leap of faith as the instant of 'life and death.'[10] In *Sickness Unto Death* he tells us that in 'Christian terminology' the word 'death' means 'spiritual wretchedness,' not physical dying.[11] Certainly he could appeal to authoritative precedent for support of his claim. St Paul thinks that the sinner lives a sort of 'death,' and, like Kierkegaard, the solution that he proposes is a 'dying to' the old life and a rebirth through faith in Christ. For

---

9 Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), p. 24.

10 Ibid., p. 53.

11 Ibid., p. 143. A whole book needs to be written on misunderstandings of Kierkegaard's conceptions of death, temporality, and eternity.

Kierkegaard the 'sickness unto death' of despair does not necessarily last 'unto' physical death. Spiritual wretchedness is itself death, and it lasts until one 'dies from' it, that is, dies away from it, and is reborn in faith in this life, not some world beyond it.[12]

For Heidegger, too, Dasein's authentic relationship to death as being toward death involves a transformation of self-understanding and Dasein's being-in-the-world. Heidegger had surely read Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death* before he wrote *Being and Time*, and perhaps it is no coincidence that his own technical phrase '*Sein zum Todes*' (being toward death) should be reminiscent of the German title of one of Kierkegaard's books (*Krankheit zum Todes*).[13] He also apparently borrowed from the Kierkegaard book from which he said he learned the most philosophically, *The Concept of Anxiety*, one of his key technical terms for the vocabulary of his notion of authentic being toward death, '*Augenblik*' (or literally, 'eyes-glance'), for the moment of insight. But while Kierkegaard's writing focuses on the level of personal choice and takes for granted the particular, existentiell understanding of being of nineteenth-century Protestant Christianity, Heidegger aims at a deeper analysis.[14]

2.3 The Problem of Wholeness

Heidegger begins his discussion of his own notion of the death of Dasein in a roundabout and misleading way. At the end of Chapter 6 of Division One of *Being and Time* Heidegger asks us:

> But *is* the phenomenon of care one in which the most primordial existential-ontological state of Dasein is disclosed? And has the structural manifoldness which lies in this phenomenon presented us with the most primordial totality of factical Dasein's being? Has our investigation up to this point ever brought Dasein into view *as a whole*?
>
> (230)

Armed with the transcendental layers of Dasein's being which he has uncovered in the first six chapters of the book, Heidegger now asks whether we have gotten to the bottom of Dasein's being and found the most primordial condition for the occurrence of Dasein as being-in-the-world. However, much of the discussion of the problem in

---

12 Abraham, Kierkegaard's paradigm for a knight of faith, is described as having the faith that he would be happy in this life. Kierkegaard suggests that faith only in a future world is not faith at all. See *Fear and Trembling*, ibid., p. 34f.

13 This possible connection between Heidegger's term and Kierkegaard's title was suggested to me by note 7 in John Llewelyn's 'The "Possibility" of Heidegger's Death,' *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 14 (May 83), p. 138.

14 Kierkegaard's term is '*Øjeblik*.' For his most compact (but also most obscure) discussion of his notion of the 'moment' of insight, see *The Concept of Anxiety*, pp. 81–93. For Heidegger's comments about this book and the existentiell character of Kierkegaard's works, see the footnotes on *Being and Time* 235 and 338 (English translation 494 and 497).

the introductory section to Division Two and the opening sections of its first chapter obscure the issue rather than illuminate it.

The initial posing of the problem does seem to raise a legitimate worry. In the first section of Division Two, Heidegger reminds us that a hermeneutical investigation needs to be evaluated as such. Is the interpretation complete? Does it have in view the full 'text' which it is supposed to be interpreting? Heidegger asks whether the interpretation has gotten the 'whole' of Dasein in its grasp. 'Only then can the question of the meaning of the unity which belongs to the whole of the totality' of Dasein be adequately formulated and answered (232).

The problem of wholeness raises two issues. First, the existential analysis of Division One has only taken into consideration the everyday and inauthentic modes of Dasein's existence. It analyzed the character of Dasein in its involved activity when it takes an understanding of being for granted. But it did not address the condition for the possibility of Dasein's authentic being, that is, of its being as the entity which makes an issue of being. And, second, has the analysis so far even had the whole of Dasein's everyday and inauthentic existence in its grasp? Heidegger asks if everydayness is not precisely the way of existing which lies *between* Dasein's 'beginning' and its 'end'? Then does not consideration of only this 'between' disregard the rest of Dasein?

Heidegger addresses the latter issue first. If Dasein's being is constituted in part by an able-to-be, then, as long as it is, it must always 'not yet be something' (233).

> As long as Dasein is, there is always something still outstanding, which Dasein can and will be. But to that which is thus outstanding, the 'end' itself belongs. The 'end' of being-in-the-world is death. This end, which belongs to the able-to-be – that is to say, to existence – always limits and determines whatever wholeness is possible for Dasein.
>
> (233–234)

While focusing on trying to determine the nature of this 'end' of Dasein, Heidegger also keeps the first problem before us. How can we analyze the whole of Dasein's being?

Unfortunately for the reader's comprehension of what is really at stake in either problem, Heidegger's preliminary discussion of the matter pushes us down a path which we are already too inclined to travel anyway, given our tendency to understand ourselves as subjects present-at-hand. With this initial encouragement, it is all too easy to overlook Heidegger's warning questions and his final rejection of the conception of human being implied by his initial discussion of the issue.

At first Heidegger suggests that Dasein's lack of wholeness signifies that it has 'something still outstanding in the able-to-be' (236). His notion of 'something outstanding' indicates something like a debt that has not been paid. Heidegger explains that 'it is essential to the basic constitution of Dasein that there is constantly something still to be closed' (236) in the sense of something still to be settled, locked up, or wound up, as a debt waiting to be paid, a decision waiting to be made, or a solution to a problem waiting to be found.[15] These connotations all have their place in light

15 'Something still outstanding in the able-to-be' ('*einen Ausstand am Seinkönnen*') suggests something outstanding in the sense of a debt to be paid, a connotation on which Heidegger's

of Heidegger's final analysis of the 'end' of Dasein, but the first interpretation which Heidegger proposes suggests that what is outstanding in Dasein's being, as long as it is, is a person's physical death. Until this event 'closes' the individual's life, we will not be able to analyze his being as a whole.

Obviously, Heidegger suggests, analyzing this 'end' of a person presents certain problems if phenomenology is to stick to the phenomena that disclose themselves to our own investigation. How can we analyze what it is like for us to die? When we experience this end, we will no longer be around to investigate it. Arriving at this sort of end, Dasein will have 'no-more-being-there,' no more Dasein and hence no more understanding of the phenomenon.[16] As Dasein reaches this sort of 'wholeness,' it will lose its being-in-the-world altogether (236).

Paul Edwards has a heyday with such remarks, suggesting that Heidegger is posing a pseudo-problem whose solution demands the experience of having no more experiences, a living to experience non-living.[17] But in these first tentative remarks Heidegger plants numerous red flags which should warn the attentive reader that this is not the definitive statement of the issue he is trying to raise. He reflects:

> We cannot cross out the 'ahead-of-itself' as an essential item in the structure of care. But how sound are the conclusions we have drawn from this? Has not the impossibility of getting the whole of Dasein into our grasp been inferred by an argument which is merely formal? Or have we not at bottom inadvertently posited that Dasein is something present at-hand, ahead of which something that is not yet present-at-hand is constantly shoving itself? Have we in our argument taken 'being-not-yet' and the 'ahead' in a sense that is genuinely *existential*?
>
> (236f.)

Unfortunately, the flags are only questions, and, at this point, Heidegger does not explicitly answer them.

Falling into the same trap as Edwards, Lawrence Hinman asserts in his reply:

> My own death is something still outstanding for me, something which has not yet occurred; in this sense it is a possibility. Heidegger clearly notes that this is the sense in which he is asserting that my death is for me a possibility.[18]

In support of this claim Hinman refers to Heidegger's initial discussion and ignores the fact that in the following passages Heidegger will repeatedly question or flatly deny that this sense of 'not yet' is appropriate for Dasein's sort of being.[19]

In fact, Heidegger eventually argues that the inauthentic understanding of death regards it precisely as such an event which has not happened yet but will in the

---

discussion draws and one which will link his notion of death to that of guilt. The phrase 'something still to be closed' translates Heidegger's '*eine ständige Unabgeschlossenheit*' (236). The German verb '*Ausstehen*' suggests the comparisons.

16 Heidegger's phrase is '*Nicht mehr da sein*.'

17 Edwards, *Heidegger and Death*, pp. 38–40.

18 Lawrence Hinman, 'Heidegger, Edwards, and Being toward Death,' p. 196.

19 See pages 243, 244, 245, 246, 250, 259, 335, and 327, as well as the above 236–237.

future. He also repeatedly waves a red flag to warn us that the initial conception of the problem may be entirely inadequate because it regards Dasein as something present-at-hand, that is, as a subject with a succession of representations which will eventually cease.[20] Later in the book he specifically says that we treat what-is as present-at-hand when we regard it as something which 'comes along, has presence, and then disappears' (389).

Now it has not been unusual in *Being and Time* for Heidegger to spend paragraphs or even most of a section describing a view which he then rejects. And frequently, as at the beginning of Chapters 3 and 4 in Division One, he will begin the description with ironic remarks about how 'obvious' a certain matter is or how 'easy' it will be to provide an answer to a certain question. Then he proceeds to show that such easy answers are not just wrong but fundamentally misguided. However, the coy false starts in the chapter on death continue for so long that the reader gets sucked into exactly the position which Heidegger ends up rejecting. For example, Section 47 on 'The Possibility of Experiencing the Death of Others' turns out to be a complete red herring, with at least two different such false starts. Edwards has great fun demolishing its claims, but his efforts are beside the point. Heidegger ends the section by suggesting that conceptions of the end of things with a different kind of being, for example, presence-at-hand or 'life' as Dilthey describes it, thrust themselves into the discussion 'and threaten to bring confusion to the interpretation of this phenomenon – even to the *first* suitable *way of presenting* it' (241). Even the proposal that recognizes that, since we experience the death of others, we do not have to wait till our own physical death to understand the whole of Dasein is still vitiated by a confusing admixture of a present-at-hand conception of Dasein, and it turns into another dead end.

But, then, what exactly is the problem of Dasein's 'wholeness'? The statement of the problem gradually shifts away from the 'horizontal' metaphor of the 'still outstanding' as something yet to come in an individual's life span and turns toward the issue of the nature of an existentiell understanding of being. Heidegger realizes that in the opening discussion the problem of wholeness may have appeared to be 'an arbitrary construction' (303) but thinks that the ensuing, correct analysis will convince us that the issue and its solution are crucial for understanding Dasein. By Chapter 3 of Division Two he can comment:

> The question of Dasein's able-to-be-whole has now fully sloughed off the character indicated at the beginning, when we treated it as if it were just a theoretical or methodological question of the analytic of Dasein, arising from the endeavour to have the whole of Dasein completely 'given.' The question of Dasein's totality, which at the beginning we discussed only with regard to ontological method, has its justification, but only because the ground for that justification goes back to an ontical possibility of Dasein. (309)

What we need to understand is not the 'wholeness' of Dasein as a 'sum' of parts which we want to have 'given' to our analytic perspective, not even if the 'parts' are

20 See pages 240, 241, 241ff., 245, and 248, as well as the above 236–237, and Heidegger's remark about Kant's conception of the self on 320–321.

the various existential structures of Dasein's being. The completeness of Dasein is not a matter of having a complete theory of it. It is the possibility of Dasein itself being 'complete' or 'whole,' that is, of Dasein's ability to *be* as the entity that 'exists' by taking a stand toward being.

In the Heraclitus seminar of 1966/67 Heidegger poses an analogous question about the unity of a library. Is the library simply the sum of its books, furniture, and other items? Is the wholeness of the library jeopardized when some of these books or chairs are removed? Of course not: it is still a library. Heidegger explains: "'All" understood as summative is quite different from allness in the sense of the unity of the peculiar sort that is not so easy to specify at first' (HS 20/37). Evidently even forty years after writing *Being and Time* Heidegger still found it hard to specify at first this notion of wholeness.

In *Being and Time* the reader may feel that there is something fishy about the problem precisely because of the misleading way it was introduced. If we heed Heidegger's warnings and reject the present-at-hand conception of Dasein, it is not clear why Dasein's 'wholeness' should be problematic. Is the difficulty that of how Dasein can be a unified understanding of being across time, particularly the span of centuries, when this understanding of being is constantly changing? This is how the issue might appear once we adequately grasp Heidegger's notions of Dasein's timeliness and historicality which follow his discussion of death. For example, how can Dasein unify itself in the past, present, and future? How can Dasein 'stretch itself along' in history? Yet why is this to be regarded as a problem? And why do we need to look behind or beyond the phenomenon for something that will guarantee a unity underlies the changes? If this is the problem, it sounds suspiciously like the one Heidegger himself dismissed as a pseudo-problem in his discussion of Husserl's and Kant's arguments for the unity of consciousness beneath its changing representations. This supposed problem, he said, was created by a mistaken, present at-hand view of the self, so it should not be left over after the rejection of such a misconception. We should remember Heidegger's criticism of the traditional conception of substance as that which 'underlies' changes. Would we not be falling into a similar present-at-hand conception of historicality if we wondered how Dasein can be the same and yet change?

The real question is not how Dasein can remain a unity across time and history but how can it be a unity at all. The possibility of existing as a unified 'whole' mentioned in the above quote is the possibility of authenticity. How is it that we can have *an* understanding of being and comprehend what-is as a whole exhibiting a particular way of being? We ourselves are simply one more domain of what is. How can Dasein make an issue of the being of everything which is and come up with an answer to the question of being?

In the 1928 lectures constituting the text of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* Heidegger claims that the concept of death in the recently published *Being and Time* is part of the analysis of Dasein's transcendence (168/214). In the lectures what precedes the discussion of Dasein's timeliness is a discussion of its 'world entry' as historical happening rather than a meditation on Dasein's death. In this presentation, Dasein's 'freedom toward ground' or its openness toward the being of

what-is seems to provide the entry into the same issues that followed Heidegger's analysis of Dasein's being toward death in the hastily published book. Perhaps he was trying to avoid the misunderstanding created in the earlier work by avoiding its misleading vocabulary in which key words are ordinary words – death, guilt, conscience – but do not mean what they do in ordinary discourse. 'World entry' and 'freedom toward ground' are more obviously a part of a technical vocabulary to be defined at the author's discretion.

In *Being and Time*, the 'death' of Dasein is the end of Dasein's being, its existence as an openness toward being. In order to see how Dasein settles the question of being, we need to understand what puts an end to 'the entity that we are,' and this is certainly not the cessation of the life of a person. It is 'death' in a very particular sense: existential death.

2.4 The Ends of Dasein

The 'end' of Dasein's being is described as its 'not yet,' but this is not something yet to come. Rather 'Dasein always exists in just such a manner that its "not yet" belongs to it' (243). This 'not yet' is an aspect of the 'ahead-of-itself' dimension of Dasein's care structure, which is not a matter of events that have not yet occurred. Before the discussion of death, Heidegger argues in the last chapter of Division One that Dasein is 'ahead-of-itself' because it projects an understanding of being which enables it to deal with things. Now Heidegger argues that when we consider the 'ahead-of-itself' in a genuinely existential manner, that is, one appropriate to Dasein's being as existence, we will see that the 'ahead-of-itself' is 'being toward the end – something which, in the depths of its being, every Dasein is' (317).

We can see in this quotation that the metaphor of wholeness on which Heidegger pins much of his discussion of death switches from an image of horizontal extension in time to one of vertical depth. The issue is not, have we got all the parts of Dasein present at once, but rather have we reached the rock bottom condition for the possibility of having an understanding of being? In fact, Heidegger will argue in the last chapter of *Being and Time* that the 'horizontal extension' of Dasein in time, that is, its 'spanning' character, is a phenomenon derivative from inauthentic timeliness and, as such, ultimately dependent on an authentic being toward the end.

Since *Being and Time* distinguishes at least nine kinds of 'ends,' some applicable to Dasein's being and some not, perhaps an account of Heidegger's more general notions of end and finitude in later works would give us a helpful overview before we get to those details. In *An Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger talks about the 'end' of what-is in general. For what-is to 'come to stand' and 'remain standing,' it must establish a limit for itself which demarcates it as something-which-is rather than non-being or nothing. This limit is the *telos* of what-is which, Heidegger claims, is not its purpose or aim but its end. Not implying some lack, failure, or cessation, rather this 'end is ending in the sense of fulfillment.'[21] That which places itself in its

21 The term 'fulfillment' translates Heidegger's term '*Vollendung*.'

limit has a form (*morphe*). Sounding at this point very much like Hegel, Heidegger argues that what-is gets its form or essence by placing itself in its limit or having an end (IM 60/46).

In an essay on Aristotle, Heidegger suggests that being 'fully-ended' or 'fulfilled' is not a matter of being concluded. Instead, it indicates a way of being determined by a *telos* such that something stands 'finitely' before us (AP 256/284). Paraphrasing Aristotle, Heidegger suggests that something is said to be only when it 'is' in the mode of 'having-itself-in-the-end' (AP 254/282). The 'not-yet-ness' of what-is is not left behind or finished but rather is brought to its realization or fulfillment (AP 258/287).

Especially since in this essay Heidegger seems to equate this 'not-yet-ness' with *hyle* or the 'matter' of something and to equate being fully-ended with achieving a definite form, the simplest illustration of this notion of coming to the end would be a natural thing developing from a seed or clump of cells into a fully-fledged plant or animal. Heidegger describes the achieving of a finite form as the thing's appearance as what it *is*, not as something else or many things or nothing. A similar looking seed or clump of cells could have ended up something else or no thing at all. In achieving its end the thing appears 'finally and finitely' as what it is. Analogously, if Dasein's end lets it show itself as what it is, then it must make manifest its being as an openness toward being.

These illustrations drawn from particular things help illuminate Heidegger's notion of the end of what-is, but he is concerned with the being of what-is in its various domains and not just with the particular characteristics of kinds of things.[22] 'Limit and end are that wherewith what-is begins to *be*' (IM 60/46). Different domains of what-is have different sorts of ending.

In *Being and Time*'s discussion of ending, Heidegger gives examples of the type of ending involved in three domains of what-is other than Dasein:

1 the end or 'fulfillment' of what-is in the domain of nature in the ripening of a piece of fruit;
2 the end of what-is ready-to-hand when a sum of money accumulates from the payment of a debt and is available for use; and
3 the end of what-is present-at-hand when a road stops and is delimited as a discrete thing (241–246).

Notice that none of these endings involve ceasing to be or vanishing from the physical world as an entity, as the piece of fruit would when eaten or the road when demolished for a freeway. These different domains of what-is have different appropriate ends which let them be in a particular way as nature, ready-to-hand, and present-at-hand, and that one piece of fruit could have any of these endings depending on the context of significance. But what sort of ending lets Dasein be what it is? What kind of ending puts an end to its existence, its taking a stand toward being?

22 For another discussion of the relationship between the ontic illustrations and the domains of the being of what-is, see Chapter 5, Section 2.

In regard to the above examples, Heidegger comments:

> *By none of these modes of ending can death be suitably characterized as the 'end' of Dasein.* If dying, as being-at-the-end, were understood in the sense of an ending of the kind we have indicated, then Dasein would thereby be treated as something present-at-hand or ready-to-hand. In death Dasein has not been fulfilled nor has it simply disappeared; it has not become finished nor is it wholly available as something ready-to-hand.
>
> (245)

Since Dasein has the peculiar being of existence, 'the existential meaning of Dasein's coming to an end must be taken from Dasein itself, and we must show how such ending can constitute *being-whole* for the entity which exists' (242).

Heidegger distinguishes six sorts of ends for Dasein in *Being and Time*, and, unfortunately for the reader, any of these notions may be called 'death' or 'dying' at various points in Heidegger's discussion, only further muddying already murky waters. First of all, we can note that we as human beings who are Dasein face ends other than the distinctive end of Dasein as the entity that makes an issue of being:

1 Because we have 'life,' we confront the end of life which Heidegger calls 'perishing.'
2 And, because we both have life and are Dasein, we confront a sort of combination or 'crossbreed' phenomenon which Heidegger calls 'demise' (or literally 'living out').[23]

However, because we are Dasein in our ownmost being, not simply a biological creature, we also confront:

3 'dying,' which Heidegger technically defines as our way of being toward our death (247) or a way of being our end, the inauthentic mode of which we discuss in Section 2.7 and its authentic mode in Section 2.8;[24]
4 'being-at-the-end' or no longer 'being there' as Dasein in the way we describe in Section 2.6;[25]
5 the existential end of Dasein that Heidegger calls 'the possibility of the impossibility of existing,' which we discuss in Section 2.5; and
6 'being toward the end,' a matter of the relationship between Dasein and being which Heidegger also calls 'being toward death,' which we discuss in Section 2.6.[26]

---

23 The term 'perishing' translates Heidegger's '*Verenden*,' which carries the sense of completing or carrying through on ending, while 'demise' substitutes for '*Ableben*,' although, unfortunately, it lacks the latter's graphic connotation of 'living out' and hence fails to make its etymological link to the notion of life (*Leben*) as obvious as it is in German.

24 'Dying' translates Heidegger's term '*Sterben*.'

25 '*Zu-ende-sein*' is Heidegger's phrase. See footnote 26 below.

26 '*Sein zum Ende*' and '*Sein zum Tode*' are Heidegger's phrases. Note the difference between these unhyphenated phrases and '*Zu-Ende-sein*' which we translate above as 'being-at-the-end.' See footnote 42 in Section 2.6.

It is essential to note that all six ends are distinctively human ends, although they may not really be significantly distinct from each other, but also that only the last four comprehend Dasein as Dasein. So let us examine the content of the first two notions of end for their meaning and their limitations.

(1) The 'life' which Heidegger attributes to us in these crucial passages is not mere biological life, and perishing is not the ending of life in the biological sense. He says that 'Dasein's going-out-of-the-world in the sense of dying must be distinguished from the going-out-of-the-world of that which merely has life' (240). But he is not contrasting the end of human beings with the end of non-human creatures which have 'mere life.' Plants and animals are not 'in-the-world' in Heidegger's sense of the term and thus cannot be described as 'going-out-' of it. When he adds that 'the kind of end which Dasein can have is distinguished from the end of a life,' his footnote reference is to his earlier discussion of Dilthey's notion of 'life' (241).[27]

Dilthey uses the term 'life' to indicate the web of significance that is created by the distinctively human activity of interpretation; life, Dilthey argues, has a hermeneutical structure because it interprets itself. The notion is similar to Heidegger's concept of being-in-the-world, and thus this sort of life is not the merely biological life that we share with animals. Heidegger's text is far from clear on this distinction, perhaps because in his own mind he was still grappling with differentiating his views from Dilthey's.[28]

---

27 The footnote refers the reader back to Section 10's discussion of anthropological, psychological, and biological approaches to human life in which Descartes, Dilthey, Scheler, and Husserl are the primary targets of criticism (pp. 45–50). The way that Macquarrie and Robinson handle the references to '*Leben*' suggest that they fail to notice that Heidegger distinguishes '*Leben*' or 'life' in Dilthey's sense from 'pure life' ('*pures Leben*') or 'mere life' ('*Nur-Lebenden*') as the physiological processes we share with animals. Compare the German and English versions of the relevant passages on pages 246–247 as well as 240–241, for example, their use of 'purely' as an adverb modifying 'considered' rather than an adjective modifying 'life' to match Heidegger's German more closely. Hence they imply that 'perishing' ('*Ableben*') is a characteristic we share with animals when Heidegger is suggesting that the latter commonality holds no significance for an investigation of Dasein, while 'perishing' does warrant attention in so far as it is considered as having life in Dilthey's sense. Statistical comparisons of human and animal longevity, for example, would get us no nearer to understanding what is distinctive about human life or the end of Dasein as an openness to being (pp. 246–247). In a later marginal note by this passage in his own copy of *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger emphasizes that his claim is accurate only if 'life' refers to 'human life,' not the entities in the ontic 'world.' But his original text is far from clear on these distinctions, indeed he himself probably was not clear about them in his own mind when he wrote it, and the reader struggling though the maze of old terms used in different and unclear ways easily goes astray.

28 In *The Genesis of Heidegger's 'Being and Time'*, a monumental account of the early development of Heidegger's philosophy and the composition of his first major work, Theodore Kisiel traces in great detail Heidegger's grappling with Dilthey's notion of life and his attempt to differentiate his own notions of human existence and facticity from it. See 'The Deconstruction of Life,' Part I, Chapter 3, pp. 116–148, and 'The Dilthey Draft,' Part III, Chapter 7, pp. 315–361.

Heidegger says that of course death can also be regarded as the cessation of 'pure life,' a physiological and biological phenomenon, but that the medical concept of '*exitus*' is distinct from what he is trying to capture with his notion of perishing as the end of life (241). A medical conception of death as the end of biological life processes, for example, respiration, blood circulation, and so forth, also applies to the death of animals, indeed in a more clear-cut way. With animals, *exitus* seems to be the only relevant concept of dying. However, when people perish, they go 'out-of-the-world' in the sense that they lose 'life' in Dilthey's sense and lose the world as the context of significance. However, they might do that either by 'exiting' or by lapsing into a permanently unconscious state.[29]

At least, we might note, they lose the world of the living as their context of significance.[30] Heidegger insists his own discussion does not address the issue of life after death, even as a question (247–248), a claim which is hard to reconcile with the common interpretation of his concern.

(2) The second conception of the end of human beings, demise, is more closely connected to Dasein's ownmost being as ek-sistence. This sort of end is still not the end distinctive to Dasein's being as Dasein, but since individuals both are Dasein as an openness to being and manifest Dilthey's 'life' as self-interpreting, we can distinguish a sort of 'crossbreed' phenomenon. The individual *qua* entity with life perishes or ceases living as self-interpreting. But the individual *qua* Dasein does not merely perish. We take a stance toward what it is to be *as* perishing. This is where views of life after death enter in, and indeed determine, the significance of aspects of biological life. Demise is perishing understood in particular ways, for example, as the gateway to heaven or hell, the beginning of the next cycle of karma, or the cessation of consciousness. However, and more importantly, it is perishing understood as having a fundamental and global impact on the totality of our self-interpretation.

Put bluntly, we entities with life drop dead; that is, we perish and thus cease interpreting. To distinguish perishing from demise is to emphasize that this interpreting is not just a matter of an *ex nihilo* interpretation of consciousness but rather manifests Dasein's stance toward being and engagement with the being of what-is, including our own, in the way it shows up in our historical culture. Heidegger calls perishing 'demise' to indicate the end of life as it as been taken up in a particular understanding of being. Demise is perishing understood as co-determined by Dasein's

29 Of course, debates about 'brain death' were far on the horizon at the time Heidegger was writing these remarks. He would probably see such arguments as trying to determine the relationship between the concepts of *exitus* and perishing or the difference between losing all biological functions and losing the ability to be aware, interpret, and respond in a human way.

30 In 'What Are Poets For?' Heidegger discusses Rilke's comment that 'Death is the *side of life* that is turned away from us, unilluminated by us.' Heidegger indicates elsewhere that Dilthey had already formulated the concept of life which Rilke uses and which is similar to his own notion of being-in-the-world (BPP 173/246f.). Heidegger suggests that for Rilke death and the realm of the dead are just another, yet undiscovered dimension of the being of what-is. They are 'the other side of the whole network (*Bezug*) of the Open' (PLT 124/302) only in the sense that they are another part of it and one which living people have not encountered yet.

primordial being (247). Hence he describes it as an 'intermediate phenomenon,' one that points the way from understanding ourselves as 'life' in Dilthey's sense to understanding the end distinctive to Dasein as the entity that makes an issue of being.

If this distinction between perishing and demise is supposed to be seen as criticism of Dilthey that corrects a crucial fault in Dilthey's account of human life, it may seem unfair at this point. Heidegger indicates in a footnote – but only in a footnote – that Dilthey 'could not fail to recognize how life is connected with death.' He quotes Dilthey's remark that the 'relationship which most deeply and universally determines the feeling of our Dasein' is the relationship to death 'for the bounding of our existence by death is always decisive for our understanding and assessment of life.'[31] Of course, Dilthey used neither the term 'Dasein' nor 'existence' in the technical way Heidegger does, and Heidegger's implied criticism in the text is that Dilthey failed to see the role of an understanding of being in our history or our dealings with what-is nor how it influences our changing interpretation of ourselves and things around us. In other words, it is precisely Dilthey's failure to see 'life' as 'Dasein' and our being as 'existence' that is the problem in his account.

Since Heidegger's concept of Dasein refers to human life in its role as the 'there' in which what it is to be is revealed, Dasein's distinctive end or death can be regarded as a phenomenon of such life (246, 444*). It is not, however, equivalent to either perishing or demise. Indeed, understanding our end as demise turns out to be an aspect of the inauthentic understanding of the death of Dasein. This does not mean that the concept is invalid or inadequate as what it is, that is, as the concept referring to our understanding of what it means to have life which will come to an end. The problem is that it does not capture the distinctive being of Dasein, and Heidegger regards understanding death in only this way indicates a flight from our ownmost being and its end.

With all these distinctions on the table, and a use of terms that predictably left his readers thoroughly confused about what his point is, Heidegger pauses to reflect on the derivative nature of biographical, historical, ethnological, and psychological characterizations of death and comments that the analysis 'cannot keep clinging to an idea of death which has been devised accidentally and at random' (247–248), vowing to get to the ontological bottom of Dasein. The end of Dasein *qua* Dasein is the existential end which determines Dasein's wholeness *as* an understanding of being, and this is the end pointed to in the last four senses of ending indicated above, an explication of which we shall proceed to provide.

2.5 The Possibility of the Impossibility of Existence

Both in the text of *Being and Time* and in a later marginal comment Heidegger seems to equate the meaning and significance of (3) dying and (4) being-at-the-end.[32] Since

---

31 See Heidegger *Being and Time*, p. 249 and *Being and Time*, p. 494, footnote vi to Chapter 2. Dilthey's remarks are quoted from the fifth edition of *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, p. 230.

32 See *Being and Time*, p. 254. In his own copy of the book on page 444 where he introduces

this basic notion cannot be made clear until we fully understand his conception of death as (5) 'the possibility of the impossibility of existence' and (6) 'being toward the end,' first we should examine these distinctive ends of Dasein's ownmost being. This sort of 'end' is an existential, that is, a structure of Dasein's being as existence, the openness toward being (242). In contrast, perishing and demise refer to events which happen to Dasein insofar as we are human beings. Dasein's existential end and wholeness are 'ways in which Dasein gets a definite character ontologically' (241), not simply events which happen to it or are yet to come in the course of an individual's lifetime.

Heidegger sees the end or death of Dasein as an essential feature of its being as a 'standing toward' being. Existential death is not grounded in the biology of our bodies but rather in Dasein's relation to being. Death, as the 'possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all' (262), is the 'conclusive' possibility (259) which closes Dasein's being. This being involves making an issue of being, and thus, as Heidegger says at the beginning of the discussion of death, it always has something unsettled in it, a problem in need of a solution, a question in need of an answer.[33] But death marks a limit which puts an end to the debate over what it is to be.

As we noted in the Introduction, the technical meaning of Heidegger's term 'existence' has been ignored in discussions of his notion of the death of Dasein. Yet if 'existence' indicates that 'Dasein *is* as an understanding able-to-be which in its being makes an issue of this being,' then we should ponder what it might mean for Dasein not to be, that is, when and how it is *not* an understanding able-to-be. Discussions of Heidegger's notion of death have assumed that Dasein dies when it ceases to be actual and that this happens when a person undergoes physical death. Or, if they recognize that Heidegger calls death a 'way to be' (245) and that for him death is a matter of 'being toward death,' then at best they have taken death to be a matter of a person's attitude about or relationship to physical death, that is, a way of caring about one's demise. Both assumptions are mistaken.

Heidegger's later explanations of his use of the term 'existence' help to clarify what is at issue in his notion of death in *Being and Time*. Since one thesis of this book is that in all his works Heidegger continued to say 'the same,' as he himself said about other thinkers, we can call upon his later works for his more developed conception. In the 'Letter on Humanism' he comments: 'The sentence "Man eksists" is not an answer to the question of whether man actually is or not; rather, it responds to the question concerning man's "essence"' (LH 207/326f.). Later in the same essay he says that his notion of existence in *Being and Time* does not refer to 'the actuality of the *ego cogito*' or personal consciousness but rather indicates Dasein's

---

the term '*Zu-Ende-sein*' he later writes '*der Tod als Sterben*,' and, as we noted above, he defines 'dying' (*Sterben*) as a way of relating to our end. See Section 2.6 for a detailed discussion of the connection.

33 The word 'conclusive' translates Heidegger's term '*abschliessende*.' The phrase 'something unsettled' translates Heidegger's term '*eine Unabgeschlossenheit*.' Based on the same root verb, they graphically carry an allusion to the notion of '*Erschlossenheit*' or 'resoluteness' which Heidegger will develop in the following chapters.

relation to being (LH 222/343). Thus, we should see that when Heidegger speaks of the 'possibility of the impossibility' of the existence of Dasein, he is not raising a question about the actuality of either man in general or an individual consciousness. He is not suggesting that sometime in the future such actuality may be 'impossible' or absent.[34] As we indicated in the last section, Heidegger claims that his investigation of death is not in any way addressing the issue of life after death (247f.). He is not raising a question about continued personal survival or even considering whether such a question can be legitimately posed, let alone assuming a negative answer to it as Paul Edwards as well as Lawrence Hinman, Jamshid Mirfenderesky, and others defending Heidegger's notion of death against Edwards seem to think.[35]

Since the question that Heidegger is raising concerns the character of Dasein's being as existence, we should ask whether such 'standing toward' being involves 'impossibility' even for the actual, existing Dasein. Elaborating on this notion, in 'The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics' Heidegger characterizes more exactly what he means by 'existence.' The 'standing out' toward being is not just a matter of consciousness being aware of something 'outside' of itself. He is not talking of a person's consciousness of, for example, dogs, rocks, trees, and so forth, as things 'outside' of her, although this is the level upon which many discussions of Heidegger's idea focus. Rather, Heidegger says that this 'standing toward' is a

34 The discussion in the lectures represented in the *Prolegomena to the History of the Concept of Time* is rather misleading on this matter because in some passages it seems to emphasize the 'I,' 'my,' and 'myself' rather than, as in *Being and Time*, couching the same point in terms of 'Dasein' and its 'ownmost' self. For an example of this, see the paragraph that begins 'With my death' on HCT 313/433 where repeated subjective pronouns suggest that the issue is the extinction of personal, subjective consciousness. But the attentive reader would have noticed Heidegger's earlier instruction to keep the content of the word 'I' open, 'not relating it to a "subject" and the like,' so that he can let the phenomenological analysis fix its content (HCT 237/326).

These lectures were given before Heidegger published *Being and Time*, and, as I have already noted in Section 1.3, in works immediately following *Being and Time*. Heidegger took pains to stress the 'neutral,' 'metaphysical' character of Dasein's self, perhaps trying to correct earlier misunderstanding and perhaps also simply becoming clearer in his own unfolding thought. In one such discussion, he stresses that we should not fill the term 'I' with the notion of the 'isolated, egoistic subject' (MFL 190/245). The progression of Heidegger's thinking about the 'I' to his fully developed notion of Dasein is a theme winding its way through Theodore Kisiel's *The Genesis of Heidegger's 'Being and Time'*. For an example of the problem he begins to grapple with early in his career see pp. 146–148.

35 Edwards accuses Heidegger of 'double talk' on the issue of life after death because he assumes that the 'impossibility of existence' can only refer to the 'totality of the destruction' of personal consciousness at physical death (Edwards, *Heidegger and Death*, p. 60). Hinman seems to think that the 'absolute nullity' which Heidegger connects with the 'possibility of the impossibility of existence' is an annihilation brought about by physical death (Hinman, pp. 198, 200, 210, 211). Mirfenderesky suggests that Christian followers of Heidegger will have to solve the problem of the compatibility of belief in eternal life with Heidegger's 'contention that death is a total annihilation or the utter nullity of existence' (Mirfenderesky, p. 178).

'standing open' for 'the openness of being.' The 'standing out' does not signify getting out of some immanence of consciousness but rather being 'out' in the 'openness of being' (Way 271f./374).

This 'openness of being' is the disclosure of being which makes possible our understanding of being. We 'stand toward' being in the sense of being open for its revelation. Since Heidegger calls this openness of being the 'truth of being,' giving truth his usual meaning of unconcealedness, Heidegger also says that existence means 'standing out into the truth of being' (LH 206/326). The openness of being grants Dasein its possibilities as 'an understanding able-to-be.' Our ability to be human and to deal with things in various ways is a matter of our understanding of being. Dasein can be *as* existing because of its 'standing out into' a revelation of being. This sort of existence is 'impossible' when it is closed off to possibilities instead of open to them.

This notion of limitation can be graphically illustrated with Heidegger's metaphoric description of Dasein as a 'clearing' or 'lightening.'[36] The clearing is the realm of possibilities which are revealed to Dasein by being, just as a forest clearing highlights the things in it by setting them off against the dark background of the surrounding forest. Beyond the clearing lie impossibilities in the realm of being's concealment. The brightness created by the light 'plays in the open and wars there with darkness' (TB 64/71). The 'other side' of the unconcealedness of the open is the concealedness of death. As Heidegger's seminar partner Eugen Fink indicates, death refers us to the night which surrounds the open.[37]

Ordinarily we think of shadows and darkness as indicating a lack of light or its complete denial. But, Heidegger argues, the shadow is a testimony to the concealed emitting of light. It is the incalculable, the unpredictable and unthinkable, which lies beyond our capacities to represent, yet points us to being as the locus of the light which may illuminate the dark corners one day (QCT 154/112). The clearing has its limitation; *aletheia* is surrounded by *lethe*.[38] But the dark, too, is 'in a certain sense also the Open, if a light is kindled in it' (HS 130/209). The 'other side' of the Open is itself part of the Open as 'not yet' in being, that is, a possibility that is not yet lit up.[39] Heidegger comments: 'Mortal thinking must descend into the dark of the depths of the well if it is to view the stars by day.'[40]

We will explore in more depth the issue of how this imagery and the view underlying it relate to Heidegger's vision of the history of metaphysics. But, for now, we must remember that, as we noted in Section 1.3, if Dasein's selfhood lies in

---

36 Heidegger's term '*Lichtung*' plays off metaphors of light and the lightening.

37 See HS 130/208. Eugen Fink co-conducted the seminar on Heraclitus from which the book is drawn and frequently speaks for Heidegger's view.

38 This is another comment by Eugen Fink (HS 130f./210).

39 See footnote 30 above for Heidegger's comments about Rilke's notion of the other side of the Open.

40 Heidegger, 'Principles of Thinking,' *The Piety of Thinking*, translated by James G. Hart and John C. Maraldo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 56.

transforming being into history and bringing itself to stand in it, then Dasein gives itself up when being eludes its disclosing light. Greeks of the fifth century BC, for example, could not understand what-is as 'stuff' to be dominated and manipulated for human purposes even though their cultural practices carried within them this concealed possibility – concealed to the point of 'impossibility' – in a way that, for example, the fifth-century Egyptian culture did not.

However, we should also remember that Heidegger speaks of the *possibility* of the impossibility of existence. Authentic Dasein is the one who reaches into the depths of this well to find the new star, a new way of understanding the being of what-is, that becomes the culture's new focal point as it navigates the twilight between its old world and the new way of disclosing its world that glimmers on the horizon. Nietzsche could see in a lightening flash that God was dead, that will to power ruled what-is, but it took the thunder, the shattering impact of this revelation, another half century to reach the ears of the Anyone.

Dasein, Heidegger comments, 'does not have an end at which it just stops, but rather it *exists finitely*.' This finitude is a characteristic of Dasein's primordial timeliness and the way it comes 'towards itself to itself' from its future (329), a feature of its timeliness we will explore in the next chapter. As an aspect of this existential future, death as the end of Dasein's existence puts a limit on its being which lets Dasein understand being and itself in some particular way. Because Dasein's ownmost possibilities are determined from its end or limit, these possibilities are understood as finite possibilities (264). Dasein cannot be just any way. Our finitude is precisely what lets us be as *this* understanding of being. Now we can see why Heidegger thinks that fundamental ontology must include consideration of 'the problem of the finitude in man as the decisive element which makes the understanding of being possible' (KPM 240/225).[41] Our finitude is not just an incidental feature of our being. It is established in our relationship to being, more particularly in the relationship between Dasein's timeliness and the Temporality of being and the role existential death plays at their intersection.

2.6 Being toward the End and Being-at-the-end

After insisting that Dasein is always already its 'not yet' and its 'end,' Heidegger adds:

---

41 It is difficult, but not impossible, to see how such remarks could be explained under the supposition that Dasein's death or finitude is simply our physical mortality or an attitude about it. Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1959) and Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973) are interesting attempts to derive something akin to an understanding of being from our attitude about our physical mortality, and one might argue that some aspects of their accounts are not universally applicable but based on attitudes toward death or, in Heidegger's vocabulary, demise found in Western culture. However, neither account gives us any leverage on understanding the distinctive history of Western culture. This understanding is accepted as a given; the inquiry does not extend to its possibility or its history, subjects Heidegger links to his notion of the death of Dasein.

> The 'ending' meant by death does not signify a being-at-the-end of Dasein but rather a being toward the end of this being. Death is a way to be which Dasein takes over as soon as it is.
>
> (245)

One important difference is obscured by the standard English translation: while 'being-at-the-end' is a phrase made by hyphenating its words, as Heidegger does with so many of the phrases he uses to describe aspects of Dasein's being, 'being toward the end' is remarkable for its unadorned reference to being. Similarly, and interchangeably it seems, Heidegger refers to being toward the end as being toward death.[42]

Dasein's death does not just signify that Dasein is being-at-the-end, or simply over and done with, finished. We have seen that Dasein's death does not signify this either in the sense that a person ends by perishing or that Dasein would cease to be actual, as, for example, might happen if we blow ourselves up in a nuclear war. In Heidegger's initial discussion, with its confusing admixture of a present-at-hand conception of Dasein, he had spoken of death as 'no-more-Dasein,' but later he indicates that, with this entity that *is* its possibilities of being, the appropriate conception of death refers not to its lack of actuality but to its lack of possibilities. It is not that Dasein is no more but that it is not, as he corrects himself, able-to-be-Dasein any more, that is, it is not able to be the 'there' through which being discloses itself.[43]

The nature of Dasein's death can be adequately determined simply by the notion of it as being-at-the-end in the sense that its current, actual possibilities are finite or come to an end, although we continue to live, and this point surely lies behind Heidegger's comments (246).

What interests us is not just *that* Dasein's possibilities come to an end, and so bring it to stand as what it is, but why and how these possibilities are thus limited. This is a matter of Dasein's very way of being, and, since its being is determined by its relationship to being in general, that is, its being is an understanding of being, ultimately this is determined by being. To understand Dasein's being-at-the-end we must consider being toward the end in general, which in Dasein's case means how it understands its own death.

---

42 For example, phrases such as '*Sein-bei*,' '*Schon-sein-in*,' '*In-sein*,' and '*Sich-vorweg-sein*,' indicate existential structures of Dasein's being. But in the case of this distinction, the contrast is between *Zu-Ende-sein*, or, as Heidegger later corrects and clarifies his point, *Zum-Ende-'sein*,' and *Sein zum Ende* (234, 444*). Macquarrie and Robinson hyphenate both being toward the end and being toward death, but I will maintain the parallel with Heidegger's German and use the phrase being-at-the-end for *Zu-Ende-sein*, avoiding capitalizing 'being' to remind the reader of the distinction I am emphasizing.

43 In Heidegger's words, the contrast is between '*Nichtmehrdasein*' or 'no-more-Dasein' (237) and '*Nicht-mehr-dasein-können*' ('no-more-able-to-be-Dasein') (250). In between his use of these words his reflections have moved away from death as demise and come to focus on death as a '*Seinsmöglichkeit*,' a possibility of being, not a fact about bodies, and on Dasein's *Seinkönnen*, its being as an ability to be its possibilities.

In regard to this distinction Heidegger comments that 'being-at-the end implies existentially: being toward the end' (250). How Dasein comes to an end raises the question of its relationship to being, that is, its existence. If a revelation of being is what gives Dasein its able-to-be as the entity which *is* its possibilities, then the point, so to speak, where Dasein's possibilities leave off and its impossibilities begin is also determined by its way of being. Heidegger is trying to capture the idea that Dasein's disclosure of being is finite because being reveals itself finitely. In later works he will assert that being itself is finite,[44] but in *Being and Time*, he is only insisting that there are some ways to be which being has *not yet* revealed. This 'something still outstanding' is something that Dasein 'can and will be' (233).

In being toward death, however, Dasein confronts the limits of its disclosedness. In *Being and Time* Heidegger says: 'With death Dasein stands before itself in its *ownmost* possibility. In this possibility the very being of Dasein as being-in-the world is at issue.' Death is Dasein's 'ownmost possibility' because in it what is at issue is Dasein's ownmost being as the entity through whom being is revealed. To be or not to be is indeed the question. Heidegger adds: 'Its death is the possibility of no-more-able-to-be-there' (250).

In its being toward death, Dasein may either be its ownmost self and thus be the 'there' in which the question of being is raised, or it can immerse itself into its current understanding of being and thus be the Anyone's self, that is, we can understand what it is to be in the way Anyone understands it.

In an essay on the pre-Socratic thinkers, Heidegger comments that the essence of mortals – which is to be the 'there' in which being reveals itself – calls upon mortals 'to heed the call which beckons them toward death.' He adds:

> As the outermost possibility of mortal Dasein, death is not the end of the possible but the highest keeping (the gathering sheltering) of the mystery of calling disclosure.
>
> (EGT 101/248)

Dasein's 'outermost' possibility,[45] to which Heidegger frequently refers in *Being and Time*, marks the boundary between the possible and the impossible – as far as Dasein's ownmost being goes, so to speak. What lies 'beyond' that possibility cannot be 'fetched over' by Dasein into its clearing, that is, the possibility cannot be overtaken.[46]

While Descartes could see the subject/object opposition increasingly manifest in our dealings with things and the quantification of what-is, he could not foresee the future alienation of consciousness from its world or the way objects would be understood as only representations for consciousness. Similarly, Nietzsche could see the nihilism latent in late nineteenth-century culture, the treating of nature as if it had no inner aim, purpose, or being, but he could not foresee the technological

---

44 For a discussion of this point, see Chapters 5 and 7, especially Sections 5.1 and 7.1. [Chapter 7 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* – Editor's note.]

45 The awkward term 'outermost' translates Heidegger's not so uncommon word '*äusserst*.'

46 This sentence tries to capture Heidegger's description of this possibility as '*unüberholbar*.'

orientation toward things that would regard them as merely 'stuff' on hand for whatever use we make of it. At the indefinite and indeterminable limits of the Temporal manifestation of the being of what-is, Dasein as the 'there' of being must simply give itself up to the darkness beyond.[47]

A marginal note that Heidegger later adds at the place he introduces the notion of 'being toward death' (234) clarifies what he was trying to say. He refers to this being toward death as the 'being of not-being' (444*).[48] This Not-being is nothing in the sense of 'no thing,' and perhaps Heidegger alludes to his famous musings about the Nothing, but, in this context, we should stress that it is not absolutely nothing. Rather, we might say, it has the curious being of the not-yet-being.

Comments Heidegger makes in later works help further clarify this initially puzzling notion, a notion which he himself may have had to work out in his thinking in the lectures, essays, and books that follow *Being and Time*. Another comment again connects death with his famous musings about 'nothing.' He says:

> Death is the shrine of nothing, that is, of that which in every respect is never merely something-which-is but which nevertheless still presences as the mystery of being. As the shrine of nothing, death harbors within itself the presencing of being. As the shrine of nothing, death is the shelter of being. We now call mortals 'mortals' not because their earthly life comes to an end, but because they are capable of death as death.

Death as the shelter of being both saves it and conceals it.[49] In another later remark Heidegger specifically says that 'in death the supreme concealedness of being gathers' (OWL 200/23). The Anyone, or those people who live as anyone, would not qualify as 'mortal' in Heidegger's sense in this passage. They are not capable of Dasein's distinctive death but rather view death inauthentically, always putting it off into the future as an event that will not happen to itself.

Heidegger later refers to the 'suffering in which the essential otherness of what-is reveals itself in opposition to the tried and usual.' He adds:

> The highest form of suffering is the dying of death as a sacrifice for the preservation of the truth of being. This sacrifice is the purest experience of the voice of being.
>
> (P 166–167/249–250)

Quite obviously, Heidegger is not talking about being a martyr for the sake of defending the facts or faith one believes in, but in letting one's ownmost self be transformed by letting our ordinary understanding of what it is to be human and

---

47 See *Being and Time*, p. 264 for this general idea.

48 Heidegger's phrase is '*Sein des Nichtseins*.'

49 The quotation comes from PLT 178/171. In this remark the odd use of the word '*Gebirg*,' translated here as 'shelter,' is surely intended to create a new meaning for the term by calling upon an apparent etymological connection between '*Gebirg*' (which ordinarily means 'mountain range') and the verb '*bergen*,' which means 'to conceal,' 'to save,' or 'to shelter.' The term reminds the reader that Heidegger says that being both unconceals itself and conceals itself; it is both '*Unverborgenheit*' and '*Geborgenheit*.'

what it is to be in general be transformed by being the medium for the disclosure of being right up to its end, its outermost possibility.[50]

Heidegger also refers to death as Dasein's 'non-relational possibility' (250).[51] Everything to which Dasein relates, every relation between people and relation to the things with which we concern ourselves, all lie within Dasein's 'network' of possibilities laid out by its existence as that 'being toward which Dasein can and somehow always does relate itself' (12).[52] But death is precisely 'the possibility of the impossibility of every relating to . . . , of every existing' (262). The non-relational possibility of death is really an impossibility when compared with the possibilities within Dasein's clearing: it is the limit of Dasein's clearing. Our relationships to things and to people will 'fail' when Dasein's very being is placed at issue (263). They are determined by this being, not vice versa. In confronting death each particular Dasein is thrown back upon itself to disclose its able-to-be.[53]

As Dasein's 'ownmost possibility,' death discloses what it is for Dasein to be *as* a disclosure of being. Hence death lays claim to Dasein as what it is; it clearly distinguishes Dasein from what-is as nature, the ready-to-hand, and the present at hand. 'This individualizing is a way in which the "there" is disclosed for existence' (263). Death delineates and delimits Dasein's possibilities as an understanding able-to-be.

As a disclosure of being, Dasein not only discloses what it is to be itself but also the being of what-is in general. Its relation to being reveals more than its own being; it reveals the other domains of what-is such as nature and number. As we saw in Section 2.4, other domains and modes of being also have an end as finite what is Dasein's to-be-at-the-end ultimately requires an analysis of being toward 'ends' in general, not just Dasein's ownmost end, and of being in general. Consequently, Heidegger suggests that within the framework of his investigation of Dasein, his ontological characterization of the end can only be provisional. The complete analysis would require a full analysis of the ends of different types of what-is, and, to achieve this, we would have to clarify the understanding of being in general and investigate what makes it possible (241). For this, we would need to have an answer to the question which the analysis of Dasein only prepares us to investigate, that is, what is the meaning of being in general? Of course, neither of these matters were addressed

---

50 Although it may seem a far-fetched claim at this point in the analysis, perhaps Heidegger gets both his term and his conception of the 'outermost' possibility from Parmenides discussion of being. See Chapter 6, Section 6.3. [Chapter 6 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* - Editor's note.]

51 The term 'non-relational' translates Heidegger's word '*unbezügliche*.'

52 The term 'network' is an attempt to capture Heidegger's etymologically richer '*Bezug*.'

53 In his *Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* Heidegger similarly stresses the 'metaphysical isolation' of mankind, the fact that our understanding of being is not derivative from or dependent on our understanding of some one thing or things. Instead, cultures create themselves, as it were, *ex nihilo*, or out of being, toward Nothing. This point is obscured by the translation of '*Isolierung des Menschen*' as 'isolation of the human being,' although Heidegger specifically denies he is referring to the ego or isolated subjectivity. See MFL 133/177.

in *Being and Time* despite Heidegger's original intention. In Part Two we would have become acquainted with the Temporal unfolding of the being of what-is and presumably have come to see more clearly the role of Dasein's undergoing of death in this process. As it turned out, the truncated published portion of the book left itself all too open to personalistic misreadings.

We saw that Heidegger thinks that the 'end' of something is what brings it to stand as what it is. An intriguing question remains about the phrase 'being toward the end.' What is it that brings being itself to stand as what it is? In the case of Western culture, what it is 'to be' became regarded as precisely a 'what,' that is, a thing, a property, an activity – as *phusis*, *idea*, *energeia*, *actualitas*, *ens creatum*, representation, will to power, and so forth. The perspective leading to these different views was established in Ancient Greece.

Heidegger seems to use the phrases 'being toward the end' and 'being toward death' interchangeably in *Being and Time*, but in the retrospective light cast by his later philosophy we might also pause to wonder whether being toward the end is not only what brings being to stand as what it is but whether it also points to the finitude of the possibilities of being, a notion perhaps better captured by the notion of being toward death. Being not only came to stand in a certain way in Ancient Greece, its disclosure there articulated the range of possibilities of the being of what-is which has now been depleted. The range of possibilities was very different than those established by, for example, Chinese thought. The depletion of Western possibilities of being leads to the death of the understanding of being within the history of Western metaphysics, and this death calls for the new beginning for thinking that Heidegger meditates upon in his later works.

If, as Heidegger claimed, the discussion of Dasein in *Being and Time* was always oriented toward answering the question of being (LR xviii/xix), then our analysis of Dasein cannot be complete until we address this issue, as we will in Chapter 5 on the finitude of being.

2.7 Dying and Inauthentic Being toward Death

As we saw in Section 2.4, Heidegger uses the term 'dying' to indicate the way in which Dasein relates to its death (247). Stressing the whole sentence, Heidegger comments: 'As regards its ontological possibility, dying is grounded in care' (252). In a later marginal note he adds: 'However, care comes to be out of the truth of being.'[54] The disclosure of being is the locus in which we understand the limits of our existence, our openness toward that being; it makes care and hence this sort of dying possible. On the other hand, what makes demise possible, indeed inevitable, is quite another matter.

---

54 In this marginal comment on *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger says: '*Aber die Sorge west aus der Wahrheit des Seyns*' (252, 444*). His later use of the archaic term '*Seyn*' is an attempt to emphasize his special meaning for the word '*Sein*' and deflect his readers from their tendency to see it as a kind of thing of any sort, even a property or a process.

For Heidegger, dying is a particular way of existing. Dasein can die either authentically or inauthentically. As Dasein we always have to take up being toward the end either by taking it for granted and thus simply moving within the possibilities of being that our culture has laid out, or by making an issue of it and thus determining where the limits of our possibilities of being actually do lie. Therefore, dying shows that mineness is constitutive of death as well as Dasein itself (240) since only a particular Dasein can be authentic or inauthentic, can question being or ignore it, although some stages in the history of our culture may be more conducive to authenticity and others, like the contemporary technological epoch, less so.

Given Heidegger's technical – and obscure – notion of death and dying, we can see why he claims that 'there are many who don't know about death' (251) even though the vast majority of people over the age of five know about demise. He also claims that although Dasein dies 'as long as it exists,' most of us do so inauthentically (251–252). The inauthentic understanding of death flees the anxiety that overcomes Dasein when it recognizes the groundlessness of its being as merely a possible way to be. Inauthentic being toward death flees anxiety in the face of existential death by turning anxiety into simple fear and death into the oncoming event. It regards death precisely as demise, that is, as the end that awaits us as particular, living things which is always, we tell ourselves, yet to come (251, 254), and thus we keep fear at bay.

Such a 'death,' we admit, happens to 'one,' that is to oneself as to Anyone, but, we tell ourselves, not to me, not now. Inauthentic understanding takes Dasein's being to be precarious only in that we each face personal extinction, yet always put it off until later. Thus, Dasein avoids recognizing the more profound, if less frightening, dependency that invades its very being here and now and always. This finitude arises out of its character as the 'there' of being (265), not out of the biology or physical vulnerability of the living creatures embodying Dasein.

Heidegger refers the reader to Tolstoy's story 'The Death of Ivan Ilych' for an illustration of the inauthentic conception of death (254).[55] People familiar with the story will remember it in the general outline suggested by Heidegger's context: in confronting a fatal illness Ivan Ilych moves from accepting the belief that 'one dies,' that is, everyone in general, to accepting the belief that 'I die.' The traditional interpretation of Heidegger's notions of authentic and inauthentic being toward death sees this as precisely the move from an inauthentic to an authentic understanding of 'death.' We have seen, however, that Heidegger explicitly denies that his message about death is simply that 'everyone dies his own death.'[56] Ivan has heard this message and consequently 'personalized' his demise to this degree; he knows that it is *he* who is going to demise and that he faces his demise on his own. So, if this is not Heidegger's message, then something more must be at stake in the move from

55 See the footnote on *Being and Time*, p. 75 and endnote xii for Division Two, Chapter 2, in the English translation (495).

56 See the claim at the end of Section 51 and the citation in footnote 3.

inauthentic understanding of death to authentic understanding of death than just this recognition.[57]

To understand what Heidegger is saying, we first need to remember that the inauthentic conception of death does not necessarily involve some mistaken factual belief. It may seem odd to call a factually accurate conception 'inauthentic,' but then we simply must remember what Heidegger means by 'inauthentic.' An inauthentic conception has not grasped Dasein's being *as* Dasein, but that does not mean that it is not based on facts about the lives of human beings. Of course we will all 'die' in the sense of perish, and you and I are included in this 'all.'

If Ivan initially thought he was not included in those who would demise, he was simply mistaken about the facts. But being right about them, as he later was, does not guarantee an understanding of existential death. If Ivan is to be considered as authentically being toward death, a claim which Heidegger does not explicitly make, we must look for some other element in the story.

Ivan does in fact seem to be one of those people for whom 'cases of death,' that is, instances of demise, are the occasion for first paying attention to existential death.[58] In confronting his demise, for the first time he really questions his understanding of being: 'What if my whole life has really been wrong?' Tolstoy describes Ivan's musings about the meaning of life:

> It occurred to him that his scarcely perceptible attempts to struggle against what was considered good by the most highly placed people, those scarcely noticeable impulses which he immediately suppressed, might have been the real thing, and all the rest false.[59]

Though there is a religious and ethical dimension in Tolstoy's message which is missing in Heidegger's notion of authenticity, both involve a questioning of the conventional wisdom of the Anyone. Ivan wonders: 'Maybe I did not live as I ought to have done.'

> 'But how could that be when I did everything properly?' he replied, and immediately dismissed from his mind this, the sole solution of all riddles of life and death, as something quite impossible.[60]

For Tolstoy the sole solution for life and death is not just having the courage to face your own demise but, as Kierkegaard puts his similar point, having the courage to

---

57 Heidegger's reference to 'The Death of Ivan Ilyich' is more problematic than I indicate here. Robert Bernasconi points out some of the difficulties in his essay 'Literary Attestation in Philosophy: Heidegger's Footnote on Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilyich"' and includes a bibliography of critical articles on the significance of the story. See *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993), pp. 76–98.

58 '*Die Todesfälle*,' here translated as 'cases of death,' is another Heideggerian term for demise and lexically indicates the 'fallen' or inauthentic nature of the conception.

59 Leo Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories* (New York: New American Library, 1960), p. 152.

60 Ibid., p. 148.

risk something on your own that goes against the conventional wisdom of the age.[61] And, for both Tolstoy and Kierkegaard, this 'something' is genuine Christianity, not the banal version watered down by the Anyone. If Ivan eventually has the courage to risk a revolution in his understanding of himself and life, then he comes closer to deserving the Heideggerian accolade of authentic being toward death, too.

At the end of the story Ivan's deathbed epiphany occurs when he accepts that his former way of living 'was not at all the right thing.' A light breaks through the darkness of death that tried to shroud him like a black sack. Now, feeling in touch with the only One who needs to understand his change of heart to make it compensate for a lifetime of error, Ivan no longer fears death because, he mutters to himself, 'there is no death.' And, suddenly, in place of death, joy and light enfold him.[62] Curiously, however, and contrary to the traditional account's version of the story, it seems as if Ivan reverts back to thinking that he, too, will escape demise – but because it is not the end it seemed and instead a beginning. However, as far as Heidegger's aims go, we can see that Tolstoy advances a particular existentiell view of demise, and Ivan's transformation brings us only a little closer to understanding Dasein's existential death.

Ironically, it is the Anyone who, Heidegger says, advises us to master our fear and cultivate a 'superior indifference' to the prospect of demise. The Anyone translates the more primordial anxiety into fear of some specific event in order to master it. The fear is then considered cowardly or gauche, and one is supposed to rise above it through the mood of 'indifferent tranquillity' (254). In the common account of Ivan's 'authentic' being toward death, he achieves no more than this.

One of the obstacles to grasping the distinction between inauthentic and authentic being toward death is that throughout his discussion of death Heidegger continually relies on a tacit analogy or proportion between my death as an individual person, that is, my perishing or demise, and my existential death as Dasein. I am to my demise *qua* person as the Dasein 'in' me is to its death *qua* Dasein. In both respects I confront a 'nothingness' impenetrable to my understanding, and what is 'beyond' the end constitutes a sort of 'other side' to what-is.[63] But in the former case, the 'beyond' that I fear is quite specific, even if a matter of possible alternatives such as heaven, hell, or the extinction of consciousness, and not the 'nothingness' that provokes anxiety.

---

61 Kierkegaard's remarks are worth quoting since they foreshadow Heidegger's notion of authenticity, especially if we remember that for Kierkegaard 'death' means a radical personal transformation: 'The fact that several people united together have the courage to meet death does not nowadays mean that each individually has the courage, for, even more than death, the individual fears the judgment and protest of reflection upon his wishing to risk something on his own.' Replace 'reflection' with 'the Anyone' and we have an existentiell version of Heidegger's analysis of the Anyone's role in blocking our recognition of existential death. See Søren Kierkegaard, *The Present Age*, translated by A. Dru (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 53.

62 Tolstoy, 'Death of Ivan Ilych,' pp. 154–155.

63 See footnote 30 in Section 2.4.

The traditional interpretation of Heidegger's notion of death, which never gets beyond demise, suggests that physical death provokes anxiety because it gives us nothing to grasp, nothing that we can compare to anything we know. Yet even the extinction of consciousness has its parallel in life, along with the images that the alternatives of heaven, hell, reincarnation, and so on, conjure up. Each night in dreamless sleep our consciousness vanishes just as completely as if it were never to return. Letting oneself drift off to sleep is like offering oneself up to such a death – a thought sure to generate insomnia if not anxiety!

The tacit analogy between demise and existential death and the continual interplay between the inauthentic and authentic understanding of death unfortunately only make Heidegger's discussion more obscure. Even the illumination that the analogy might cast, if explicitly made, is lost. Once one realizes how existential death differs from personal demise, one notices how frequently Heidegger puts scare quotes around such words as 'death' and 'dying' when he is making a remark which is intentionally ambiguous or does not differentiate between the two. The analogy, which lets him say similar things about both conceptions, actually hinders the distinction from being as clear as it should be.

Besides the continual ambiguity about what sort of 'death' or 'dying' is under consideration, Heidegger also talks of both the (a) 'certainty' and the (b) 'when' of death in regard to the inauthentic and authentic understanding of Dasein's end. But the words have a different meaning depending on which sort of end we are discussing.

(a) Emphasizing the whole sentence Heidegger says, 'The fact that demise, as an event which occurs, is "only" empirically certain is in no way decisive as to the certainty of death' (257). For demise, this certainty is the certainty of an inductive generalization with no known exceptions, at least for mere humans; we will demise, sooner or later. The Anyone says that 'Death certainly comes but not right away,' and Heidegger suggests that with this 'but' the Anyone denies the certainty of death because what is distinctive about the certainty of death is 'that it is possible at any moment' (258).

Yet Heidegger has switched senses of death on us by using his technical term for the moment of insight of authentic being toward death.[64] With existential death, the possibility is ever present that we will suddenly achieve authenticity and understand being in a new way, but it is by no means a certain or inevitable actuality or eventuality for everyone. The vast majority of people will continue to believe what the Anyone believes and be brought to a new understanding of being only after it has become something that anyone can accept. Nietzsche saw the dawning of nihilism in a lightning flash, but its thunder took decades, if not a century, to reach the public consciousness. Furthermore, Heidegger worries that the dominance of the technological worldview may prevent such moments of insight from ever happening again. The 'certainty' of this moment is found in the insight brought forth

64 Heidegger uses the word '*Augenblick*' referred to at the end of Section 2.2, a term he borrowed from Kierkegaard to describe the moment of radical conversion.

by the call of conscience, and Heidegger's point depends on his wordplay in German, not any facts about the world or history.[65]

(b) Along with this certainty of death goes the indefiniteness of its 'when' (258), but again this 'when' is equivocal. Our demise has an indefinite 'when' since we ourselves will never know when it will happen even if we know that it is happening, though conceivably someone else could fix its time at least within a brief span, as does a doctor in order to fill out a death certificate. Everyday being toward death evades the indefiniteness by making it definite. It does this not by calculating when demise will happen ('Dasein would sooner flee' that sort of definiteness) but by 'interposing before it those urgencies and possibilities which can be taken in at a glance and which belong to the everyday matters that are closest to us' (258). In emphasizing the indefinite 'when' of existential death, Heidegger is not exhorting us to be continually aware that demise could happen any time. Dasein 'does not first die and does not at all die authentically by and in an experience of factical demise' (247). This is true both for the experience of demise and the experience of knowing that we 'certainly' will demise.

Despite the attractiveness of the existentialist-style advice contained in so many interpretations of Heidegger's notion of authentic being toward death, Heidegger is also not saying that the authentic response to the indefiniteness of the 'when' of demise would be to live our personal lives to the fullest each moment so that we will have no regrets when that unknown time arrives. This advice voices the Anyone's view of death and only seems a variation of inauthentic being toward death: instead of suppressing knowledge of our death, we are directed to think that Dasein's ownmost death is simply demise and told to 'interpose' between the 'when' of demise and our current 'now' those 'urgencies and possibilities' which 'belong to the everyday matters that are closest to us.'

In contrast, the 'when' of existential death cannot be fixed by anyone, let alone the Anyone. It is possible not at some moment measured by the time on a clock but at an authentic moment of insight into being. This moment by its very nature cannot be some definite 'when' of clock-time. Indeed, it is not a 'moment' at all in this usual sense, and there is some reason to think that it may take years, if not decades, to 'happen,' just as Heidegger described his own thinking as taking years to come into the clear, or, we might say, the openness of being (LR xvi/xvii). Nietzsche's insight into nihilism took years to come to him and decades to penetrate the consciousness of the public.

---

65 Heidegger's '*Gewissheit*' is translated as 'certainty.' In Chapter 3's discussion of the call of conscience Macquarrie and Robinson note that Heidegger takes pains to dissociate the term '*Gewissen*,' translated as 'conscience,' from the adjective '*gewiss*' or 'certain,' and its derivatives such as '*Gewissheit*.' In the discussion, though, Heidegger took pains to dissociate his own concept of '*Gewissheit*' from the ordinary notion of certainty in regard to the 'certainty' of death. It is also the ordinary sense of '*Gewissheit*' which Heidegger wants to keep distinct from his notion of '*Gewissen*.' See *Being and Time*, pp. 291–292 and 307 and the English translation on p. 338. The attraction of using '*Gewissheit*' in the discussion of existential death and authentic insight also surely comes from its embedded reference to '*Wissen*' or knowledge since a very special kind of knowing is required for authentic being toward death.

Before we move on to complete the discussion of authentic being toward death, and after that, to a discussion of the timeliness of Dasein, one interesting question remains concerning the relationship between demise and Dasein's ownmost death, the possibility of the impossibility of existence. What is the relationship between our physical death and our existential death? Some interpreters of Heidegger's notion take physical demise and our attitude about it to be simply one instance of all the 'deaths' of life, that is, of loss, lack, despair, misunderstanding, futility, and so forth, and thus they take it to symbolize these other, less monumental 'existential' deaths. I not only deny that Heidegger intends this metaphoric generalization but insist that he has little interest in the ontic level of personal misfortunes. But can we completely ignore the fact of physical death in our analysis of the existential, ontological character of Dasein?

The answer seems to be 'no,' although not for the typical reasons offered and not because Heidegger's discussion in *Being and Time* never sharply differentiates the two sorts of death. Dasein's finitude shows up not just in its possession of an understanding of being but in the way this understanding changes because of its response to the unconcealment of being. Max Planck commented that 'a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.'[66] Perhaps an understanding of being 'dies off' for similar reasons. Perhaps one of the key factors of Dasein's timeliness and historicality and the changes they bring is that older generations clinging to an earlier understanding of being die off. If so, it seems that '*exitus*' and perishing are important, if not essential, to Dasein's historical way of being. This, I think, should be Heidegger's answer, though he does not directly address the question.[67]

Then what about Dasein's relation to the opposite state of affairs, that of immortality? In saying that he does not address the question of life after death, Heidegger mentions that he is also not speculating on whether there could be a 'higher being' after death or whether Dasein itself could 'live on' or be immortal (247). But the reasons he gives supporting the essential finitude of Dasein suggest that such a being would not be 'Dasein' at all, which perhaps is why he refers to a 'higher being.' In his 1966/67 Heraclitus seminar, Heidegger commented that, in the terminology of *Being and Time*, 'immortality is no category, but rather an existentiale, a way that the gods relate themselves to their being.'[68] Not a matter of

---

66 The remark is quoted in Thomas Kuhn's *The Structures of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 151. It comes from Planck's *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers*, translated by F. Gaynor (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), pp. 33–34.

67 The issue is left unsettled by Heidegger's comments about Nietzsche's notion of the 'dying out' of those who cannot grasp the authentic insight into the 'eternal return of the same.' This 'dying out' could be either literal, physical death or being 'dead to' how things are. Heidegger seems to opt for the latter when he equates the 'fleeting' ones with the 'fleeing ones.' See N2 122/383 and 131/394.

68 See HS 111/178. The dialogue character of the text makes it difficult to determine whether Heidegger is speaking for himself here or rather is just trying to clarify the remarks of his seminar partner, Eugen Fink. I assume he is doing both.

just living forever, thus Heidegger's notion of immortality, too, denotes a way of existing not the extent of a lifespan, but one appropriate to the gods, not to finite Dasein. Only humans are mortal in Heidegger's sense, certainly not gods and not even animals: 'Only man dies' (PLT 150/144). Mortals, as who they are, are 'present in the shelter of being' (PLT 179/171) in a way that other domains of what-is are not.

In contrast to mortals, who are 'capable of death as death' (PLT 178/171), divinities are immortal. They represent a contrast with our finite understanding of being, neither dependent on skills to sustain their lives nor subject to the history of being. Heidegger argues that Heraclitus saw that what we are becomes manifest only when we contrast ourselves with divinity. Independently confirming this point, Jean-Pierre Vernant suggests that in contrast to the Greek preoccupation with defining our nature and that of what-is, Babylonian myths such as the 'Enuma Elish' and the rituals based upon them do not 'clearly distinguish between man, the world, and the gods. Divine power is concentrated in the person of the king.'[69] The beginning of Greek philosophical thought and its reflection on human capacities represents for Heidegger a clear break from mythic thought, as we will see in Chapters 5 and 6.[70]

2.8 Authentic Being toward Death

If authentic being toward death were simply a matter of relating appropriately to our own demise, it is hard to see why Heidegger would think that, along with the 'sober anxiety' in which we confront our individual ability to be, 'there goes an unshakable joy in this possibility' (310). Surely we would all 'sooner flee' this experience. Even the joy of those who believe in life after death is surely not 'unshakable,' and Heidegger does not even attempt to offer us such hope. However, as we have seen, anxiety in the face of death is very different than fear in the face of demise. It is anxiety before the 'ownmost, non-relational, outermost able-to-be' (251). The unshakable joy that is experienced in relating to this possibility is the joy of Dasein's profound creativity; its ability to let things *be* and thus release both itself and them into the open realm of human activity.

In contrast to the inauthentic relationship to death, in which we are merely the 'Anyone's self,' authentic being toward death manifests Dasein's ownmost self as the entity through which being is revealed. So far, our discussion has emphasized the meaning of the word 'impossibility' in the phrase 'the possibility of the impossibility of existence' by, for example, contrasting it with non-actuality. However, in order to understand Heidegger's notion of authentic being toward death we need to bring out the significance of the use of both the terms 'impossibility' and 'possibility' in this crucial phrase. Why doesn't Heidegger just speak of the 'impossibility of existence'? As we saw in Sections 2.5 and 2.6, his point is that,

---

69 See Vernant's *Myth and Thought among the Greeks* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 346.

70 [Chapter 6 is available online at *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/6_White.htm*. Editor's note.]

since Dasein *is* its possibilities, since it *is* what it can be, it must in some sense already be its 'not yet,' that is, what it will be. If it was not, it could never come to be this.

Dasein is its 'not yet' as a possibility of its existence. It is open for what is 'still outstanding' in its ability to be. Dasein's understanding of being can change, and new ways of being are not always impossible. Being can reveal the way of being which was formerly concealed, as happened in the shift from the Greek to the medieval and from the medieval to the modern worlds. Each time, as Heidegger says, a 'new and essential world arose' (OWA 77/65). Referring to Trakel's notion of death in the poem 'Seven-Song of Death,' as we noted in the Introduction, he says that 'death is not decay' but rather that in death we 'leave behind the form of man which has decayed' (OWL 167f./46). The world made sterile and banal by the Anyone's reduction of its possibilities to a bland sameness is transformed by the new insight into being. Possibilities are unconcealed which were not illuminated before.

Considering Heidegger's penchant for playing with the etymological connections of words, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that when he describes death as the 'measureless impossibility of existence' (262) and when he italicizes the 'im-' of 'impossibility' in the phrase 'the possibility of the impossibility of existence' (306), he is playing on the fact that this prefix can mean 'excessive amount' as well as 'not.'[71] Heidegger may be taking advantage of this double meaning and capturing an important feature of our finite yet open existence when he says that, in authentic being toward death, possibility 'becomes "greater and greater"; that is to say, the possibility reveals itself to be such that it knows no measure at all, no more or less, but signifies the possibility of the measureless impossibility of existence' (262).

Our particular understanding of being precludes some possibilities of being as not possibilities, but yet we are open to new possibilities just as the Greeks and medieval Christians were. The possible ways that being could reveal itself may seem 'measureless,' unfixed and unfixable, when regarded in the light of Dasein's finitude, as they are in *Being and Time*, but we will see that Heidegger's conception of the finitude of being, as well as his claim that we have now run through the possibilities opened up by the Ancient Greek understanding of being, place limits on what Dasein may become, that is, what we may understand ourselves to be.

However, within the history of Western culture from Ancient Greece until the present day, and within the language of the analysis of *Being and Time*, authentic being toward death is the relationship to being that opens up Dasein for such new possibilities of being. Being toward the ownmost possibility of death discloses Dasein's ownmost being as the entity which makes an issue of being, and it frees Dasein from its current cultural understanding of human nature and the things with

---

71 In these phrases, Heidegger italicizes the '*Un-*' of '*Unmöglichkeit*.' Compare the cognate English prefix 'in-' in the word 'inflammable,' which means not non-flammable but highly flammable, or consider the German words '*Unmasse*' and '*Unsumme*,' both of which mean not 'nothing' but an enormous number or vast quantity. Similarly, an '*Untier*' is not a non-animal but a 'very animal' animal, that is, a brute, a monster.

which we deal; as Heidegger puts it, Dasein is freed from its lostness in the Anyone. Heidegger comments: 'Here it can become manifest to Dasein that in this distinctive possibility of its own self, it has been wrenched away from the Anyone' (263). Dasein is thrown back upon its ownmost self to determine what can be; the Anyone no longer protects it from its being.

Heidegger describes authentic being towards death as 'forerunning' into the possibility of death.[72] His word literally means 'to run ahead' or 'to run in front' and might also be translated as 'outstrip' or, with Macquarrie and Robinson, 'anticipate.' However, we can capture his meaning better with the archaic English verb 'to forerun,' especially since the still common term 'forerunner' parallels a derivative German term which also means 'forerunner' or 'harbinger.' Authentic Dasein is indeed a forerunner or harbinger of a new understanding of being. It 'foreruns' to the edge of its current clearing in order to disclose what 'can be in a time' (338). Heidegger notes: 'Being toward death as forerunning into possibility for the first time *possibilizes* this possibility and makes it free as such.' Forerunning possibility is contrasted with merely expecting the actualization of something which is already a well-known way of being of, for example, nature (262). Authentic Dasein as the forerunner of possibility sets the possibility free as possibility in a way it was not before. The possibility was not 'there,' illuminated in the clearing *as* possibility, before authentic Dasein's insight into being.[73] For example, things came to be seen as essentially characterized by number thanks to thinkers such as Descartes and Galileo, and therefore available to be treated in certain new ways that were beyond the ken of people in the Middle Ages.

As I indicated above, Heidegger thinks that we cannot fix the exact time when such a change in the understanding of being occurs. It is the 'moment of insight' of authentic existence. Heidegger can comfortably say that in such a moment both 'the utter impossibility of existence becomes possible' (265) and 'possibility turns into impossibility' (308). Either phrase would seem odd if we were simply talking about the occurrence of demise. Isn't the impossibility of existence, that is, our prospective non-actuality, totally lacking in possibilities of living, supposed to be possible all along? In what sense then does its 'impossibility' become possible at some indefinite 'when'? And, instead of talking about the possibility of demise turning into impossibility, we would more intelligibly say that its possibility is realized, that is, demise becomes actual.

However, Heidegger is talking about the possibility of existential death. It occurs when old worlds die and new ones are born. A change in the understanding

---

72 Heidegger's term is '*Vorlaufen*,' related to '*Vorläufer*,' the term for 'forerunner' or 'harbinger.' I avoid using the Macquarrie and Robinson term 'anticipation' to translate '*Vorlaufen*' because it only suggests a mental expectation of a known possibility. While this might be a useful term to describe a way of relating to one's demise, which is precisely how it is understood in the common interpretation of Heidegger's conception of being toward death, it is not helpful in capturing what he means by '*Vorlaufen*.' While the archaic oddity of 'forerun' may make it awkward, at least its etymological oddity matches Heidegger's term.

73 This is the way in which Dasein 'chooses' possibilities in Heidegger's atypical notion of choice. See Section 1.3 and the discussion of resoluteness in 3.3.

of being leaves old possibilities behind and lets new ones take their place in the 'there' of being. Hence, impossibility becomes possibility and possibility turns into impossibility. When the medieval world died and was transformed into the modern one, that is, when the new vision of the being of what-is became that of the Anyone, there was no going back to the old understanding again.[74]

Death, then, is the possibility which most precisely reveals Dasein's character as possibility (248–249). What Dasein understands itself to be is only a possible way to be, and what it will be is only a possible way to be. These changes in the understanding of being, however, do not indicate that Dasein escapes the limitation of its existential death. Dasein does not 'run ahead' of death in the sense of getting beyond it. 'As able-to-be, Dasein is not able to overtake the possibility of death' (250).[75] Dasein does not 'run ahead' *of* death; it 'runs ahead' *to* death. Death remains a limit against which Dasein shatters itself (385).

In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger comments:

> All violence shatters against *one* thing directly. That is death. It is an end beyond all fulfillment, a limit beyond all limits. Here there is no breaking out or breaking up, no capture or subjugation.

He adds that this 'uncanny' limit 'banishes us utterly and especially from everything with which we are at home' (IM 158/121).[76] No matter how 'violently' Dasein tries to wrest being from its concealment, some possibilities of being will not give way to unconcealedness, at least not yet because it is not their time. Someone questioning being in the twelfth century could not free the being of what-is as mere stuff for human use. In that sense, death as the 'utter impossibility' of being remains a limit beyond which Dasein cannot go. Heidegger also puts his point another way by saying that Dasein 'shatters against being' (IM 177/135). Dasein is 'without a way out' or 'without an opening' in the face of death (IM 158/121) when its disclosing light can project no illumination into this every constant 'beyond.' For Dasein there is no sort of final, Hegelian or Kierkegaardian overcoming of death.

If Dasein is able to reveal new possibilities of being, it is because these possibilities have already tacitly, 'pre-ontologically' unveiled themselves in Dasein's world. They occupy the 'space,' so to speak, between the well-trodden territory of the Anyone and the 'utter impossibility' which limits that world. In forerunning to death Dasein breaks out of the shelter of the Anyone's superficial, familiar understanding of being and becomes 'liberated in such a way that it can for the first time authentically

---

74 We can see the similarity between Heidegger's notion and Kierkegaard's conception of dying to an old self-understanding in the leap to a new one, but, while Kierkegaard's discussion focuses on the personal level, Heidegger looks to the cultural context in which such personal changes take place.

75 The term 'overtake' translates Heidegger's word '*überholen*.'

76 The term 'uncanny' translates Heidegger's word '*unheimlich*.' His meaning plays off the adverb '*heim*,' which means home or homeward, and '*heimlich*,' which means secret or concealed. When we are no longer at home with things, they strike us as uncanny.

understand and choose the factical possibilities lying before the possibility which is not to be outstripped.' Running ahead to shatter itself against death Dasein also shatters the stage of existence it had already reached and thus is prepared to take a new stance toward being (264).

However, Dasein must look to the disclosure of being for these new possibilities; we do not and cannot invent them, that is, make things be in just any way we choose. Our finitude makes us dependent on the unconcealment of being; it is our 'neediness.' In this sense, Dasein must 'give itself up' to a new disclosure of possibilities. The primordial certainty of authentic being toward death is a primordial disclosure of Dasein's own being precisely as being-in-the-world (265). This primordial disclosure 'individualizes' Dasein as what it *can* be, not just what it is, but that does not mean that it can be in just any way. Heidegger comments: 'Forerunning utterly individualizes Dasein and allows it to become certain of the wholeness of its able-to-be' (266). Thus, authentic Dasein understands the possibility of its clearing right up to its 'end.'

How is it that possibilities of being can be unveiled in Dasein's world before it comes to disclose them explicitly in its authentic being toward death? We already know that the being of what-is reveals itself in Dasein's dealings with things, but now we must address the question of how that being can change and reveal itself in new ways when the time is right – 'time' in Heidegger's sense. The rest of this book examines the relationship between Dasein's authentic timeliness and the Temporality of being. Only when we understand what is at stake in this relationship will we be able to fill in the rest of the details of Heidegger's account of the finitude of Dasein.

Chapter 3

The Timeliness of Dasein

The first section of this chapter provides a general discussion of the nature of Dasein's timeliness as the 'meaning' of its being, that is, as what makes its being possible, distinguishes it from simple consciousness of events and objects in time, and indicates why Heidegger describes this basic condition of Dasein as 'timeliness,' with all the word's connotations.[1] Section 3.2 introduces Heidegger's general notion of 'ecstatic' timeliness and his technical vocabulary while Sections 3.3 and 3.4 discuss inauthentic and authentic timeliness as its two concrete modes. Section 3.5 examines Heidegger's existential notions of conscience and guilt, and Section 3.6 previews Dasein's historicality by examining Heidegger's formal analysis of it in *Being and Time*.

3.1 Timeliness as the Meaning of Dasein's Being

Heidegger warns us that, given the dominant understanding of being as well as the common notion of time and the standard philosophical reflections upon it, his notion of the timeliness of Dasein may seem strange. This timeliness does not 'correspond to that which is accessible to the ordinary understanding as "time."' Neither the way time is conceived in our ordinary experience nor the problems arising from our consciousness of it can function as starting points for Heidegger's analysis of time (304).

As I indicated in the Introduction, the time of Dasein's being is more a matter of *kairos*, the time of opportunity, than of *chronos*, the time of clocks, although one of Heidegger's goals is to show that the latter is derivative from the former. As we will see, timeliness puts Dasein 'in time with' the disclosure of being in cultural practices; it is the 'horizon for the understanding of being which belongs essentially to Dasein' (BPP 228/324). To comprehend Heidegger's analysis in *Being and Time*, we must, as he will later say, keep in mind that he is ultimately and always attempting to attain 'the transcendental horizon of the question of being.' All of his analyses, and 'above all the interpretation of time, should be evaluated strictly as they aim at making the question of being possible' (ER 97/96). Heidegger can legitimately argue that even in *Being and Time* he was aiming beyond the timeliness of Dasein and toward the Temporality of being (TB 32/34). We will see his target more clearly as we work our way to Chapter 5's account of Temporality as the meaning of being.

1 For an etymological explanation of the translation of '*Zeitlichkeit*' as 'timeliness,' see 'Texts and Translations.'

Never in *Being and Time* does Heidegger descend to the level of a detailed analysis of the particular aspects of time-consciousness similar to the one offered by Edmund Husserl, or, for that matter, Kant's or Bergson's analyses, although his discussion has almost universally been read as a sort of 'Existentialist' version of the Husserl lectures which he himself edited, *The Phenomenology of Inner Time Consciousness*.[2] Supposedly, he added to Husserl's discussion some advice on how the individual person should live his life; for example, he should be nonconformist, open to change, and perpetually aware of his perhaps imminent demise. This recommended 'authentic timeliness' is, it seems, no more than a heightened awareness of events in time and a more responsive attitude toward the people and things that one encounters.[3] Most commentators failed to find any route from such claims to the promised investigation of the meaning of being and hence concluded that *Being and Time* was sidetracked into a dead end of subjectivity.

The 'transcendental horizon' for the understanding of being which Heidegger seeks, however, is not the 'fringe' of expectations belonging to time-consciousness, as it was for Husserl, and *Being and Time* neither started nor ended with such subjectivity. The horizon, Heidegger later says, is 'not that of subjective consciousness, but rather it is defined as the existential-ecstatic timeliness of Da-sein' (IM 18/14). As we saw earlier, Dasein's existence, its standing toward being, is the condition for the possibility of consciousness, not vice versa. Consciousness does not create the openness to what-is but is derivative from it (Way 272/375). Similarly, time-consciousness or the consciousness of things and events in time does not create timeliness but is derivative from it. We are 'timely' in our skillful dealings with things, not just our explicit awareness of them, and these dealings show Dasein's dependence on a disclosure of being. In lectures and works immediately following *Being and Time* Heidegger took pains to contrast his own approach and subject matter with those of Husserl and Bergson. He asserts that, from Aristotle and

---

2 A long history of scholarship assimilates Heidegger's concerns with notions of time-consciousness found in Kant and Husserl. For example, see Charles M. Sherover's book *Heidegger, Kant and Time*, first published in 1971 by Indiana University Press and reprinted in 1988 by University Press of America and Daniel O. Dahlstrom's 'Heidegger's Critique of Husserl' published in 1994 in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, edited by Theodore Kisiel and John van Buren (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994), especially pages 239–244.

3 Commentators have suggested that the character of Chance in Jerzy Kosinski's *Being There* is an amusing parody of this conception of Heidegger's authentic being-there. In Chance's life of wide-eyed openness the television screen plays the role of the truth of being. The subjective voluntaristic view of authenticity can be found in some of Kosinski's descriptions of Chance. For example, he says: 'by changing the channel he could change himself . . . he came to believe that it was he, Chance, and no one else who made himself be.' The irony of Chance's name only gives a more close approximation of Sartre's view since this philosopher's supposed radical voluntarism frequently sounds more like a radical spontaneity over which the individual has no control. Kosinski does capture the role of the television as the central work of art in the middle of the twentieth century. See *Being There* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich Inc., 1970), p. 5.

Augustine down through Kant and on to these early twentieth-century thinkers, the philosophers all take time as something present-at-hand, even when they locate it 'in' the soul, and they all operate with an unexamined, inadequate conception of subjectivity. However, what Heidegger said was too late and did too little to counter the misunderstanding already imposed upon his thinking by the pervasive presuppositions in traditional and contemporary philosophy.[4]

We must recall the preceding analysis in *Being and Time* to situate Heidegger's discussion of timeliness. Heidegger has already laid out the essential dimensions of Dasein and traced them back to their origin in care. At the beginning of the timely reinterpretation of the structures of care, Heidegger reminds us that, 'Dasein's being whole as care indicates: ahead-of-itself already-in (a world) as being-at-home-with (what-is within the world).' He adds that the 'primordial unity of the structure of care lies in timeliness' (327).

In Division One Heidegger had already argued for a priority in the existential structures of Dasein's being, placing understanding as always ahead-of-itself as the most important dimension, the one which releases Dasein's ability to be 'already in' a world, at home with the roles, goals, and everyday items of the everyday environment. Timeliness, as the meaning of Dasein's being, is the condition for the possibility of the existence of this entity that understands being. As Heidegger puts it in *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, emphasizing the whole sentence, '*The ontological condition of the possibility of the understanding of being is timeliness itself*' (BPP 228/323). Such timeliness, Heidegger says, 'times itself,' that is creates its own unity as it manifests itself (350). We will explore this idea throughout the rest of the chapter.[5]

The 'timing' does not happen most fundamentally in a moment to moment flow of consciousness. In lectures given shortly after the publication of *Being and Time* which present the subject of timeliness in a different context, one which bypasses an analysis of death and thereby avoids its diverting tendency, Heidegger comments that 'world-entry' only happens when timeliness times itself (MFL 211/274). Such world-entry does not happen, say, when an individual consciousness awakens to start the day. Rather world-entry is characteristic of Dasein's timely, historical 'happening' (MFL 194/251).

In Heidegger's explanation of world-entry, the concrete illustrations he uses are the 'metaphysics of myth' (MFL 209/270) and the end of the history of philosophy, not, like Husserl, the consciousness of a melody or the meaning of a sentence made possible by retention and expectation of its absent elements. Consciousness finds its unity in the significance of the world 'timed' around it, a world in which melodies

4 See, for example, MFL 149–150/188–190. These remarks occur in a section dealing with 'The Problem of Transcendence and the Problem of *Being and Time*,' an issue which Heidegger never clarified enough to keep readers from identifying 'transcendence' with consciousness's contact with the 'outside' world, a total misconception of our being in Heidegger's view.

5 I substitute 'timeliness times' for Heidegger's '*Zeitlichkeit zeitigt*.' See discussion below for a fuller explanation.

and sentences are paid such attention, and Dasein's world is the phenomenon for which we are trying to account.

Thus, we need to see how timeliness makes possible the understanding of being that we all share, not just how it makes possible a person's consciousness. We may well ask at this point, why call this phenomenon, whatever it is, 'timeliness' at all? What has it got to do with time in the ordinary sense such that we should call it 'primordial time'? Heidegger thinks that if he shows that 'the "time" which is accessible to Dasein's common understanding is *not* primordial but arises rather from authentic timeliness, then, in accordance with the principle "*a potiori fit denominatio*," we are justified in designating "*primordial time*" the *timeliness* we have just laid bare' (329). The ordinary conception of time as a series of 'nows' is supposedly derivative from inauthentic timeliness, which in turn is derivative from authentic timeliness. Both modes of timeliness are thus primordial in comparison with ordinary time. After completing our account of timeliness in this chapter, we will examine the 'derivation' of ordinary time in the next.

3.2 The Ecstases of Timeliness

Heidegger distinguishes three 'ecstases' of timeliness. This new term, like 'existence,' indicates a 'standing out' manifest in Dasein's being, but this time the etymological play is from Greek, not Latin, although the literal meaning is similar: 'to stand out toward' or 'to stand out from.' The usual definitions of ecstatic as 'blissful,' 'overjoyed,' or 'astonished' have no relevance to Heidegger's use, and neither does the more closely literal Greek sense of 'displacement' if this is taken as indicating a need to get out of some momentary now of consciousness and certainly not a displacement from self as in religious ecstasy. The creation of a field of possibilities for Dasein's activities by ecstatic timeliness is precisely what makes possible its unified selfhood and the consciousness of each particular Dasein.

The specific dimensions of timeliness are labeled, in order of priority: (1) the 'future,' or in German literally the 'to come,' (2) 'having-beenness' or the 'having-been,' and (3) the 'present' or the 'pre-sent.' The latter term Heidegger frequently turns into a verb (translated as 'making-present' or 'waiting-toward') to emphasize that the present is an active process of making things present, dealing with them as objects of our everyday concerns (326).[6]

6 The German term for 'future' is '*Zukunft*' or literally 'to come,' a meaning Heidegger frequently plays on, and I will substitute 'to-come' for 'future' when this meaning is prominent. Heidegger's term for the past dimension is '*Gewesenheit*,' and 'having-been' or 'having-beenness' is the standard though awkward attempt to capture this verbal tense used as a noun. The 'present' is '*Gegenwart*,' a term Heidegger frequently turns into a verb as '*Gegenwärtigen*' or, as we will put it, 'making-present,' to emphasize that the present is an active process of making things present (326). When Heidegger hyphenates the latter term as '*Gegen-wärtigen*' to emphasize the meaning of the prefix and root, the more literal term 'waiting-toward' is substituted. The translation of 'present' as 'pre-sent' is explained in the text. See Section 3.3 on inauthentic timeliness for further explanation of these terms.

The second term is obviously part of a technical vocabulary, but we should regard all three as such. To reinforce their distinctive meaning, we will use the following terms:

the having-been	the pre-sent	the to-come

While not paralleling the German term or its etymology, calling the 'present' ecstasis the 'pre-sent' indicates the way in which the significance of Dasein's activities in this dimension originates from the 'to-come' and the 'having-been' and the way in which all three dimensions are tied to the 'destiny of being' sent from Ancient Greece by the way the question of being was posed and subsequently answered. Although I have tried to avoid using jargon too frequently, in this case, as with the term 'timeliness,' resorting to it helps break down the reader's attachment to the assumption that we are merely describing elements of time-consciousness correlated with 'parts' of time or that a person's experience of time constitutes the subject of Division Two of *Being and Time*.

The ecstases do not represent parts of the time which is measured by a clock or calendar, nor do they have any time-measurable relationship to one another. Heidegger says: 'Timing does not signify that the ecstases come in a "succession." The to-come is *not later* than having-been, and having-been is *not earlier* than the present' (350).[7] Despite the way the chart might be read, we should not think that the to-come starts tomorrow or five minutes from now; neither does having-been occur before today.

The dimensions of timeliness are intertwined: 'Timeliness times itself as the future making-present as having-been' (350).[8] In this tortuous jargon Heidegger characterizes the phenomenon of timeliness as having a particular kind of unity. The dimension of 'having-been' arises 'from the future and in such a way that the future which has been, or, better, is "beening," releases the present from itself' (326). The odd English matches Heidegger's neologistic German. We will need the rest of the chapter to unpack its meaning.

The description indicates the priority Heidegger grants the ecstases: the future is the most fundamental dimension; from it arises having-been; and together they release the present. The priority of the ecstases matches the priority involved in the existential structures of Dasein's being which Heidegger had laid out in Division One of *Being and Time*. In the timely reinterpretation of the structures of care, Heidegger reminds us that, 'Dasein's being-whole as care indicates: ahead-of-itself already-in (a world) as being-at-home-with (what-is within the world).' He adds that the 'primordial unity of the structure of care lies in timeliness' (327).

Dasein's 'ahead-of-itself' dimension, rich with concealed possibilities, is correlated with the future; its 'being-already in' a world is correlated with having-been as the

7 The term translated as 'timing' is '*Die Zeitigung*.'

8 The awkward phrase 'the future making present as having-been' substitutes for Heidegger's equally awkward, neologistic '*als gewesend gegenwärtigende Zukunft*.'

tradition of understanding being into which it is thrown; and its 'being-at-home-with' what-is within the world is correlated with the 'making-present' of the present world of its concern. The unification of this care structure is accomplished by the self-unifying character of timeliness.

Although we shall use an example below of personal everydayness to illuminate the phenomenon that Heidegger is investigating since, after all, the person is Dasein, and such an example helps illustrate the priority of the dimensions of timeliness, it is a mistake to understand Heidegger's discussion as dealing only or even most directly with the personal level. As I argued above, he is interested in the entity that *we* are and its being. Thus, we need to focus on the peculiar character of Dasein as the entity that makes an issue of what it is to be in general, not just Dasein in its everydayness and certainly not just the individual person living within the realm of the Anyone.

We can understand the priority of the ecstases of the timeliness of Dasein at the ontological level by first examining the most important dimension of Dasein's time. The future as the ahead-of-itself makes possible Dasein's being as existence, that is, as a standing open toward being. Thus, Heidegger says that the ahead-of-itself indicates 'the future as of a sort which would make it possible for Dasein to be such that its able-to-be is at issue' (327).

The future makes possible Dasein's 'essential characteristic of existentiality' (327). This is not to say that we need a future span of time in order to 'debate' about what it is to be. Right now we are the entity that makes an issue of what it is to be, whether or not we are actually doing so. As we have seen, the future is 'still outstanding' not in the sense of something yet to come but of something still unsettled. Dasein is the 'dis-closedness' which is always 'un-closed,' always unsettled or at issue.[9] Dasein exists in such a way that it encompasses the debate yet to come, that is, in such a way that its 'not yet' belongs to it and makes it the entity that it is.

As I noted in the Introduction, Heidegger thinks that 'the existence of historical man begins at that moment when the first thinker takes a questioning stance with regard to the unconcealment of what-is by asking what it is' (ET 128/189). Heidegger's remark about this beginning in Ancient Greece proves enlightening:

> A genuine beginning, as a leap, always is a head start in which everything to come is already leaped over, even if as something covered up. The beginning already holds the end concealed. The genuine beginning has nothing of the neophyte character of the primitive. The primitive, because it lacks such a bestowing, grounding leap and head start, is always futureless. It is not capable of releasing anything more from itself because it contains nothing more than that in which it is caught.
>
> (OWA 76/64)

Dasein acquires a future when it acquires an understanding of being such that being is in question. In this respect, 'primitive Dasein' has no future. As the future which is the 'to-come,' what Western Dasein will be comes to it from its concealed end, the

9 In Heidegger's own wordplay, he describes Dasein's *Erschlossenheit* as always having something unsettled (*Unabgeschlossenheit*).

realm of death. For Heidegger, being toward the future is being toward this end, either authentically or inauthentically. We will not pause here to consider the parochial or Eurocentric character of Heidegger's dismissal of 'primitive' Dasein, but just point out that cultures such as Ancient Egypt, the Kalahari bushmen, Australian aborigines, or some Native American groups continued in the same basic form of everydayness for thousands of years.[10] Heidegger is trying to account for what he sees as the inner dynamism of Western culture, which he does not identify with progress or cultural superiority, but the manifestation of a unity and continuity within dramatic change that needs explanation.

The future releases to Dasein its dimension of having-been as the understanding of being into which it is thrown. Dasein always already has an understanding of being. In the initial leap, that first insight into what-is, the Greeks find themselves with such an understanding already and do not suddenly acquire it. And, without the world of the Greeks and the Middle Ages on which it builds, the modern world would not be what it is. Not that the past is over and done with, a 'given' with which we are confronted or which determines what we are. We understand the past through the projection of a future with certain concerns, and hence our understanding of our 'already having-been' changes as our understanding of ourselves changes. What matters about the past depends on what matters about the future. Indeed, as we shall soon see in more detail, Heidegger argues that Dasein's authentic projection of its future requires it to 'repeat' the possibilities of its past by transforming them in its new understanding of being.

At the end of the Introduction we noted Heidegger saying that the dialogue with Parmenides never ends. We might also think of how the interpretation of Parmenides' poem or Plato's dialogues changes with every epoch and how that interpretation arises from current cultural concerns. Will we ever achieve *the* right account of what such thinkers meant? Heidegger asks us if we could come to the final essence of a great thinker. Could we 'distill *the* Kant and *the* Plato by cleverly calculating and balancing off all Kant interpretations or all Plato ones?' He answers 'No.' There is no 'Kant as he is in himself.' Such an idea 'runs counter to the nature of history and most certainly to philosophical history.'

> This historical Kant is always only the Kant that becomes manifest in an original possibility of philosophizing, manifest in part, if you will, but in a part that carries the impact of the whole.
>
> (MFL 71/88)

Similarly, there is no way we are in ourselves, no 'in itself' of human being or being itself. But neither is a manifestation – a disclosure or unconcealment – of either human nature or the being of what-is just some imaginary slice of an indeterminate and indeterminable pie in the sky. It *is* the way things show themselves to be in our changing cultural practices. We will come back to this point in Chapter 5's discussion of the Temporality of being, but for now we are interested in Dasein's ability to be.

10 See Chapter 5 for further discussion of this issue.

To explain the priority of the ecstasis of the future and its relation to the other two ecstases of timeliness, we can look at another concrete but limited and derivative example of the timing activity of Dasein. This is the way the timely structure manifests itself in the inauthentic everydayness of the individual. To understand oneself as a teacher or student, for example, is to project certain roles, goals, and tasks; it is to have a certain understanding of oneself that determines one's aims in life. This is the 'ahead-of-itself' dimension, and out of it arises a certain understanding of one's past or what has happened and its significance. These dimensions in turn 'release' a present and determine the activities that one is engaged in right now, such as preparing a class session or doing homework.

Perhaps the most dramatic personal illustration of the interaction of the ecstases, which we borrow from Kierkegaard, is that of a person who undergoes a radical conversion and comes to a new self-understanding. Here, too, Heidegger 'learned from' Kierkegaard. Because he projects a new future for himself, for example, that of a Christian, he comes to a new understanding of his past as despair and sin, no matter how happy he seemed at the time. The new understanding of his future and his past determines what he does in his life at present.[11] This example anticipates the authentic timing of timeliness in the way a change in the understanding of being reconfigures future, past, and present.

We might also recall Jean-Paul Sartre's example of the young man who has to choose whether to join the Free French Forces or stay home and help his mother, or the young Jesuit who had decided that his lack of academic success, botched love affair, and failure in military training meant he should become a priest.[12] But the contrast between Kierkegaard's and Sartre's analyses highlights an important aspect of Heidegger's position.

For Sartre these individuals' interpretations of the meaning of their past and the facts about it they remember, as well as what they choose for the future, is ultimately arbitrary, a convenient fiction imposed on indifferent data to fend off anguish in the face of our spontaneous freedom. For Kierkegaard God's grace grants a path from sin to salvation if only the individual will be open to the eternal at work in the self. Once the leap is made the hindsight view of the previous life as sin and despair is an accurate grasp of its nature, not a retrospective illusion or arbitrary fiction. On the side of Kierkegaard but from a different perspective and on a quite different ontological level, and of course with no personal will attached, Heidegger sees the revelation of being guiding authentic Dasein's timely insight into the being of

---

11 The 'dialectic' of such conversions and the manifestation of 'the eternal' in them has been explored with great insight by Kierkegaard. He describes the way that an individual receives a new understanding of his past, present, and future in the 'leaps' from the aesthetic sphere to the ethical and the ethical to the religious. For the notion of the 'dialectic' of the eternal, see *Sickness Unto Death* (Lowrie translation), p. 157. For various 'case studies' see the brief sketches of lives in this book under the different types of despair or the more extended creations in both volumes of *Either/Or*.

12 Jean-Paul Sartre, 'The Humanism of Existentialism,' *Essays in Existentialism*, edited by Wade Baskin (New York: Citadel Press, 1968), pp. 42–45.

what-is, a subject we will explore in Chapter 5. For now, we are looking at such insight from the historical character of Dasein.

As we see from both the ontological and personal examples, the pre-sent that is released by the to-come and having-been does not refer to some instantaneous moment of consciousness; nor are the ecstases of future and having-been simply the dimensions of attention that enable us to have an experience of an enduring, if specious, present. The term 'now,' as the term 'present,' points to an indefinite dimension of disclosure. The 'present' can refer to what I am doing at this minute, or this day, or this week or month or even a period of years, for example, 'At present I am writing a book on Heidegger.' As ecstases, the dimensions of the to-be, having-been, and pre-sent are a disclosure matrix which cannot be measured or delimited by the time that we can measure on a clock.[13] Indeed, the time that we measure on a clock is a feature of a world disclosed by a particular understanding of being. This does not make time a fiction or in any sense unreal, as it might seem for Kant, Husserl, and Bergson, but its revelation, its presence in our lives, is dependent on the concerns originating in Ancient Greece and continuing in our understanding of being.

Although the example of personal everydayness illuminates the phenomenon that Heidegger is investigating since, after all, the person is Dasein, and furthermore, we can call upon such an example to help illustrate the priority of the dimensions of timeliness in the next section, it is a mistake to understand Heidegger's discussion as dealing only or even directly with the personal level. As I argued above, he is interested in the entity that *we* are and its being. Thus, we need to focus on the peculiar character of Dasein as the entity that makes an issue of what it is to be in general, not just Dasein in its everydayness and certainly not just the individual person.

We need to distinguish the timeliness of, to use the phrase that Heidegger sometimes does, 'the Dasein in man' and the timeliness of *a* man or *a* woman or any *one*. Another passage in *Basic Problems* seems to make this contrast. Heidegger first refers to the futural dimension of Dasein but then makes the parallel with individual behavior:

> In thus relating itself to its ownmost able-to-be, *it is ahead of itself*. Expecting a possibility I can come from this possibility toward that which I myself am. Dasein, expecting its able-to-be, *comes toward itself*. In this coming-toward-itself, expecting a possibility, Dasein is *futural* in a primordial sense.
>
> (BPP 265/374–375)

As a person, I project a particular possibility for myself, for example, being a teacher, a woman, and so on, in understanding who I am. As Dasein, I also project the fundamental, comprehensive pre-ontological understanding of the being of what is of a world in which institutions, ways of life, professions, and child-rearing make such roles available. These personal projects occur with the realm of the Anyone

13 This terminology was first suggested to me by Professor Peter Manchester

and are immersed in the general phenomenon of inauthentic timeliness. Their parameters and goals are laid out by the significance-structure of the world. My selfhood is based on the Anyone, not Dasein's ownmost being, no matter how creative and unique I might be in the way I take up these roles. I may make an issue of what it is to be me, but this is not the same as making an issue of the being of what-is.

For Dasein 'at present' to encounter what-is within the world and deal with things in its daily activities, being must be already understood (315). When our stance toward being itself is brought into question, the significance of our present world falls away and we find ourselves in anxiety. Only then does the possibility of authentic timeliness arise, and we may either flee it, turning anxiety into fear, or become open to the unconcealment of the possibilities of being and to understand the being of what-is in a new way, for example, to see the order of things as not a divine hierarchy gathered around God but as material interconnected by quantifiable mass and motion.

When Heidegger makes claims such as 'timeliness times' one should not forget the ordinary meaning of his German verb.[14] Ordinarily, his use of words as technical terms with their own invested significance requires us to prescind from their common meanings. But with this phrase the ordinary connotation adds a resonance which is missing in the translation of it as 'timeliness times,' specifically a sense of 'maturing' or 'ripening.' Dasein's timeliness is what lets Dasein ripen toward its end and what lets its understanding of being change and grow. Heidegger comments: 'Time times – which means time makes ripe, makes rise up and grow. Timely is what has come up in the rising' (OWL 106/213).[15] Dasein's authentic insights keep 'in time with' the epochs of the revelation of being in our dealings with things. The impetus for and direction of this 'timed' growth, though briefly mentioned in Section 3.5, ought to be discussed more fully in the context of Heidegger's analysis of the history and finitude of being.

Before moving into a detailed characterization of the specific ecstases of inauthentic and authentic timeliness, a map of the wealth of new jargon would be helpful.[16] The following chart relates the specific terminology to Heidegger's general names for the ecstases of Dasein's timeliness:

---

14 His phrase '*Zeitlichkeit zeitigt*' uses the verb '*Zeitigen.*'

15 Heidegger's '*Das Zeitige*' is translated as 'Timely.'

16 Heidegger's discussion of these technical terms is scattered throughout Division Two's first four chapters, but see section 68, 'The Timeliness of Disclosedness in General' (335–389), for the most compact comparison of their usage.

To some degree I have had to choose which term to use when Heidegger gives us too many or uses two terms interchangeably, as he apparently does with '*Gegenwart*' and '*Gegenwart.*' For example, in contrasting the authentic and the inauthentic future Heidegger suggests in one place that, if we need a formal, general term for the future ecstasis we could use his phrase 'ahead-of-itself' by which he had already designated this aspect of the care structure (337). But since he himself continually uses 'the future (*Zukunft*)' in reference to this ecstasis and plays off its literal meaning of 'to come,' I prefer to try to capture this meaning in our term and leave 'ahead-of-itself' to label a dimension of the care structure. See footnote 22 in Section 3.3 for the ambiguity surrounding '*Gegenwart*.'

	HAVING-BEEN	PRE-SENT	TO-COME
INAUTHENTIC	forgetting	waiting-toward	awaiting
AUTHENTIC	repetition	moment of insight	forerunning death

3.3 Inauthentic Timeliness

The two modes in which timeliness times itself make possible the fundamental modes of Dasein's being, that is, authentic and inauthentic existence (328). In this section we will discuss inauthentic timeliness with its three ecstases of 'awaiting,' 'forgetting,' and 'making-present.' In inauthentic existence Dasein loses itself as the entity whose ownmost being is to make an issue of being; it 'falls' away from its ownmost self and is absorbed by the objects of its concern. In the timing of inauthentic timeliness a particular understanding of being is taken for granted. In this mode of timeliness the ecstasis of the future, now specified as 'awaiting,' still has priority, but it involves a projection of a particular existentiell understanding of the being of what is rather than a plunge into the questionableness of being.

Although Heidegger labels the future ecstasis of inauthentic timeliness 'awaiting,' the verbal use of his term suggests a more active stance such as 'to be prepared for.'[17] Dasein's inauthentic future dimension is 'awaiting' in the sense that Dasein is prepared to deal with the objects of its concern, finding their being comfortable and assured. Heidegger says:

> Inauthentic understanding projects itself upon that with which it is concerned, what is feasible, urgent, or indispensable in everyday activity . . . Dasein comes toward itself from that with which it concerns itself. The inauthentic future has the character of *awaiting*. (337)

Dasein 'comes to' itself from that which is 'to-come.'

Though the term may suggest a conscious intention, the 'awaiting' of the inauthentic future is a mode of existence, that is, of having an understanding of being according to which we deal with things, and not necessarily of explicit, conscious awareness. It indicates our ready skills for dealing with things, even objects we have never encountered before. Heidegger says that 'awaiting' the 'toward which' of some project which we aim to accomplish is 'neither a considering of the "goal" nor an expectation of the impending finishing of the work to be produced. It has by no means the character of thematic grasping.' Many times we ourselves are quite unaware of the details of our dealings with things, as, for example, when we are

17 Heidegger's term is '*Gewärtigen*.' The verb '*warten*' does mean 'to wait for' or 'to await,' and the adjective '*gewärtig*' does mean 'awaiting.' But the verb '*Gewärtigen*' suggests an ability to deal with what is to come, whether it happens after the final stroke of a hammer or after enrollment in college.

driving a car and adjust our steering to the banked slope of the road. We let our skills put tools to work for us. This 'awaiting' combined with the two other dimensions of inauthentic timeliness will make 'possible in its ecstatical unity the specifically manipulative way in which equipment is made present' (353).

Heidegger also speaks of a futural way to be that he calls 'expecting' which comes closer to being a type of reflective activity.[18] However, his notion of 'expecting' seems general enough to cover both conscious and unconscious expectations. It may indicate an orientation toward a specific project or circumstance, not just our general ability to deal with things. Heidegger remarks that 'expecting' is 'founded upon awaiting.' He adds that only because Dasein awaits its able-to-be in terms of that with which it concerns itself can it expect anything and wait for it (337). Unfortunately, Heidegger provides no concrete examples to illustrate the contrast between awaiting and expecting and their derivative relationship.

I can suggest two examples which I think capture the distinction. Again they will be examples on the level of particular things since these are more immediately understandable. Contrast the difference between 'awaiting' a ringing telephone, or being able to deal with one when it does ring, and actually 'expecting' a phone call, an expectation which may be evident in both reflective awareness ('I wonder when he is going to call?' or 'I wish he would call') and unconscious physical behavior (drumming one's fingers, tapping one's toes) while one's conscious thoughts are on what to fix for lunch. Similarly, contrast the difference between 'awaiting' when one enters a stranger's house, that is, having a general familiarity with what one may find there and being able to deal with it, and 'expecting' to see certain things when one enters one's own house. The latter expectation can be, and probably almost all of the time is, quite unconscious. Its operation and its difference from awaiting is indicated by one's surprise at finding the furniture rearranged or changed or missing. Both conscious and unconscious expectations are made possible by the more fundamental 'awaiting,' that is, being able to deal with things.

These examples do not just illustrate the inauthentic ecstasis of the future but also that of having-been and the present since the three dimensions organize a unitary phenomenon. Thus, we can see 'forgetting' and 'making-present' (or 'waiting-toward') at work in them, too.[19] How Dasein exists as futural releases these particular modes of having-been and the present. In regard to the past:

> The inauthentic self-projection which is making-present and producing possibilities out of that with which it concerns itself is, however, only possible because Dasein has *forgotten* itself in its ownmost, thrown able-to-be. This forgetting is not nothing, nor is it just a failure to remember; it is rather a 'positive' ecstatical mode of having-been, a mode with a character of its own.
>
> (339)

---

18 His term is '*Erwarten*,' which has etymological ties with '*Gewärtigen*' (awaiting), '*Gegenwart*' (the present), and '*Gegenwärtigen*' (making present or waiting toward).

19 For the use of 'making present' and 'waiting toward,' see footnote 6 in Section 3.2

Heidegger is using 'forgetting' as a technical term, and its ordinary meaning should be set aside. What we are 'forgetting' are not events that have happened to us or facts that we might try to remember. We are 'forgetting' what it is to be Dasein in its ownmost being, but this is something of which we may never have been aware in the ordinary sense and therefore cannot 'forget' in the ordinary sense. The ecstasis of forgetting has 'the character of self-closing backing away before its ownmost "been"' (339). Dasein closes itself off from the questionableness of its being and the past from which this stems and thereby closes itself off to its ownmost self, too. The experience of the forgottenness of being, that is, the recognition that being was forgotten, was, Heidegger said, the fundamental experience prompting the writing of *Being and Time* (TB 29/31). It provided the motivation for raising anew the question of being.

Heidegger refers to a 'retaining' a number of times in a way that suggests that, despite the opposition in common meaning, it could be used as a substitute term for 'forgetting.'[20] For example, he correlates retaining with the future as 'awaiting' in such phrases as 'awaiting retaining.'[21] This, too, indicates that in the inauthentic past ecstasis nothing is being 'forgotten' in the ordinary sense. What is 'retained' is Dasein's existentiell understanding of being, its understanding of how to deal with things, but this requires 'forgetting' being in its questionableness.

Only on the basis of such forgetful retaining can we 'remember' or 'forget' anything in the ordinary sense. Heidegger comments:

> Just as expecting is possible only on the basis of awaiting, *remembering* is possible only on that of forgetting *and not vice versa*. For in the mode of having-forgotten, the having been 'discloses' primarily the horizon into which Dasein, lost in the 'superficiality' of the objects of its concern, can bring itself by remembering.
>
> (339)

We could say that when we remember events or the characteristics of things, we take their being for granted and recollect the details of their particularity. Such recollections are evoked by our current concerns and the things with which we are dealing. Thus, remembering as the derivative mode of the inauthentic past also indicates an absorption in the things with which we concern ourselves. Our cultural remembrances, too, for example, Memorial Day or Black History Month, are only kept alive by our current concerns. In anxiety, when we do not forget the questionableness of being, remembering is precisely what we do not do. Our understanding of familiar ways of being recedes and new possibilities can make their way to the foreground.

Correlated with the inauthentic future and past is the particular kind of present which they release. Dasein's current ability is laid out in terms of the things with which it concerns itself. Whether the project lasts a minute, a day, a week, or a year, it is articulated by the web of significance that constitutes Dasein's world. Heidegger

20 His term is '*Behalten*.'

21 See, for example, *Being and Time*, pp. 339, 361, and 368.

comments: 'Corresponding to the inauthentic future (awaiting) there is a specific being-at-home-with things of concern' (337). This way of being-at-home-with things is a 'making-present' or 'waiting-toward' activities in the current context of concern that is 'pre-sent' by the understanding of being which we project in 'awaiting' the future.[22] Heidegger's use of the notion of 'waiting-toward' suggests a more specific involvement in particular projects than the more general comfort of being-at-home in the world, perhaps correlating with the other derivative ecstases of inauthentic timeliness, remembering and expecting. We can formalize the vocabulary to specify both a primary and derivative mode of the ecstases of inauthentic timeliness:

INAUTHENTIC	HAVING-BEEN	PRE-SENT	TO-COME
primary mode	forgetting	making-present	awaiting
derivative mode	remembering	waiting-toward	expecting

Moving on the ontological level in *Being and Time*, Heidegger is interested not just in how we relate to things such as telephones or living room furniture, of course, but in how we take what-is in general as having a specific being. We await what-is ready-to-hand, present-at-hand, nature, and so forth, as, for example, God's creation or stuff to be manipulated, and this shows up in our expectations about specific things and the way our understanding lays out the ecstatic context of the roles, goals, and standards according to which we deal with them.

Cultures, like individuals, can be more or less immersed in an understanding of being which is taken for granted. Revolutionary periods such as the early modern epoch are rich with possibilities, and sterile periods such as the Dark Ages are addicted to actualities. The cultural givenness of an understanding of being involves more than just a collection of individuals going about their particular daily lives. The interaction of people within the culture produces the effect which Heidegger calls 'leveling,' making the breakthrough of a new paradigmatic work of art or philosophical thought difficult. The more we deal with things in the same old ways, the more we reduce the way that they can appear to us to the bland sameness which Heidegger calls 'averageness.' Dasein, as the entity which we are, can be more or less entrenched in this averageness, more or less locked into an understanding of being, in different periods of its history. The timeliness which makes possible Dasein's

22 Heidegger initially suggests using 'waiting-toward (*Gegen-wart*),' not 'making-present (*Gegenwärtigen*),' as the term for the ecstasis of the present (*Gegenwart*) correlated with the general inauthentic future of 'awaiting (*Gewärtigen*)' (337–338). But in the discussion that follows he says that 'making-present' is the more general or fundamental term or simply seems to use the terms interchangeably (338). The resulting ambiguity seems to stem from Heidegger's preoccupation with the etymological wordplay in German which we cannot capture in English, a problem apparent in the translators' struggle with these words. Consequently, I use the English terms in the way that seems to make the most sense in our vocabulary as well as the interpretation this book offers.

being has, one might picture, a topography of peaks and plains, a rhythm of crescendos and murmurs.

3.4 Resoluteness, Conscience, and Guilt

In the first two chapters of Division Two of *Being and Time* Heidegger frequently acknowledges a need for an existentiell 'attestation' of the existential ways of being he claims to uncover, for example, inauthentic being toward death. But he found the attestation or concrete manifestation of this phenomenon in literature in the character and musings of Tolstoy's Ivan Ilych.[23] At the end of the chapter on death he admits that the question of Dasein's being-a-whole, its authentic being toward death, 'still hangs in mid-air' and needs phenomenological justification. The abstract, ontological analysis needs to be attested by concrete realization of an authentic ability to be. The next chapter asserts that this 'authentic able-to-be' is found in resoluteness, the phenomenon he proceeds to analyze and, in the process, uncovers Dasein's conscience and its being-guilty.

Since Heidegger seems to describe resoluteness as both a preparation for authenticity and a full achievement of it, we can bring some clarity to his dense discussion by distinguishing these two forms of authentic disclosedness, preliminary and completed, and even extract a third form that is a 'philosophical' resoluteness. In this section we will discuss resoluteness as not the final completion of authenticity but as a way of disclosing Dasein's being which only – but importantly – prepares us for the existentiell possibility of authentic insight into being. We should emphasize at the beginning, though, that the discussion of resoluteness remains on the level of a search for an ability or potentiality to be, not for a concrete exemplar of being such as we found in Ivan in the case of inauthentic being toward death.

Although we may be making the text of *Being and Time* more systematic than it is and giving Heidegger more credit for architectonic design than he deserves, we can preview Heidegger's analysis of all three stages of authentic resoluteness by suggesting a tripartite structure of preliminary resoluteness that is related to the existentiell concretion of authentic timeliness according to the following parallels:

RESOLUTENESS as:	HAVING-BEEN	PRE-SENT	TO COME
philosophical	ready for anxiety	wanting a conscience	questioning being
preliminary	anxiety	call of conscience	being guilty
authentic resolution	repetition	moment of insight	forerunning death

We have yet to explore the meaning of some of these technical terms, but while we have the architectonic before us, I should note it might be tempting to reverse anxiety and being-guilty as modes of the 'to come' and 'having been.' However, Heidegger

23 See Section 2.7, 'Dying and Inauthentic Being-toward-Death.'

clearly describes anxiety as a mode of situatedness and thus of having-been (340, 343) and being-guilty as a matter of understanding involving a projection and thus of the 'to-come' (296–297). However, Heidegger reminds us that the structure of timeliness is an integrated whole, not three distinct parts strung together, and that hence, even though each aspect of Dasein's being may be primarily manifest in a particular ecstasis, in each we find the whole of timeliness implicated (346). Thus 'anxiety springs from the future' even though, as a particular instance of situatedness, it is manifest in having-been (344), and being-guilty demonstrates Dasein's 'thrownness,' its finding itself in an inherited understanding of being, even though it points us toward the possibility of forerunning Dasein's death as its ownmost existentiell modality (305).

Heidegger speaks of 'readiness-for-anxiety' and 'wanting-to-have-a-conscience' as if they were precursors to actually being in anxiety and heeding the call of conscience. Although his text offers little leverage to distinguish these modes, such a way of being seems to indicate the philosophical or theoretical stance toward authenticity, a matter of knowing what it is rather than, at that moment, being authentic. Hence it seems well worth distinguishing from the other two modes. If preliminary resoluteness and full authenticity both involve new although different disclosures of being and if 'proximately and for the most part' Dasein is caught up in inauthenticity 'when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment' (43), then we can see that even the great thinkers and creators will live like Anyone most of the time, before or in between their episodes of creative insight. They are no longer 'addicted' to the Anyone, lost in fallenness, or fleeing the anxiety in which the current understanding of being is brought into question, but neither are they engaged by a new disclosure of being. We can supply the description of this way of being's futural dimension as a questioning of being or an openness toward being though one that is only this; genuine authenticity may never be subsequently achieved.

Such a preliminary ecstatic matrix may underlie what Heidegger much later calls 'interpretive thinking,' the sort of thinking his own reflections provide. He did say that he never intended to 'preach' a variety of existentialism, or, for that matter, I would say, offer any specific new existentiell understanding of being. Rather, he was always only concerned with renewing the question of being. But such questioning can only take us to the verge of making the leap of insight to a new understanding of being, which he himself only claims to try to prepare us for, not actually supply.[24] To paraphrase Heidegger's comment about philosophical thinking in general and turn it against him: To 'philosophize' about being shattered by death is separated by a chasm from a thinking that is so shattered (LH 222–223/343).

Understanding that being is questionable and laying out the existential structures of Dasein's being as existence does not inevitably lead one to make the authentic

---

24 See the discussion in Section 7.4 of Heidegger's distinction between preliminary 'interpretive thinking' and the 'understanding thinking' which makes the leap of insight (TB 35/38). [Chapter 7 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/C White.htm* - Editor's note.]

leap across the chasm to a radically new understanding of being. One cannot become an authentic creator by, for example, reading Heidegger's works or those of the great thinkers of history. Far from theory-produced, it makes as little sense to exhort someone to 'Be authentic!' in Heidegger's view of this achievement as it would to exhort them to be another Plato or Aristotle, let alone expect them to become authentic by reading *Being and Time*. However, the reader who understands the book might at least achieve this philosophical level of resoluteness.

In *Being and Time* Heidegger's own reflections on resoluteness as a way of being focused on the preliminary resoluteness which is not just a philosophizing about Dasein's being as an openness toward being but rather a specific disclosure of being, although not one in which Dasein actually reaches fully-fledged authenticity in the moment of insight. Resoluteness involves the anxiety in which being is called into question. In resoluteness Dasein discloses the indefiniteness of its being as suspended over an abyss of possibilities.

To understand Heidegger's notion we must make one of our rare textual excursions into his own German terms rather than leaving his wordplay for the footnotes. The etymological connection between '*Erschlossenheit*' or 'disclosedness' and '*Entschlossenheit*' or 'resoluteness' is lost in the translation but is crucial for Heidegger's meaning. '*Schliessen*,' the verb forming the root of both '*Erschlossenheit*' and '*Entschlossenheit*,' means 'to close' or 'to lock.' Although the prefix '*er-*' usually indicates the beginning of an action or the carrying through of the action, '*erschliessen*' means not 'to close' or 'to lock' but, quite the opposite, 'to disclose' or 'to make accessible.' Dasein is characterized as disclosedness because it lets things come forth and show themselves as what they are.

Ent-schlossenheit or resoluteness is a completion of *Erschlossenheit* or disclosedness that reveals Dasein as the entity that it is, something which perpetually escapes our attention when we take an understanding of human nature for granted as God's image or conscious subject – and direct our attention to the things with which we deal everyday. The '*ent-*' prefix attached to '*schliessen*' suggests entry into a new state or the abandonment of a previous state, appropriately indicating that *Entschlossenheit* is a disclosure of Dasein's being *as* '*Erschlossenheit*' and is, as such, a new mode of disclosedness: Heidegger describes it as a 'distinctive mode of Dasein's disclosedness' (297). Indeed, as the preliminary authentic disclosedness, resoluteness 'limns' Dasein's 'distinctive' being as the entity that makes an issue of being. If Dasein remains inauthentic, it is closed off to any new revelation of being and never comes up against the boundary of its particular understanding of being. In contrast, resoluteness reveals the clearing of being for what it is. Resoluteness reveals the limits of the clearing – 'the thin wall by which the Anyone is separated, as it were, from the uncanniness of its being' (278). As we were frequently reminded in Heidegger's discussion of death, Dasein's being always has 'something still to be closed,' something unsettled and not-yet, '*eine ständige Unabgeschlossenheit*' (236), a fact of its being disclosed in resoluteness.

The etymological reverberation of '*Entschlossenheit*' is, I would say, the main reason why Heidegger picks this word for the preliminary authentic mode of Dasein's being since he specifically rejects its ordinary meaning in a later, clarifying comment

In English, too, we ordinarily describe an individual as 'resolute' when he or she exhibits a single-minded striving toward a goal. But, in response to misunderstanding of his concept, Heidegger writes:

> The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time* is not the deliberate action of a subject but rather Dasein's opening out of the prejudice in what-is to the openness of being.[25]

He adds that resoluteness is not a matter of 'a subject striving toward himself as his self-set goal' (OWA 67/55). Though Heidegger uses words such as 'choice' and 'decision' in conjunction with the notion of resoluteness, he gives them a distinctive, ontological significance. For example, he describes 'decision'[26] as 'not man's judgment and choice' but a separation in the 'togetherness of being, unconcealment, appearance, and non-being' (IM 110/84). A 'decision' lets the being of what-is appear in various ways.

By speaking of resoluteness as a matter of 'self-being' or of Dasein being itself, Heidegger misled many of his readers about the level of his discussion.[27] We failed to grasp the existential character of this 'self.' Resoluteness is not a characteristic of an individual's personality nor a way of setting particular life goals and facing one's demise,[28] and it has little similarity to Kierkegaard's notion of life in the ethical sphere, though many commentators have found the two concepts nearly identical.[29] As Heidegger himself points out, Kierkegaard's analysis remains within a particular existentiell understanding of what it is to be human.[30] Accepting a contemporary Christian understanding of existence, Kierkegaard can then instruct the individual on how to achieve this version of personal selfhood which, at least as far as the ethical sphere goes, can aptly be described as a matter of deliberately striving toward self-set goals.

---

25 Heidegger's phrase at the end is '*aus der Befangheit im Seienden*,' which is difficult to capture in English. I assume that he is referring to the fallen understanding of what-is belonging to the Anyone. In English it would be more natural to say that Dasein opens out of 'its prejudice about what-is,' but the correlate preposition '*im*' of the German phrase is also uncommonly awkward.

26 Another '*ent-*' word, that is, '*Entscheidung*.'

27 Heidegger's term is '*Selbstsein*.'

28 For an indication of the usual account of the sorts of things that are chosen in resoluteness such as a career or getting married, see, for example, Michael Zimmerman, *The Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981), p. 80. Zimmerman also discusses resoluteness as a matter of 'steeling oneself' to face physical death in this book as well as his article 'The Foundering of *Being and Time*' in *Philosophy Today*, XIX (1975), p. 104.

29 The conflation of Heidegger's position with Kierkegaard's notion of the ethical sphere can be found in, among other works, Calvin Schrag's *Existence and Freedom* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1961) and Michael Wyschogrod's *Kierkegaard and Heidegger* (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

30 See *Being and Time*, pp. 235 and 494 in the English translation, footnote vi to section 45, the introduction to Division Two.

Heidegger, however, is operating at a level of existential generality which explores the conditions for the possibility of such a particular existentiell understanding of what it is to be. He is interested in how we come to have a particular understanding of our being and of being in general, and resoluteness is a step along the way in the formation of this conception. Resoluteness prepares Dasein for a new disclosure of being, but the definite 'content' of this disclosure – or, as Heidegger calls it, the 'resolution' – depends upon Dasein's 'situation' and has varied accordingly. One such situation is that of a Christian in nineteenth century Denmark. Another is that of a German in the 1930s.[31] Some people who argue that Heidegger's philosophy led to his affiliation with the Nazis hold the mistaken view of resoluteness as an attitude about one's personal life, for example, a steely determination, choosing a goal and marching toward it. Correcting the mistaken view, however, does not eliminate the connection between Heidegger's thought and the Nazis. The issue then becomes whether Heidegger thought that the Nazis had an authentic insight into German culture in its contemporary situation, one rooted appropriately in its tradition and taking the path pointing toward its future fulfillment of its historical mission. Apparently he did, at least until 1935 and perhaps beyond.[32]

Heidegger says that 'the term "irresoluteness" merely expresses the phenomenon we have explained as being-surrendered to the way things have been prevalently

---

31 A good example of such a position can be found in Werner Dannhauser's comments about Heidegger in his article 'The Trivialization of Friedrich Nietzsche,' *The American Spectator*, Vol. 15, No. 5 (May, 1982), p. 8.

For years articles such as Karsten Harries's 'Heidegger as a Political Thinker' and Karl A. Moehling's 'Heidegger and the Nazis,' seemed to settle this issue to Heidegger's credit. For Harries's article see *Heidegger and Modern Thought*, edited by Michael Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 304–328, especially pp. 318–328; for Moehling's see *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, edited by Thomas Sheehan (Chicago: Precedent Publishing Co., 1981), pp. 31–42, especially pp. 40–42. But controversy recently has swirled again with the publication of Victor Farías's book on Heidegger and Nazism in a number of languages, *Heidegger and Nazism*, edited by Joseph Margolis and Tom Rockmore (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). Heidegger's dubious behavior and statements are documented in detail, although perhaps taken out of context in many cases and their meaning distorted in many others. See *Heidegger and Nazism*, edited with a forward by J. Margolis and T. Rockmore and translated by P. Burrell and G. Ricci (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989). See the next note for references to scholars who have entered the post-Farías debate.

For Heidegger's own comments about the difficulty of telling when one has authentic insight into being see Section 3.6 as well as the discussion in Section 7.4. [Chapter 7 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* – Editor's note.]

32 For a wide variety of views on this subject, see *The Heidegger Case on Philosophy and Politics*, edited by Tom Rockmore and Joseph Margolis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992). For an account which summarizes various alternative views of Heidegger's political involvement, see Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *Heidegger and Modernity*, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). For one which most thoroughly places the 'Heidegger affair' in its historical and social context, see Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). For a critical review of Heidegger's work as a whole written after the height of the Nazi debate, see John D. Caputo, *Demythologizing Heidegger*

interpreted by the Anyone' (299). As its opposite, preliminary resoluteness involves the recognition of the abyss of possibilities over which existence is suspended and thus is characterized by indefiniteness, not the definiteness of a particular way to be. In anxiety the significance that things usually manifest becomes blurred and indeterminate. We no longer know what things *are*; they are no longer present with a 'pre-sent' significance.

Now we must ask, how do 'conscience' and 'guilt' fit into this rather abstract picture? Once we understand the ontological level of Heidegger's discussion, that is, that he is talking about our mutual being and not the personal lives of subjects, we can see that his analysis of 'conscience' and 'guilt' bring out important aspects of authentic resoluteness and timeliness. Heidegger takes pains to dissociate his use of these terms from their ordinary, ethical employment, but his efforts have been to little avail since commentators have persisted in giving the notions moralistic overtones. However, what is at issue in both notions is not personal responsibility for individual actions or character traits but rather Dasein's relationship to being.

Conscience, says Heidegger, is the phenomenon that attests to Dasein's 'ownmost, authentic able-to-be' (279). To show us the ownmost self of the entity that discloses being, conscience must call us out from the hiding place of the Anyone (273) and into the uncanniness of anxiety. Since conscience is supposed to show us that authentic existence is possible, we can think of it – putting the point much more simply than Heidegger ever does – as what has kept Dasein continually questioning what it is to be for over 2500 years and has prevented us from remaining satisfied with any one answer. Western culture has been driven by a desire to know what things are. Heidegger's own experience of the forgottenness of being which prompted him to write *Being and Time* might be considered 'attestation' of this phenomenon.[33]

Why refer to this as a matter of 'conscience' when it bears so little relation to what we ordinarily mean by conscience? Perhaps his use of the word was bound to mislead, but Heidegger plays off the etymological connections of his German terms in a way that we can begin to capture in English by noting the root of 'conscience' is 'science,' especially if we keep in mind the latter's traditional meaning of any systematic knowledge. In his preceding discussion of being toward death, Heidegger had spoken of the kind of 'certainty' in which Dasein maintains itself in the truth of its authentic disclosedness.[34] He distinguished this kind of certainty from the certainty

---

33 See the remark from TB 29/31 in the last section's differentiation of Heidegger's special use of 'forgetting' in regard to inauthentic timeliness.

34 See *Being and Time*, p. 264. Heidegger draws on the graphic connection between '*Gewissen*' (conscience), '*wissen*' (know), '*gewiss*' (certain), and '*Gewissheit*' (certainty). Heidegger's '*Gewissheit*' is translated as 'certainty.' Macquarrie and Robinson note that Heidegger takes pains to dissociate the term '*Gewissen*' from the adjective '*gewiss*' and its derivatives, for example, '*Gewissheit*.' Earlier in the book, though, Heidegger took pains to dissociate his own concept of '*Gewissheit*' from the ordinary notion of certainty in regard to the 'certainty' of death. It is also the ordinary sense of '*Gewissheit*' which Heidegger wants to keep distinct from his notion of *Gewissen* as conscience. See *Being and Time*, pp. 291–292 and 307 and the English translation p. 338.

of reflective knowledge or empirical matters of fact, and the distinction corresponds to the difference between truth as 'unconcealing' and truth as correspondence. This primordial certainty, like the primordial truth, indicates an understanding of Dasein's being that comes from existing, something akin to 'know-how' but on the level of ontological insight. The 'voice of conscience' calls us from the depths of Dasein's being and to Dasein's being. It calls us to break through the 'thin wall' of the Anyone and touch Dasein's ground in the revelation of what it is to be. But what does conscience tell us? Especially since Heidegger eliminates any moral connotations of the term and says that it calls us not in words but through silence, its function is mysterious until we consider the third ecstatic dimension of resoluteness: its futural mode.

Conscience calls Dasein to its 'being-guilty.' Once again Heidegger uses a term which misleads and then must repeatedly insist that his use of the term has no immediate moral significance. He comments:

> The idea of 'guilty' must be sufficiently *formalized* so that those ordinary phenomena of 'guilt' which are related to our concernful being-with others will *drop out* . . . it must also be detached from relationship to any law or 'ought' such that by failing to comply with it one loads oneself with guilt.
>
> (284)

The formal content Heidegger abstracts from the concept of guilt is twofold: guilt indicates being defined by a 'not' (as in not having done something required, being lacking, being indebted to someone or something) and being the 'ground' of something (as in having responsibility for something) (282–283).

These conceptual clues lead Heidegger to define being-guilty as both 'being-ground for a being which has been determined by a not' (283) and 'the null being-ground of a nullity' (305). Both descriptions indicate Dasein's relationship to being and not something characteristic of individual actions or personalities. That Dasein is 'guilty' in its being indicates that this way of being is both limited by and indebted to a revelation of being. Dasein's existence is a 'not-ness' or 'nullity' because it must always understand itself out of a possibility of being into which it has been thrown and which is not of its own making. This way of being precludes other possibilities of understanding itself and its world. We cannot, for example, escape understanding ourselves as conscious subjects by voluntarily returning to the medieval or Ancient Greek conception of human being. In his discussion of guilt, Heidegger says of Dasein that, as an ability to be, 'it always stands in one possibility or another; it constantly is not another possibility and has waived it in existentiell projection' (285).

Not just a nullity in this way, Dasein is also a 'null being-ground of a nullity' because it does not have 'power over its ownmost being from the ground up' (284). For its ownmost being as an understanding of being, Dasein is indebted to a disclosure of what it is to be. Dasein does not 'invent' being but rather is the 'there' in which being is revealed. Dasein's ground is being, and its own being is what it discloses both in the sense of understanding itself as human in a particular way but also as Dasein, as it does in resoluteness.[35]

35 Or, in Heidegger's obscure way of expressing this point: 'Dasein is not the ground of its being . . . rather, as being itself, it is the *being* of the ground' (285).

3.5 Authentic Timeliness

Heidegger comments:

> To resoluteness necessarily *belongs* the *indefiniteness* characteristic of every able-to-be into which Dasein has been factically thrown. Only in a resolution is resoluteness sure of itself. The *existentiell indefiniteness* of resoluteness never makes itself definite except in a resolution; but yet all the same it has existential definiteness.
>
> (298)

Preliminary resoluteness limns the indefiniteness of Dasein's being and the being of what-is in a way that living in the Anyone does not. But it also manifests the world of Dasein's time, not a limitless expanse of possibilities with no claim on us. Dasein's projection of its self-understanding upon its being-guilty keeps it tethered from such free flights of fancy. The completion of authenticity, the realization of Dasein's ownmost being for which preliminary resoluteness prepares us, is the disclosure of the new way to be already becoming apparent in this world: the resolution achieved in the moment of insight brings us figuratively and literally in Heidegger's terminology, back down to 'earth,' to the limits of our world, as well as to the new possible ways to be showing up within it. It discloses Dasein's 'situation,' how both its own being and the being of what-is can be in its world.[36]

Let us focus on this last stage of resoluteness:

RESOLUTENESS as:	HAVING-BEEN	PRE-SENT	TO-COME
authentic resolution	repetition	moment of insight	forerunning death

The authentic pre-sent is the 'moment of insight.' As we noted at the end of Section 2.2, in ordinary speech his German word means 'moment,' but Heidegger is drawing on its literal meaning of a 'glance of the eyes' to indicate a special kind of insight as well as its timely character. This special moment is a flash of insight. In the moment of insight, we are not absorbed in dealing with particular things whose being is taken for granted. Rather the insight discloses the being of what-is. As Heidegger puts it, the authentic present as the moment of insight 'lets what can be "in a time" as ready-to-hand or present-at-hand be first encountered' (338). What can *be* present-at-hand and ready-to-hand, or nature, number, or language, shows up. In different moments of insight being has revealed itself as *phusis*, as God's creation, as subjects and objects, and as stuff for manipulation, plus numerous philosophical variations on each theme.

The resolution which arises out of resoluteness and makes Dasein's able-to-be definite again is not simply a return to the previous, commonplace existentiell understanding of being; it is not an anxiety-fleeing return to the conventional wisdom

---

36 For Heidegger's discussion of the 'situation,' see, for example, *Being and Time*, pp. 299–300, 307–308, and 328. The term 'earth' is used in later works such as 'Origin of the Work of Art' to indicate the limiting factor of Dasein's world and its dependency on being.

of the Anyone. Neither is it the *ex nihilo* invention of some 'other worldly' possibility created by abstract thought. A resolution 'is precisely the disclosive projection of what is factically, actually possible' (299), and for this a revelation of the being of what-is is required. Galileo, for instance, could not have seen things as numerically quantifiable unless the cultural background practices were already letting them show themselves in this way.[37]

The resolution discloses possibilities of our world which were not recognized as such by the Anyone. After anxiety, preliminary resoluteness can either fall back into the Anyone's world or take a 'stance toward' being by making a 'resolution' that unconceals the being of what-is lying behind its façade.[38] As Heidegger says, using 'exists' in his own technical way, 'Resoluteness "exists" only as the understanding and projecting of the resolution' (298). In the leap of insight which takes place in the resolution, Dasein escapes the superficial understanding of being embodied in the Anyone and comes to understand its own being and the being of things in its world in a new way by 'appropriating anew' the possibilities offered by the Temporality of being as the being of what-is unconceals itself in new ways. The resolution is the point at which the timeliness of Dasein and the Temporality of being intersect, as we shall see in Chapter 5.

To be resolute, Heidegger says, it is necessary to 'recover a choice' of being. His point is not that a choice has not been made.[39] The prevalent understanding of the Anyone, with which Dasein always first, 'proximally and for the most part,' finds itself, as well as the new possibilities tacitly coming to be in the background practices are both 'choices' in Heidegger's atypical sense. Dasein has always made a choice of being whether the choice is explicitly recognized or not. Its choice is what determines it as *this* possible way to be (42) rather than some other, for example, as conscious subject rather than speaking animal or image of God. The 'recovery' of the choice of possibilities of being means, Heidegger elaborates, that Dasein '*chooses this choice*, determining itself as an able-to-be out of its own self' (268).

Although even authentic Dasein does not completely escape the choice of being already made, starting with, for example, the understanding of the Middle Ages, choosing this choice explicitly involves something other than just accepting it as a 'given.' Heidegger says, 'In choosing the choice Dasein first of all *possibilizes* its authentic able-to-be' (268). Recognizing being as a 'choice' in this atypical sense, and hence as only possibility, frees Dasein to make an issue of being and thus to reveal possibilities of being which have been covered over by the superficial

---

37 For further discussion of this issue see Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this book on the Temporality of being. [Chapters 6 and 7 are available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/C.White.htm* – Editor's note.]

38 See *Being and Time*, p. 344 for the suggestion that these two alternatives are the options for preliminary resoluteness.

39 In keeping with their implied interpretation of authenticity as a rejection of conformity, Macquarrie and Robinson translate the phrase '*Nachholen einer Wahl*' (to recover or 'hold again' a choice) as 'making up for not choosing,' with the gratuitous insertion of a 'not' changing the meaning of the phrase to its contrary.

averageness of the Anyone. In this way, Dasein determines its able-to-be 'out of its own self.' By 'appropriating anew' the possibilities of understanding being that have been covered up by the Anyone, Dasein makes them available *as* possibilities (270). In making possibilities available as possibilities, authentic Dasein is 'choosing' possibilities rather than merely actualizing given ones. It frees them from their concealment in our everyday understanding of things so that we can explicitly see the world in a new way.

If we think again about Heidegger's German terms, we can now see more clearly why he labels authentic disclosedness '*Entschlossenheit*' or resoluteness and its outcome the 'resolution.' As '*ent-*' suggests, Dasein does enter into a new disclosedness: the peculiar disclosedness of anxiety in preliminary resoluteness is followed by the resolution's new insight into being. In English we should ignore the meanings of 'resolute' and 'resolution' connected with strong-willed determination, since neither anxiety nor insight into being can be willed, and consider the optical meaning of 'resolution.' A microscope may disclose something as an indefinite blur, which is analogous to the way anxiety discloses what-is, but then adjusting its resolution will enable us to see what the thing in question *is*. We can also think of a resolution as re-solving the question of being, that is, a re-solution. Resoluteness places the question of being before us, and then the resolution brings a new answer into focus.

Being resolute requires recovering a choice, but in order to make a resolution it is also necessary to 'forerun' Dasein's death and 'repeat' its possibilities of being.[40] To understand how such insight is possible, we must look to the authentic ecstases of the to-come and having-been which 'release' it, or in other words, to the 'forerunning' of death and 'repetition' of Dasein's historical possibilities. The anxiety of resoluteness which brings Dasein face to face with the necessity of choosing to be itself does 'not imply that existence is already taken over in the resolution by repetition. On the contrary, anxiety returns to thrownness as possibly repeatable' (343). This return is the rebound of forerunning death. Resoluteness thus refers us to the other dimensions of authentic timeliness.

Although its importance may be obscure initially, especially in the standard accounts of being toward death, Heidegger assures us that the forerunning of death as the future and most important ecstasis of authentic timeliness is not something incidental or 'tacked on' to resoluteness as an 'after thought.'[41] Rather the forerunning of death is necessary for a disclosure of a new existentiell understanding of being which in turn can only come when Dasein frees itself from the conventional wisdom of Anyone through preliminary resoluteness. Hence, resoluteness 'harbors in itself authentic being toward death as the possible existentiell modality of its own authenticity' (305). The 'ecstatical character of the primordial future lies precisely in the fact that the future closes the able-to-be, that is to say, is closed itself' (330). The forerunning of death puts an 'end' to the indefiniteness of resolute Dasein's able-to-be. There are some ways Dasein cannot be.

---

40 'Repeat' translates Heidegger's '*Wiederholen*' or, literally, to hold again.

41 See Heidegger's various demures on *Being and Time*, pp. 301–303 and 309.

The equation of the future ecstasis of authentic timeliness with authentic being toward death has been carefully prepared for by Heidegger's exposition, but it has still remained rather mysterious in most commentaries. As suggested before, this has been the result of a personalistic misreading of the whole text of *Being and Time* and, in particular, a failure to distinguish the existential death of Dasein from the demise of a person. Now that we understand that death is a limitation on ek-sistence imposed by the concealedness of being, we can begin to see why the authentic future involves a 'forerunning' of death and why its analysis would lead Heidegger to an investigation of historicality and then, at least as projected in the originally proposed format, to the meaning of being in general.

About the function of forerunning Heidegger says:

> In forerunning, the freedom *for* the proper death is freed *from* the possibilities which press upon Dasein in its accidental falling in such a way indeed that the factical possibilities which are laying before the one that cannot be overtaken can be understood and chosen. The forerunning discloses to existence the uttermost possibility of giving itself up and thus shatters any rigidity in the existence reached at any time.
>
> (264)

How Dasein takes itself to be in its inauthentic fallen state is an 'accident' in the philosophical sense or just one particular possibility of its being, one we fall into depending on when and where we were born.[42] Clinging to this particular understanding of being closes Dasein off to its essential being as the site through which being reveals itself. The authentic Dasein that understands its limit as the 'there' of being is ready to give itself up to the disclosure of being.

Through forerunning, Dasein first acquires the 'wholeness' that Heidegger sought in investigating its death. 'In forerunning Dasein can first make certain of its ownmost wholeness – a wholeness which is not to be overtaken' (265). Heidegger's notion of 'certainty' here is not a matter of explicit knowledge or indubitable propositions. Rather, 'the explicit appropriating of what has been disclosed or discovered is being-certain' (307). The explicit appropriating may be disclosed through the Greek temple or the symbol of the cross, not primarily or necessarily in propositional thought. Even the appropriating at work in the texts of poetry or philosophy, such as Plato's dialogues or Kant's *Critique*, is not so much present in the particular propositions or arguments as in the 'unsaid' or 'unthought' understanding of the being of what-is manifest through them.

Heidegger describes the nineteenth-century poet Hölderlin, for example, as a 'precursor' for our modern period.[43] The 'precursor' cannot be 'outstripped' in his vision of being. He does not 'go off into a future' but rather 'arrives out of that future' in such a way that the future comes to be through him. He stands at the limit

---

42 I translate '*zufällig*' in the passage above as 'accidental falling' in order to capture both its common meaning of 'accidental' and its graphic connection with '*verfallen*' or 'falling'.

43 This time his word is '*Vorgang*' – rather than '*Vorlaufen*,' the forerunning that he spoke of in *Being and Time*, but the idea is the same.

of the clearing but facing us, not the darkness beyond, and lets that future come to us through his insights into being. The authentic poet – or philosopher – also cannot be characterized as 'passed away' because his poetry takes its place as what-has-been (WAPF 142/320) and is continually re-appropriated by future authentic Dasein.[44] Heidegger also speaks of Nietzsche's thought of the 'eternal return of the same' as a moment of insight that brings us into the appropriation of the modern epoch. In both cases, Heidegger grants a special privilege to these creators' insights because he can see them as anticipating his own account of Dasein and its unique historicality.[45]

The notion of Dasein's forerunning of death as its end can be illuminated from another direction if we recall Heidegger's notion of the primordial leap in which being became an issue in Ancient Greece which we described in Section 3.2. This leap is pictured as a beginning which contains its concealed end, and the forerunning of death is the forerunning of this end. What was concealed becomes revealed.

The notion of Dasein's 'beginning' and 'end' provides us with a ready image for its authentic way of existing as past, that is, the ecstasis of have-been called 'repetition.' Where does Dasein get the possibilities that it reveals in the moment of insight? Heidegger says 'those possibilities of existence which are disclosed are not gathered from death' (383). The forerunning of death is a way of freeing us for a revelation of being, but the horizon from which we draw the inspiration for the specific, factical possibilities of existence is not that of the unfathomed and unfathomable future. 'Forerunning of the uttermost and ownmost possibility is coming back with understanding to the ownmost "been"' (326). Thus, this future intrinsically involves Dasein in a 'coming to' itself by 'coming back to' what has been. Heidegger's verbal play depends on the notion that the future is a 'to come' which 'comes back.'[46]

We can forerun Dasein's end only by coming back to its beginning – the primordial leap which contains the end concealed within itself. The preparatory anxiety of resoluteness does not just leave us facing forward into the void of death or the realm of the concealedness of being. It turns Dasein back to the way it is thrown into a disclosure of being as the source of possibilities which can be repeated (343). This notion naturally leads Heidegger into a discussion of Dasein's historicality, to which we will turn in Section 3.5.

If Heidegger's discussion of the nature of Dasein's insight or what it 'resolves upon' in the resolution seems vague, making it all too liable to a personalistic misreading in terms of individual decisions and actions, we can at least partially

---

44 The phrase 'passed away' translates Heidegger's '*vergänglich*.' Unfortunately, it obliterates Heidegger's etymological allusion to '*Vorgänger*.'

45 Heidegger may seem to have a particularly ambivalent relationship to Nietzsche's philosophy, which is why it is often difficult to differentiate who is saying what in his huge tome on Nietzsche's philosophy. Of course, Heidegger does not agree with Nietzsche that life is will to power or accept such other, specific metaphysical or historical claims Nietzsche makes. But his own interpretation of such doctrines as the eternal return of the same make them close to his own views.

46 His wordplay is between '*Zukunft*' and '*Zurückkommen*.'

defend him by appealing to the difference between the existential analysis and existentiell understanding. Heidegger remarks:

> In the existential analysis we cannot, in principle, discuss what Dasein ever factically resolves. Our investigation excludes even the existential projection of the factical possibilities of existence. Nevertheless, we must ask where in general Dasein can draw these possibilities upon which it factically projects itself.
>
> (383)

The issue of where Dasein draws its possibilities is existential, but the issue of what possibilities the actual Dasein draws, or has dealt to it, is a matter for Dasein's existentiell understanding in its 'standing toward' being. The investigation in *Being and Time* only attempts to uncover the '*existential condition for the possibility* of its factical existential able-to-be' (280). In the existential analytic of Division One of *Being and Time* Heidegger only aimed to 'outline the formal structure' of Dasein in a way that would not presuppose or 'bind' it to any existentiell view. His discussion stays on an abstract level (363).

Unfortunately, because of his desire to keep the existential analysis of *Being and Time* distinct from any existentiell investigation of a particular understanding of being, in the chapters of his discussion of these structures Heidegger does not provide us with any detailed examples of Dasein 'repeating' its historical possibilities by projecting an actual resolution. Writings coming after *Being and Time* indicate more clearly that Heidegger regards authentic disclosedness as something quite rare and that it is not just a matter of adopting a certain attitude toward one's life or behaving in a certain way. For example, in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* he suggests that authentic Dasein creates great works of art, the political organization of a state, and poetry as well as 'thinking' or philosophy.[47] Such 'works' come to focus a new understanding of being.

Presumably, Heidegger would have gone on in the unfinished Part Two of *Being and Time* to give us some concrete examples of Dasein 'repeating' its possibilities of understanding being when he discussed the existentiell understanding expressed in the philosophy of Kant, Descartes, and Aristotle. We can glimpse what he would have had to say when he notes that Kant uncritically takes over Descartes's conception of the subject, that Descartes applies the concepts of medieval ontology to the notion of *res cogitans* when he conceives of it as *ens creatum*, and that the ancient ontological interpretation of what-is as 'presence' is based on Aristotle's conception of time (24–26). Heidegger comments: 'The seemingly new beginning which Descartes proposed for philosophizing has revealed itself as the imposition of a fateful prejudice' (25). Such a 'pre-judgment' of what-is can only be fully understood after we 'destructure' the ontological tradition, and only then can we fully understand what it means to 'repeat' the question of being (26).[48]

---

47 See IM 93/71. One might now shudder to think Heidegger may have been thinking of Hitler as such a founder of a new political state, not Lycurgus and Solon.

48 Heidegger's term is '*Wiederholung*,' but the translators obliterate its possible connection to his notion of repetition later in the book by using 'restate.'

The resolution made in authentic timeliness is also the first step on the road back to inauthentic timeliness. Later calling inauthenticity 'errancy,' Heidegger comments:

> . . . letting what-is as such be as a whole occurs in a way befitting its essence only when from time to time it gets taken up in its primordial essence. Then re-solute openness toward the mystery is on the way into errancy as such.

We arrive in errancy when the new understanding of being becomes commonplace. Heidegger also suggests that the glimpse into the mystery of being remains such a glimpse only when being remains a question (ET 137/198). To answer the question is to take one stand or another and thus to close oneself off to Dasein's special character as the entity that makes an issue of being.

3.6 Historicality

Dasein's history is intimately tied to the history of being, but the truncated existential analytic of *Being and Time* only examines Dasein's activity as it takes up and projects an understanding of being. In this section we, too, will focus our attention on the connection between Dasein's timeliness and its historicality, though ultimately both are only made possible by the Temporality of being.[49] More fundamental than the historicality of Dasein is the history of being which is manifested through it. The fact that Dasein's historicality is only made possible by the ongoing history of revelations of being is not explicitly discussed in the Dasein analytic, but we can glimpse the path to the phenomenological turn from Dasein to being on the horizon of the discussion. The phenomenological turn is the turn or '*Kehre*' required to complete the analysis of the relationship of being and Dasein.

The history of being will be discussed in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this book,[50] and our discussion of Dasein's historicality will not be complete until we place it in that context. Until then, the notion that being reveals itself remains rather mysterious. But perhaps the connection between the two histories – really two sides of the same coin of history – should be emphasized further at the start of our discussion of historicality in order to clarify what is ultimately at issue. To neglect this connection is to leave ourselves immediately liable to Husserl's misunderstanding of Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*. Husserl, Heidegger said, in the seminar on 'Time and Being,' understood that early work as the regional ontology of the historical (TB 45/48). Husserl took this ontology as fitting comfortably within his own conception of the regional ontologies which investigated the nature of various types of things. Such a regional ontology is precisely what you would end up with if you failed to see the connection between Dasein's historicality and the history of being as well as

---

49 The term 'historicality' substitutes for Heidegger's '*Geschichtlichkeit*.'

50 [Chapters 6 and 7 are available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/C White.htm* Editor's note.]

the distinction between the two. Failing to see this, Husserl, Heidegger says, remained oblivious to the historicality of thought (LR xiv/xv). Thought, especially what Heidegger calls 'foundational thought,' is dependent on the history of being. Husserl accepts a particular understanding of being as an ahistorical given, not realizing how thought and its world can change. He assumes that the historicality of human being will have no effect on the being of other regions of what-is. An analysis of these other regions of being, such as the one which Husserl offered, could thus be done quite independently of any analysis of human historicality. Numbers, space, and nature all have a way of being that is independent of all culture and history which can be revealed by a method of descriptive thinking that is also independent of such conditions.

The connection between Dasein's historicality and the history of being also indicates the peculiarity of Heidegger's notion of historicality. As I mentioned in the third section of the Introduction, civilizations which are not vehicles for the revelation of being are not historical in his sense. The Ancient Egyptians or Mayans, for example, were not historical peoples. In fact, it seems that all civilizations other than Western are ahistorical in his sense; for Heidegger, they are 'primitive' Dasein in the sense that they have no future and hence may go on in the same way for centuries or millennia.

Timeliness is the condition for the possibility of Dasein 'happening' in an 'historical way.'[51] All Dasein 'happens,' but the Dasein of Western culture has a distinctive authentic timeliness which makes it happen in an historical way. Perhaps we could say that the Dasein of many ancient cultures happened in a 'mythological way' in a reality articulated by the logos of their gods. Now, when, according to Heidegger, the history of being is coming to an end, perhaps Dasein happens in a 'technological way.' None of these three labels seems particularly appropriate for Eastern cultures so we need yet another. Given the direction of the exposition of Heidegger's thought provided so far, it should come as no surprise to the reader that Heidegger can announce that 'authentic being toward death – that is, the finitude of timeliness – is the concealed ground of Dasein's historicality' (386). If it does come as a surprise in the context of *Being and Time*'s discussion of historicality, the reason may be that Heidegger has again, as with the initial discussion of death, rhetorically shunted the reader onto a sidetrack and left the route back to the main line of analysis not clearly marked. However when Heidegger begins to speak of Dasein's birth, he refers us to cultural artifacts.

Heidegger's discussion begins by asking how Dasein can 'stretch out' in a unified way between its 'birth' and its 'death.'[52] We already know how unusual his notion of death is, but the comment about 'birth' may again throw us back into a personal interpretation, as if Heidegger is asking how a person can be born, have a personality which manifests unity across time, and then demise. However, when Heidegger goes on to discuss the past that lies between Dasein and its 'birth,' he does not talk

51 Forms of the verb 'happen' will substitute for Heidegger's uses of '*Geschehen*' while, as usual, 'historical' translates '*geschichtlich*.'

52 Heidegger's term is '*erstrecken*.'

about the events of childhood and our personal scrapbooks and mementos. He talks about artifacts found in museums and the ruins of Greek temples. Though Heidegger never says so explicitly, we can infer that the 'birth' of Dasein at issue is its beginning in Ancient Greece.[53] And the question is, how is it that the history of Western civilization can exhibit continuity and yet also profound changes? Not a matter of some enduring actuality of substance, this movement happens within a range of possibilities already laid out. It is a matter of a 'sub-stance' as a fundamental stance toward being, originating with the Greeks, which set up this range in advance.

The unity of Dasein's 'stretching out,' that is, the unity of its history, is made possible by the fact that authentic timeliness is a 'coming toward' that 'comes back,' or, in other words, that forerunning necessarily includes repetition. Dasein's 'history' is not 'the past' as something gone by and over with.[54] Rather, the history in question is a matter of how Dasein 'comes from' its past (378). Because of the interplay of the ecstases of authentic timeliness, Dasein can, 'by handing down to itself the possibility which it has inherited, take over its thrownness and have the moment of insight into 'its time.' Only authentic timeliness, which is at the same time finite, makes possible something like fate, that is, authentic historicality' (385).

Heidegger describes Dasein's authentic historicality as 'fate,' but he is careful to indicate that his term does not indicate any sort of 'fatalistic' determinism but rather the way that being has been 'sent' to Dasein.[55] Successful sending requires successful receiving. Resoluteness makes manifest to Dasein its inheritance of an indeterminate range of possibilities which Heidegger calls its 'heritage.'[56] The heritage of Dasein's history does not specify some one resolution, some one particular new understanding of being, as the only possible one for Dasein in some particular period. Dasein's heritage has the indefiniteness of its general able-to-be. In fact the 'situation' which will be brought into focus in a resolution is not something present-at-hand which is waiting to be grasped. It 'only gets disclosed in a free resolving which has not been determined beforehand but is open to the possibility of such determination' (307).

Heidegger believes that Dasein's history and hence its successive resolutions have been determined through the creative contribution of its own grasp of being. Taking up possibilities from the unarticulated range offered by being through the cultural background practices involves an active response on Dasein's part, not a passive determination.[57] In authentic historicality Dasein's possibilities are 'inherited and yet chosen' (384). Dasein's 'repetition' or 'fetching again' always includes a

---

53 Alternatively, the issue could be that of when an individual acquires an understanding of being such that being is in question, even just tacitly as in the everydayness of an individual brought up in Western culture. The issues are in fact connected, but, given Heidegger's comments about temples and museums, I think that the conclusion I draw in the text is more convincing.

54 Heidegger's term '*Vergangenheit*' suggests these connotations.

55 His term is '*Schicksal*,' which derives from the verb '*schicken*' or 'to send.'

56 Heidegger's term is '*Erbe*.'

57 In light of the claim that Dasein's authentic choice first 'possibilizes' a possibility, perhaps this range should not be described as a range of possibilities, as if the possibilities are all laid out beforehand, but rather as Dasein's indeterminate able-to-be.

'counterclaim' upon its past (286).[58] Indeed, if this were not true, then Dasein's understanding of being would not have changed since Ancient Greek times and we would not be trying to account for the continuity of its 'stretching out.'

The continuity of Dasein's existence enables us to see our age as the product of its past. But for Heidegger the motivating force behind this history is, of course, nothing mechanical or material but rather the creative insight of Dasein as the vehicle for the changing disclosure of what it is to be. The continuity of existence was prepared for by the primordial leap which disclosed being as at issue in Ancient Greece. Heidegger seems to think that all Dasein's possibilities for understanding being within the horizon of presence, that is, all the possibilities of metaphysical thinking, were laid out by the way the Greeks posed the question of being and the stance they took toward it. He comments that 'In resoluteness lies the existentiell constancy which, by its very essence, has already taken up beforehand every possible moment of insight springing from it' (391). Giving up a 'resolution' by making another one, that is, 'countermanding' one existentiell understanding of being by disclosing a new one, is not an arbitrary or haphazard process but is called for by, to use Heidegger's word, the 'situation' in which Dasein finds itself. This situation is a product of Dasein's relationship to being as existence. Ultimately situations are made 'possible' by revelations of being, though they are made actual by Dasein's creative insight.

In Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics* he notes some examples of the 'world-building' which is 'history in the authentic sense.' The 'creators, poets, thinkers, and statesmen' are the ones who build worlds, the authentic Dasein who make the leap of insight that brings Dasein's history from its future. They 'run forward' into death, reach into the shelter of being in order to uncover what 'can be in a time' and bring it to light in the clearing. 'Against the overwhelming chaos they set the barrier of their work, and in their work they capture the world thus opened up' (IM 62/47f.). Later in that book Heidegger elaborates:

> We know from Heraclitus and Parmenides that the unconcealment of what-is-is not simply given. Unconcealment happens only when it is achieved through work: the work of the word in poetry, the work of stone in temple and statue, the work of the word in thought, the work of the *polis* as the abode of history in which all this is grounded and preserved.
>
> (IM 191/146)[59]

---

58 The wordplay is between '*Wiederholen*' (repetition) and '*Widerruf*' (counterclaim). The term '*Widerruf*' has sometimes been translated as 'revocation.' Taken in its ordinary sense the word fails to capture the way that a resolution draws on Dasein's previous understanding of being and instead suggests a complete rejection of it. But if we thought of the term as meaning 're-vocation,' indicating a repeated commitment to a vocation, then we come closer to Heidegger's meaning. In the '*Widerruf*' Dasein reaffirms its role as the 'there' of being.

59 Heidegger's '*vorhanden*' is translated here as 'simply given.' The being of what is is not built into things as if it were simply a property of an object sitting before us present at hand such as color or shape.

In the Greek state all of these ways of world-building worked in harmony to let the being of what-is reveal itself in various ways, that is, to reveal itself, as we shall see in Chapter 6, first as *chreon*, *phusis*, and *aletheia*, and then, in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, as *idea* and *ousia*. The 'working of the work' lies 'in a change, happening from out of the work, of the unconcealedness of what-is, and this means, of being' (OWA 72/60). The significance lying unarticulated in the cultural practices suddenly comes into focus in the Greek temple or the 'saying' of a thinker and the cultural dealings can begin to take on new shape, as we will see in Section 6.3.[60]

In *Being and Time* Heidegger labels Dasein's 'happening as being-with others' its 'destiny' (386).[61] This notion is called forth by the realization that Dasein's authentic historicality takes place in a community. Solitary creators, the artists, poets, thinkers, and statesmen, cannot make Dasein historical alone.

> But if fateful Dasein as being-in-the-world exists essentially as being-with others, its happening is a happening-with and is determined as *destiny*. This is how we designate the happening of a community, a people. Destiny is not put together out of individual fates any more than being-with-one-another can be conceived as the occurring together of several subjects. Fates have been already guided in advance in being with one another in the same world and in resoluteness for definite possibilities. Only in communicating and struggling does the power of destiny become free. The fateful destiny of Dasein in and with its 'generation' makes up the full, authentic happening of Dasein.
>
> (384f.)

Heidegger admits in a later interview that the concept of destiny in *Being and Time* is left underdeveloped and consequently what he was trying to express in such passages is not clear.[62]

Some points can be drawn from his scant remarks. First, this contrast between 'fate' and the happening-with of 'destiny' does not indicate that fate is 'personal' in the sense of being manifested in the events of one's personal life, for example, one was 'fated' to meet a particular person or be hired for a particular job, or that the Dasein to whom a particular fate is 'sent' is only an individual person. Neither is the collective destiny something independent of fate. In addition we can note that Heidegger does not call destiny itself 'authentic historicality,' which was the title he gave to fate. Rather the last sentence above says that fate and destiny go together to

---

60 [Chapter 6 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* – Editor's note.]

61 The word 'destiny' translates Heidegger's '*Geschick*.' Note its connection with '*Schicksal*' and '*schicken*.' (See footnote 54 above.) Under this specific definition, mythological and other ahistorical cultures could be considered as having a 'destiny,' although it would keep them moving in the same circuit rather than down the path of a history. However, such cultures would lack 'fate' as authentic historicality since they do not explicitly make an issue of being and their understanding of being does not change. In later works, though, Heidegger clearly ties the term 'destiny' to the history of being in Western civilization.

62 See Zygmunt Adamczewski's report on Heidegger's remarks in his 'On the Way to Being (Reflecting on Conversations with Martin Heidegger)' in *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking*, edited by John Sallis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1970), p. 24.

make up Dasein's 'authentic happening.' Dasein's fate as authentic historicality depends on having a community of like-minded people.

To understand the relationship between fate and destiny and the process in which they cooperate, we can use the example of the authentic thinker since Heidegger makes some relevant remarks about this way of world-building. First of all, philosophy is 'based on the mysterious ground of freedom, on what we have called the leap.' Thus it involves the repetition of the primordial leap in Ancient Greece. Heidegger's added remark that 'all essential philosophical questioning is necessarily untimely' may seem to go against the notion that the authentic present involves an insight into what 'can be in a time.' However, the emphasis in the latter phrase should be on the word 'can.' Authentic thinking is a break with the current Anyone's conception of what it is to be, and, as such, it may be regarded as outrageously wrong by the philosopher's contemporaries. 'Philosophy is essentially untimely because it is fated to be one of those few things that can never find an immediate echo in its actual day' (IM 8/6). Especially since Heidegger considers Nietzsche such an authentic thinker, one is reminded of the madman crying out 'God is dead' and finding ridicule and disbelief as the response. Nietzsche could see that the cultural practices of the late nineteenth century were eliminating the place of God in human existence. The drama of life had shifted from salvation to acquisition. But, it takes time, after the flash of lightning, for the thunder to reach the ears of the man in the street.

How does authentic thinking build a world, then? Heidegger says that authentic thinking can never directly supply the energies and create the opportunities that bring about historical change because such thinking is only the concern of the few creators, the profound transformers (IM 10/8). But philosophy's insight, if it is authentic, neither comes in a void nor is sent out into one. It must be an insight into what *can* be 'in a time,' and it must strike a responsive chord in others who can come to share in the insight. This is why fate as authentic historicality involves destiny as a happening-with others. Machiavelli expressed a view of human nature similar to the common modern, Nietzschean conception, but no one in sixteenth century Italy took him up on it.[63] 'The preservers of a work belong to its createdness as essentially as its creators' (OWA 71/58). Initially, the work's preservers, that is, those who do have ears for its message, seem to deserve the title of 'authentic Dasein' as much as the creator. If this preservation is lacking, there is no authentic creation.

As suggested before, the Dasein that is authentically historical need not be an isolated, individual person. The artisans who planned and built the Gothic cathedrals

63 As we will see in Section 7.4 [available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* – Editor's note], Heidegger also thinks that attempting to institute a new understanding of being is risky and difficult. Machiavelli himself commented: 'nothing is more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage, than to put oneself at the head of introducing new orders.' He 'leaped' too far for others to follow, and hence his insight failed to catch the public's attention. His words, after all, were intended for the ears of princes, not the Anyone. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by H.C. Mansfield, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), p. 23.

worked as a group to express a shared new insight into what it is to be. However, the 'destiny' referred to in *Being and Time* does not seem to indicate this kind of joint authentic historicality as much as what must be the case if a particular, newly projected understanding of being is to be taken up by society at large. Take the example of the insight of philosophy again: 'It spreads only indirectly, by devious paths that can never be laid out in advance, until finally at some indefinite "when," after it is forgotten as primordial philosophy, it sinks down to a commonplace self-understanding' (IM 10/8). The 'when' in which insight into being ceases to be authentic and becomes commonplace is as indeterminate as the 'when' in which authentic insight happens. The process in between is the happening-with of destiny, and we could say it ranges from being authentic or what preserves authentic insight, when it still involves the same fundamental questioning of what it is to be, to being fallen inauthenticity. Thus, Dasein's full 'authentic happening' involves both authentic historicality, either individual or collective, and the happening-with of destiny that preserves. Both are necessary for Dasein to be the 'there' in which being reveals itself.

The fact that the history of Dasein is indeed that of its changing understanding of being is far from obvious in the published portion of *Being and Time*. We have to be aware of what Heidegger intended to accomplish in both the projected section 'Time and Being' and the missing Part Two on the destructuring of the history of ontology. The thought of human beings does not create *ex nihilo* an understanding of what it is to be. As mentioned above, just as an insight into being is not cast toward a void but rather 'toward the coming preservers, that is, toward an historical group of men,' it never arises in a void either. Using 'poetic' in a broad sense to cover all the modes of authentic disclosure, Heidegger adds:

> What is thus cast forth is, however, never an arbitrary demand. Truly poetic projection is the opening up or disclosure of that into which Dasein as historical is already cast.
> (OWA 75/63)

Hence authentic Dasein finds the being of what-is already revealed in a certain way. We find that things have started to show up in new ways. A new understanding of being comes as a discovery of the being of what-is – a dis-covering – and not an invention. As Heidegger remarks in another work: 'What a curious leap, presumably yielding the insight that we do not yet sufficiently reside where authentically we already are' (ID 33/97). Without our explicit recognition, our cultural practices had already started letting things show up in new ways; the creator only brings this being into focus. Curious as well, perhaps, is that, in Heidegger's view, when we do come to reside 'there,' that is, when Dasein does become 'at-home-with' a disclosure of being, it ceases to be authentic and becomes inauthentic.

Chapter 4

The Derivation of Time

Electric lights and Dasein's consequent ability to turn night into day must have seemed a wondrous, practical development in Heidegger's childhood. Einstein's theory that time is a fourth dimension of the universe which should be added to space's three for an accurate physical theory and his conclusion that space is finite made their concepts more difficult to fathom when he was an adult. The infinite vistas opened up by Newton contract into an dubiously real present moment whose measurement depends on consciousness. Our contemporary debates about the difference between the qualitative and quantitative time of parenthood and turning homes into workplaces and workplaces into homes magnify Western culture's obsession with the passing of time.[1] Seizing the moment becomes vital in everything we do.

In the first section of this chapter I show why Heidegger thinks that the finitude of timeliness does not preclude the infinitude of time as we ordinarily conceive of it, and the second section contrasts timeliness with this sort of time. Section 4.3 examines the relationship between the time of our daily activities and the time that we measure on clocks. Heidegger's attempt to 'derive' the time of clocks from the timeliness of Dasein is explored in Section 4.4. The concluding section shows how Heidegger was preparing for the phenomenological 'turn' to the Time of being even in the published portion of *Being and Time*.

4.1 Finite Timeliness and Infinite Time

After arguing that Dasein's primordial timeliness is finite, Heidegger imagines a reader objecting:

> But 'does not time go on' in spite of the no-longer-being-there of my self? And can there not be an unlimited number of things which still lie 'in the future' and come along out of it?

Heidegger replies that both questions are to be answered affirmatively. Even so, they pose no objection to his conception of the finitude of timeliness 'because this is something which is no longer handled by these at all' (330).[2]

---

1 For example, see *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* by Arlie R. Hochschild (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997).

2 The phrase 'no longer being there of my self' translates '*Nichtmehrdasein meiner selbst*'. As we noted in the chapter on death, Heidegger makes a distinction between

Heidegger's response indicates how sharply we must distinguish the finitude of timeliness from any finite character of our time, even our personal time. His claim that timeliness is finite in no way implies that ordinary time or clock-time is finite; indeed, he thinks that our concept of infinite time is derived from the primordial, finite timeliness of Dasein. Even though Heidegger sometimes refers to the distinctively authentic timeliness as well as timeliness in general as 'primordial time,' finite timeliness and infinite time are not conflicting qualities or phenomena measured on the same scale. His triply equivocal use of the word 'time' only obscures what is at stake. The dispute over the finiteness or infiniteness of ordinary or scientific time is quite a distinct issue and one not handled in the simple contrast between authentic and inauthentic timeliness or the discussion of primordial time, that is, timeliness, in general.

The sharpness of the distinction between timeliness and time makes the derivation of infinite time a more complicated matter than the one depicted by traditional commentaries. In particular, it is not a matter of a false, ego-flattering belief as if inauthentic timeliness lets the individual believe that she lasts for an infinite time while authentic timeliness makes her own up to the fact that her life span is finite. If we came up with our notion of infinite time in an attempt to conceal an essential characteristic of our own life, then why isn't infinite time an illusion, a bit of wishful thinking? And if finite timeliness was simply a matter of an individual occupying a finite span, then why isn't infinite time the more basic phenomenon with finite time just a limited partition of it?

Heidegger insists that neither of these suggestions is true. Their appeal arises out of a failure to make a sharp distinction between demise and existential death as well as ordinary time and timeliness. Both assumptions take death and the finitude of timeliness to correspond with demise.

In Heidegger's view of things, our ordinary conception of time refers to a genuine phenomenon and not an illusion created by either self-deception or the conflation of the concepts of time and space. Our idea of time arises from and is revealed by 'an essential kind of timing of primordial timeliness.' Heidegger adds: 'The fact that this is its source tells us that the time "in which" what is present-at-hand arises and passes away is a genuine phenomenon of time; it is not an externalization of a "qualitative time" into space as Bergson's interpretation of time – which is ontologically quite indefinite and inadequate – would have us believe' (333). We will return to the question of the confusion of time and space later, but here I only want to emphasize that, in trying to determine the origin and derivation of our ordinary concept of time, Heidegger is trying to explain our idea but not explain it away.

For Heidegger the problem is not how the infinite time in which objects arise and pass away becomes primordial timeliness. Rather we must understand how

---

'no-longer-being-there' or 'no-longer-Dasein,' which refers to a person ceasing to be, and 'no-longer-able-to-be-there' or 'no longer able to be Dasein,' which indicates the finitude of existence as a standing open for-being. In this passage he talks about the relationship between a person's demise and infinite time.

inauthentic, finite timeliness gives rise to infinite time. He claims that 'Only because primordial time is *finite* can the "derived" time "time" itself as *infinite*' (330f.). We already have an indication of how inauthentic timeliness arises out of authentic timeliness and of how in general inauthenticity is founded upon authenticity. We could not take an understanding of being for granted unless one already 'exists.' Now we need to address the question of how inauthentic timeliness can in turn produce the conception of infinite time. At the end of the discussion we will return to the issue of how the derived time is ultimately dependent on primordial finite timeliness.

4.2 Timeliness and Within-time-ness

Because of the way Dasein occupies time and lets time occupy it, Heidegger suggests that Dasein can also be called 'timely' in quite a different sense than that of the ecstatic timeliness described in Chapter 3. In spite of his insistence on his technical use of the term 'timely,' Heidegger admits:

> Nevertheless, Dasein must also be called 'timely' in the sense of being 'in time.' Even without a developed historiology, factical Dasein needs and uses a calendar and a clock. Whatever may happen 'to it,' it experiences as 'in time.'
>
> (376)

In order to avoid confusion with his technical term, Heidegger refers to this sort of being 'in time' as 'within-time-ness.'[3] Within-time-ness is also a characteristic of the things that are present-at-hand and ready-to-hand within the world. 'Innerworldly' things come to be, occupy a span of time, and cease to be. However, as Heidegger indicates above, Dasein finds itself 'in time' in this way, too. We want to know, though, how it is that, with our fundamental being-in-the-world as involved activity, not just our 'innerworldly' presence, we find ourselves with time on our hands?

Heidegger starts with the phenomenon of our everyday existence as project-making and tool-using, not with time-consciousness as Husserl did. He makes the connection between inauthentic timeliness and time in the following passage:

> The circumspective, common sense concern is grounded in timeliness — indeed in the mode of a making-present which awaits and retains. Such concern, as concernfully reckoning up, planning, preventing, or taking precautions, always says (whether audibly or not) that something is to happen '*then*,' that something else is to be attended to '*beforehand*,' that what failed or escaped us '*on that former occasion*' is something that must '*now*' be taken hold of again.
>
> In the 'then,' concern expresses itself as awaiting; in the 'on that former occasion,' as retaining; in the 'now,' as making-present.
>
> (406)

3 The word 'timely' substitutes for Heidegger's '*zeitlich*' while 'within-time-ness' translates '*Innerzeitlichkeit*.'

Thus the three ecstases of inauthentic timeliness, that is, awaiting, retaining (or forgetting), and making-present, are correlated with the 'then,' the 'on that former occasion,' and the 'now.'[4]

What Dasein 'awaits' in its future dimension of ecstatic timeliness is what it can deal with in some 'then' yet to come. What Dasein 'retains' is what it has been able to deal with on some 'former occasion,' and what it makes present is what it deals with 'now.' Everyday Dasein does not encounter time as a succession of bare instants. Our everyday time is always occupied by the things with which we concern ourselves, and out of our projects arise the essential features of the 'world-time' that we encounter as being-in-the-world. Dasein's experience of things happening to it 'in time' involves three fundamental characteristics: datability, significance, and spannedness.

Datability and significance seem to be closely connected aspects of the same basic feature of world-time. Every 'then' is a 'then, when' such and such will happen; every 'on that former occasion' is an 'on that former occasion as' such and such happened; and every 'now' is a 'now that' such and such is happening. Moments are given significance in relation to our involved activity. The relational structure pinning moments of time to events in the world Heidegger calls 'datability' (407). Thus datability is not a matter of events being pinned to moments of time but quite the opposite.

Not only is a moment of time pinned to an event, but moments of time gain significance and refer beyond themselves through the web of projects to which they are thus connected. 'Ten o'clock' is 'my class at ten,' 'after I read my mail,' and so on. This relational structure is an aspect of the structure of significance of the world which lays out all our projects in terms of time. Even the simplest project is laid out as a series of successive actions. For example, if we want to swim across the pool, first we walk to its edge, now we dive in, and then we begin stroking. And such particular projects arise in the context of other projects, for example, learning how to swim, setting up a plan for getting in shape. Significance sets up the way that projects are interconnected with each other 'within time.'

The spanned character of world-time, in which moments flow one after another with no gaps, and the spanning character of Dasein's everyday being both arise out of the significant interconnection of Dasein's activities. Heidegger explains: if in awaiting we understand ourselves in the 'then' and in terms of making this present, that is, in terms of realizing our projects, then the 'and-now-not-yet' has already been implied when we assign the 'then.' The 'now not yet' lies between the current 'now' and the 'then' at which we are aiming. It is the 'until then' whose significance and datability are given by the steps we must take to realize our goal. For example, it is the swim across the pool which lies between our 'now' on the deck and our goal of reaching the other side. This 'until then' itself has its earlier and later episodes in the sequence of diving and stroking. The whole series is 'embraced' as a 'during' when we awaitingly project the 'then' (409). We project the 'span' of intermediate steps which must be taken to realize our goal and 'embrace' the span of world-time in embracing the activities we project.

---

4 Note that 'then' (*dann*) is used to refer to some future time and that 'on that former occasion' functions as an awkward substitute for '*damals*' and refers to past time.

Most explications of Heidegger's notion of ecstatic timeliness focus on how Dasein can 'span' a stretch of time in a unified way. But notice that in Heidegger's treatment of this phenomenon, it is (1) a derivative phenomenon and not the heart of ecstatic timeliness; (2) a phenomenon of inauthentic timeliness insofar as it manifests within time-ness; and (3) a phenomenon unified by the significance articulated in the world and our skill at dealing with things rather than by consciousness.

4.3 World-time and Now-time

In inauthentic timeliness, says Heidegger, we interpret ourselves as stretched along within-time (409). During our everyday activities we understand ourselves as moving along through time, realizing first this project and then that project. Heidegger considers time in general to be 'the making-present which interprets itself – in other words, that which has been interpreted and addressed in the "now"' (408). In other words, time is disclosed to us when we interpret ourselves as located in a 'now,' surrounded on both sides by a span of time. Timeliness itself is familiar to us in everyday concern as its by-product, world-time. But this phenomenon appears upon reflection when consciousness directs itself upon a certain feature of our activities. Involved activity is its underlying basis.

Time, however, can appear in two different ways: it can be disclosed as the significant, datable, spanned world-time discussed above, or it can be disclosed as a succession of 'nows.' The latter, which is itself derived from the world time of involved activity, is what we call 'time' in the ordinary sense. This is the time that we measure by a clock. Heidegger proposes to call the world-time which is 'sighted' by the use of clocks 'now-time' (421).

Our conception of time as an infinite, irreversible succession of 'nows' thus arises, Heidegger argues, from the timeliness of fallen Dasein. This conception of time is justified as long as it does not present itself as the sole possible horizon within which time can be interpreted (426). As I indicated above, for Heidegger the ordinary conception of time is quite valid, not illusory or imaginary, as long as it is recognized for what it is.

As noted in the quote at the beginning of the preceding section, Heidegger thinks that, because Dasein is also 'timely' in the sense of being 'in time,' it needs to make use of calendars and clocks. Even the isolated individual such as a hermit may need to refer to some sort of calendar and clock to organize activities such as planting a garden or beginning a journey, but obviously we need these measuring systems in order to make group cooperation possible. Even in the cultures of 'primitive' Dasein, which lack any explicitly developed interest in time, calendars were needed for public activities of hunting and planting, and clocks were needed to schedule daily activities. Of course, a primitive calendar may only chart the cycles of the moon and the seasons, and the most primitive clock is simply the movement of the sun.

All such time reckoning arises out of Dasein's concernful involvement in the world. This sort of reckoning 'precedes any use of measuring equipment by which time can be determined. The reckoning is prior to such equipment and is what makes

anything like the use of clocks possible at all' (404). At bottom this reckoning is a matter of reckoning with projects and their sequential order, but its basis is ignored or disguised when we consider only the time that a clock manifests. When we focus only on clock-time, we shear world-time of its datability and significance and empty its span of the filling which originally elicited our embrace, leaving it just a bare succession of 'nows' (422). Heidegger argues that datability and significance 'are *not* permitted to "come to the fore" when time is characterized as a pure succession. The ordinary interpretation of time *covers them up*' (422). He goes on to suggest that this cover-up is 'no accident,' but we will discuss the motives for it in the next section.

Here we need to get clearer about the nature of the time that clocks reveal. First of all, as I indicated earlier, the now-time which clocks reveal is not a time which has been confused with space, as Bergson argues. Heidegger suggests instead that what is 'ontologically decisive' for this sort of time 'lies in the specific kind of making-present which makes measurement possible.' He adds:

> Measuring time is essentially such that it is necessary to say 'now'; but in obtaining the measurement we, as it were, forget what has been measured as such, so that nothing is to be found except a number and a stretch.
>
> (418)

The 'making-present' involved in the measurement of time is remarkably different from the 'making-present' involved in the measurement of space. With space, the thing measured remains present or can be made present again and can be measured again. But in order to measure time, it must vanish as we measure.

What we measure with an analog clock is not the stretch of space between two of its marks but rather the span of time during which the 'traveling pointer' moves from one to the other. Yet when we reflect on our measuring, we may not notice what we have measured. The only 'stretch' that seems to be *there* to be measured is that of the space on the clock. Similarly, if we are counting seconds by saying 'now,' we forget that the second is the span of time that lies between our repetitions of 'now' and hence think that the resulting number only indicates the number of times we said a word. It does indicate this as well, of course, but this is not what we are measuring when we measure time.

Such measuring is a very abstract and reflective way of encountering time. We do not use the clock to coordinate our projects but rather look at it as measuring some curious, independent thing. In contrast, world-time, the time encountered in our everyday involved activities, is, we could say, ready-to-hand time. Like the hammer, it is transparent in use: we are not aware of time *per se* but of our class at ten, the appointment at two, and so forth. The now-time measured by the clock and abstractly looked at as some sort of thing is present-at-hand time, which, curiously, is only evanescently present. In detached reflection, 'time is understood as a succession, as a "flowing stream" of nows, as the "course of time"' (422).

In this detached reflection, both time and things in the world lose the significance given by involvement. Time becomes detached from activities and simply 'present-at-hand with' things and events. They are not present at hand in exactly the same

way, but 'they still get "seen" ontologically within the horizon of the idea of presence-at-hand.' The 'nows' which pass away make up the past, and the 'nows' which come along define the future.[5] Unlike a tree or hammer viewed as present-at-hand, the 'now' must be continually passing and coming along. 'Yet as *this* thing which changes, it simultaneously shows its own constant presence' (423).

Heidegger argues that 'The principle thesis of the ordinary way of interpreting time – namely, that time is infinite – makes manifest most impressively the way in which world-time and accordingly timeliness in general have been leveled off and covered up by such an interpretation.' Every 'now' can be divided into a 'just-now' and a 'now-forthwith,' or a 'now' which is just past and a 'now' which is yet to come. 'If in characterizing time we stick primarily and exclusively *to such a sequence*, then in principle neither beginning nor end can be found in it . . . Time is endless on "both sides"' (424).

This argument depends on the picture of time which Heidegger is criticizing and on the fact that time, when pictured this way, appears to be infinitely divisible as well as 'endless.' As Heidegger puts it, 'The sequence of nows is uninterrupted and has no gaps. No matter how "far" we proceed in "dividing up" the now, it is always now' (423). Each 'now' can be sliced by an even sharper blade of the instantaneous present, it in turn divided, and so on. Each moment of the past and the future can also be mentally refined. Then the span of each 'now' is shorter, and in this abstract representation, we can continue the division indefinitely.

Such infinite divisibility is probably not what people mean when they say that time is infinite. But Heidegger applies the same line of reasoning in regard to our picture of time going on forever. 'If "one thinks" the sequence of nows "to the end" by directing attention to being-present-at-hand and not-being-present-at hand, then an end can never be found. In *this* way of *thinking* time through to the end, one *must* always *think* more time; from this one infers that time is infinite' (424).

This abstract representation of the infinitude of time depends on ignoring the limitations of our actual means of measuring, and this is part of Heidegger's point in saying that, in such a conception, we regard time as present-at-hand. We can currently measure picoseconds by the vibrations of electrons, a technique involving sophisticated instruments and relying on the web of modern scientific practices. But the detached representation of infinite time ignores all the ways we do actually measure time in favor of an abstract theorizing which knows no limits at all.

4.4 Deriving Time

Now that we see how the ordinary conception of time relates to world time next we need to examine in further detail the relation between this infinite time and finite primordial timeliness. The popular interpretation of Heidegger's supposed derivation takes the finite character of timeliness as simply a matter of individuals ceasing to

5 That which 'passes away' (*vergehen*) makes up the past (*Vergangenheit*), and the 'nows' which come along (*die ankünftigen*) define the future (*die Zukunft*).

be at certain points in time. Conceiving of time as infinite is then taken as a way of denying this fact; we want to believe that time is infinite in order to believe that we are not going to cease. This interpretation may be accurate as far as it goes, and it does fit the above picture of time as infinite. We would like to believe that there is always going to be more time between the current 'now' and the 'now' of our demise. However, what usually is not noticed in this line of argument is that we are dealing with only the inauthentic conception of death. Indeed, infinite time is disclosed 'only in Dasein's inauthentic timeliness' (426), and inauthentic existence regards death as the physical demise which will happen in the future. The conception of finitude in this understanding of timeliness does amount to 'just stopping' in contrast to the authentic timeliness which 'exists finitely' (329). Furthermore, if authentic timeliness amounted to just consciously accepting the fact that *I* am going to demise, rather than believing that 'one dies,' it is hard to see why we could not say that the infinite time described above arises in this mode of timeliness, too. My death would still lie in a future 'now,' and, by the above line of argument, I could conceive of infinite 'nows' between me and it.

To get clear about what Heidegger's point really is, we should keep in mind that when Heidegger talks about the conception of time in relation to Dasein's flight from death, he is talking about inauthentic existence and its conception of death as demise. Heidegger comments:

> . . . the Anyone, which never dies and which misunderstands being towards the end, gives a characteristic interpretation of fleeing in the face of death. To the very end 'it always has more time.' Here a way of 'having time' in the sense that one can lose it makes itself known. 'Right now, this! Then that! And that is barely over when . . .' Here it is not as if the finitude of time were getting understood; quite the contrary, for concern sets out to snatch as much as possible from the time which keeps coming and still 'goes on.'
>
> (425)

The finitude of timeliness is not understood even if we take quite the opposite stance but still focus on our demise. The opposite of thinking that one always has more time is thinking that one has no time, but yet this, too, is a form of inauthentic timeliness. Heidegger remarks that we say we have 'no time' when irresoluteness completely dominates our existence (410). The future ecstasis of awaiting becomes contracted until Dasein is totally absorbed in the most immediate concerns which are pressed upon it by the Anyone. With too many things to do and not enough time to do them, we feel as if we have no time.

As Heidegger suggests above, always 'having time' indicates a way of having time in which we can also lose it. In neither case is the primordial finitude of timeliness adequately grasped. Though Heidegger claims that inauthentic existence involves both thinking that one always has more time and thinking that one has no time, the apparent contradiction is resolved when we see that these are different ways of dealing with the same sort of time and are not mutually incompatible. That is, the person who lives life from moment to moment, absorbed in the present 'now' in such a way that the future seems to vanish, may also act as if these 'nows' will go on infinitely.

We fail to embrace a wide span of time, and hence have no time but the present now, but yet we could occupy ourselves with activities as if they will go on forever.

The demise of a person can scarcely have any effect on the infinite succession of time. Taking the part of the Anyone, Heidegger asks:

> How is 'time' in its course to be touched even the least bit when a man who has been present-at-hand 'in time' no longer exists? Time goes on, just as indeed it already 'was' when a man 'came into life.' The only time the Anyone knows is the public time which has been leveled off and which belongs to everyone – and that means, to no one.
>
> (425)

The representation of the infinitude of this sort of 'time' is strengthened by the fact that 'the Anyone never dies because it *cannot* die' (424). Individual people demise, but the Anyone can neither demise, since 'one's death' is always yet to come, nor undergo authentic death, since it is never 'mine.'

Unless we keep in mind that time can be understood in very different ways, it may also seem odd or even contradictory that Heidegger asserts that authentic existence, which experiences its timeliness as finite, 'always has time.' But in this case, resoluteness 'has time *for* what the situation demands of it and has it "constantly"' (410). The time which authentic existence 'has' is not a succession of 'nows' nor the order of particular projects in the world. It is the primordial time in which it stands open to the revelation of being and gains its authentic self. Dependent as Dasein is on being, resoluteness makes time for a moment of insight. Only in resoluteness does the finitude of Dasein's primordial timeliness authentically manifest itself.

At least on a superficial reading, some of Heidegger's comments about finite timeliness in his discussion of the derivation of time lend themselves to the common interpretation that Heidegger is simply saying that we occupy a finite time span. For example, Heidegger comments that because the timeliness of Dasein 'is finite, its days are already numbered.' This does sound like the proclamation of a death – or rather demise – sentence. However, if one places the remark in context and notes what Heidegger goes on to say, the sort of 'numbering' of days at issue is quite a different matter. He adds that 'concernful awaiting takes precautions to determine the "thens" with which it is to concern itself – to divide up the day' (413). Dasein's time is numbered because in its involved activity it divides its time up into hours, days, weeks, and so forth. In particular, its days are numbered because the sun provides us with the most natural way of measuring our time, giving us the daylight in which we can work. With electricity and all the gadgetry of the twentieth century, Heidegger notes our 'advanced' Dasein has the 'advantage' of being able to turn night into day (415), and thus to work at any time, but his own quotation marks indicate that he regards this as a rather dubious achievement.

In contrast, the finitude of timeliness shows up not in the length of Dasein's 'span' but in its dependency on a network of significance arising out of its understanding of being, a network 'leveled off' in the ordinary conception of time. Even in inauthentic timeliness, Heidegger argues, the finitude of Dasein's being is manifest.

Our insistence on three particular characteristics of now-time shows our tacit understanding of this grounding: we think that time (1) is irreversible, (2) will not let itself be halted, and (3) passes away.

Why is time considered (1) irreversible? Heidegger notes, as many philosophers have, that 'Especially if one looks exclusively at the stream of nows, it is incomprehensible why this sequence should not present itself in the reverse direction.' He suggests that our notion of the irreversibility of time arises out of the priority of the future in ecstatic timeliness (426). We project a future which determines the significance of the past and the present activities in which we are engaged. We cannot reverse the structure of significance any more than we can reverse the process of swimming across the pool as in a film run backwards.[6] Our time, like our projects, only points one way.

We also think that (2) time cannot be halted. Heidegger suggests that talk about time 'passing away' expresses our experience of the inexorable march of time. Such an experience 'is in turn possible only because the halting of time is something we want' (425). The desire to halt time is based on the inauthentic awaiting of the future, an awaiting in which we forget the opportunities for authentic existence as they glide by. We do not want to place our understanding of being in question so we try to keep things the way they are, maintain the status quo, and ignore the changing understanding of being even if we are in the midst of it. We want to halt time because we want to avoid the changes it brings.

Finally, why do we think of time as (3) 'passing away' when, to just the same degree, it also arises? With regard to the sequence of 'nows,' the one idea is as legitimate as the other. For every 'now' that passes away, another one arises. But, as Heidegger suggests, we usually seem to think of time as sweeping everything into the past, being over and gone, rather than springing forth and carrying us into the future. Heidegger argues that the timeliness on which this conception of time is based shows through in such assumptions (425). In inauthentic existence this finite network of significance binds us to the comfortable, familiar past. We prefer to think of the present as a 'going by' that takes its place with the 'gone by' past, not as the fountainhead of novelty and creation.

Heidegger argues that, if we start with a conception of time as a succession of 'nows' or if we start by thinking of ourselves as simply moving along in world-time

---

6 Bertrand Russell suggests that it is an accident that memory reveals our past instead of our future. George Whitrow notes that this view implies that our relations to past and future would be symmetrical were it not for an arbitrary quirk of mind. Whitrow, like Heidegger, counters this line of thinking by pointing out that even in memory our thinking is oriented toward the future, that is, that we think of events in the order in which they happened, an order which proceeds from past to present to future. To reverse the sequence of remembering by remembering 'backward' requires a great mental effort. Whitrow takes this as showing that the intrinsic nature of mental activity involves reaching out toward the future. (See G.J. Whitrow, *The Natural Philosophy of Time*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 87.) For Heidegger, it would indicate both that the ecstases of future, past, and present are the disclosure matrices for any mental activity and that the future dimension has a special priority.

from project to project, that is if we start with either the ordinary conception of time or the understanding of world-time in inauthentic timeliness, we will not be able to understand Dasein's authentic timeliness. If we start with the notion of either an empty, shorn 'now' or a present whose significance is just 'given' by the significance of things, how can we explain the radical shifts in which old worlds die and new ones come to be? How can we explain the 'fullness' of time? The 'now' cannot account for the moment of insight (426f.).

Thus, Heidegger makes the same point about the relation between world-time and now-time that he made earlier about the relation between what-is ready-to-hand and what-is present-at-hand. If we start with an understanding of the former, we can comprehend the change to the latter, but if we think that things just are in themselves the latter, then we cannot explain the former.

If Heidegger succeeds in showing that the ordinary conception of time arises out of inauthentic timeliness and that inauthentic timeliness arises out of authentic timeliness, and also shows that we cannot provide an explanation of these three things in reversed order of priority, has he justified his use of the term 'primordial time' to refer to authentic timeliness (405, 426)? His own rationale seems rather feeble since to explain one concept by means of something else, for example, to explain our notion of time by means of ecstatic timeliness, does not justify using the same word, 'time,' for both. Heidegger only promotes confusion by using the same word to refer to two quite different notions, or even three if we include his notion of the 'Time of being' which we will discuss in Chapter 5. The common term quite predictably misleads the reader into thinking the issues center around time in the ordinary sense and our experience of it. Nonetheless, his use of the same word makes possible a neat architectonic and a catchy title, that is, 'Being and Time.'

Leaving questions of terminology aside, we can ask: is Heidegger's 'derivation' of the ordinary conception of time successful? Answering this question immediately involves us in other questions which take us beyond Heidegger's discussion in *Being and Time*. Understanding time as a sequence of 'nows' present-at-hand is only possible, Heidegger implies, in the context of an understanding of being as presence, the nature of which is the topic for my next chapter. Heidegger takes this understanding to be unique to Western culture, originating in the metaphysics developed by the Ancient Greek thinkers, which is the subject of my Chapter 6.[7]

But other questions would perhaps take us beyond the territory in which Heidegger offers guidance even in later works. Is the understanding of time in Western culture really distinctive or unique? Do other cultures, which do not make an issue of being or do not understand being as presence, have a remarkably different conception of time? Untouched by Western influence, would other cultures see time as a succession of 'nows,' stretching infinitely backward and forward? We would also have to enter the debate about the Greek conception of time, whether they viewed time as cyclical or linear, and so forth. However, in this book I want to keep close to the track of Heidegger's argument.

7 [Chapter 6 is available online at *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/6White.htm*. Editor's note.]

Heidegger does make a point, though, which is relevant to this issue. In a seminar on Heraclitus he comments that, as he investigated the idea of archaic time in Pindar and Sophocles, he was struck by the lack of discussion of time as sequence. Rather, according to Heidegger, time was seen as that which grants a sequence. This is the time of the seasons, days, and hours as they grant the passing of things in a certain order and thus grant us our dealings with these things (HS 60/100). This suggests that the early Greeks had a different view of time than that which began to develop with the rise of the metaphysics of presence in, for example, Aristotle. Time was not yet the counting of 'nows' that ran concomitantly with things in motion.

Instead Heidegger suggests that the early Greeks' understanding of time was an understanding of the granting of opportunities for dealing with things which have their own cycles and rhythms and their own being. This is the sort of time apparent in crafts and work in the world in general where people must adapt themselves to the demands of the things they work upon and know when the time is 'ripe' for their response, as must, for example, someone who fashions shields out of metal or wine out of grapes. Heidegger suggests that a change in the understanding of time occurs with the rise of traditional metaphysics which 'forgets' the background context of our dealings and disinterestedly contemplates the things and properties which show up in this context.

Although we will not be in a position to understand the significance of the following remark until after we have examined Heidegger's notion of the Time of being and the way Dasein's timeliness is 'in time' with this Time, I want to quote one last passage in which Heidegger explicitly, if obscurely, connects Dasein's disclosure of time with its role as the entity which makes an issue of being. He comments:

> As an entity which makes an issue of its being, Dasein *uses itself* primarily *for itself*, whether explicitly or not. Proximally and for the most part, care is circumspective concern. In using itself for the sake of itself, Dasein 'uses itself up.' In using itself up, Dasein uses itself, that is, its time. In using time, Dasein reckons with it. Time is first discovered in the concern which reckons circumspectively, and the concern leads to the development of time-reckoning.
>
> (333)

How does Dasein, the entity which is the 'there' which discloses being, 'use itself up'? Why is this the same as using its time? Why does time-reckoning become more and more important? Why do clocks and calendars come to dominate our lives? Heidegger later suggests that time-reckoning becomes important when Dasein finds itself without any time left in the modern age (WICT 101/41). Dasein in the modern age is running out of the possibilities of its being – out of Time – and this, too, Heidegger thinks brings about a change in our way of understanding time. Now it becomes our master in quite a different way. We will examine time's place in the modern epoch of being in Chapter 7.[8]

---

8 [Chapter 7 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/C White.htm* Editor's note.]

4.5 The Time of the World

Before we begin to examine Heidegger's account of the Time of being and the history of Dasein's understanding of being, I should emphasize that these investigations are not foreign to *Being and Time*. We have been discussing the time of Dasein's being, but other domains of what-is have their own time. In Section 69 Heidegger talks about the timely transcendence of the world, and, in doing so, prepares for the phenomenological turn to being. This section is the link in the analysis of the timeliness of Dasein which connects it with the Temporality of the other domains of what-is, but, because this early work was left unfinished, the link was left unattached. Dasein, however, is not the only domain of what-is which shows up in a Temporal way.

Dasein has been analyzed as being-in-the-world. It is not identical with its world but *in* it. 'So if we orient ourselves by the timely constitution of disclosedness, the ontological condition for the possibility that there can be the entity which exists as being-in-the-world must let itself be exhibited' (350). This condition for the possibility of Dasein is precisely the phenomenon of world as the 'there' in which being discloses itself. This world is not simply a product of Dasein's timing activity, and therefore Heidegger must at least announce the 'transcendence of the world,' and correlatively of being, even if he will not account for it within the confines of the analytic of Dasein.

Thus Heidegger says in the section entitled 'the problem of the timely transcendence of the world':

> Just as the present arises in the unity of the timing of timeliness out of the future and having-been, the horizon of the present times itself equiprimordially with those of the future and of having-been.
>
> (365)

Each ecstasis of Dasein has a corresponding 'horizon' into which it 'stands out.' As Heidegger puts it in another early work: 'That toward which each ecstasis is intrinsically open in a specific way we call the *horizon of the ecstasis*' (BPP 261/378). The horizon of the present ecstasis, called '*praesens*' in *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* and other works, plays the crucial role in our understanding of being as presence because we attribute being only to things which show up in some 'now.'[9]

The other domains of what-is show up in this horizon with their own Temporality. The ready-to-hand, the present-at-hand, and nature, for example, appear in our cultural background practices with a particular way of being; and they change from what-is created by God to subjects and objects and then to stuff to be dominated.

---

9 See, for example, BPP 308/438. Since Heidegger imports the term '*praesens*' from Latin and since there seems to be no particularly appropriate English word that would not invite confusion with 'presence' and other related terms, I will leave the infrequently used term in Latin.

For a discussion of being as presence see Section 5.2 below.

The horizons for Dasein's timing activity must, as transcendent to Dasein, have their own timing activity. The timing activity of the horizons ultimately refers us beyond the timeliness of Dasein to the shifting background against which it is played out, that is, the Temporality of being. The ecstases stand out into their corresponding horizons just as Dasein stands out into being. The world is the locus of their interaction.

True, as Heidegger goes on to add from the perspective of the Dasein analytic, 'of course, only as long as Dasein *is* . . . "is there" being' (212). But this does not mean that being is the invention of Dasein. Dasein finds itself 'thrown' into the world with the being of what-is revealed in a particular way. This being is that for which Dasein is open. At this point in his analysis of Dasein in *Being and Time*, Heidegger simply leaves the 'problem of the timely transcendence of the world' as a problem. The reference to 'transcendence' reminds the reader of Heidegger's introductory claim that being is 'the *transcendens* pure and simple' (38). This notion of the timely transcendence of the world is in fact a preparatory reference to the Temporality of being which was to be explicitly discussed later in the projected book.

The discussion of Dasein's historicality in *Being and Time* also points toward a discussion of the Temporality of being. Just as Heidegger left a place in his discussion of the timeliness of Dasein which could only be filled in by his later discussion of the Temporality of being, that is, the notion that the world is transcendent, he also leaves a place in his discussion of the historicality of Dasein which would later be filled in by his discussion of the history of being. This is his notion that the world is itself historical and does not just acquire its history as some subjective coloring put there by Dasein. What-is within the world as present-at-hand, ready-to-hand, and Nature 'is as such historical, and its history does not signify something "external" which merely accompanies the inner history of the "soul"' (389). Heidegger explains:

> The thesis of Dasein's historicality does not say that the worldless subject is historical but that what is historical is the entity that exists as being-in-the-world. *The happening of history is the happening of being-in-the-world.* Dasein's historicality is essentially the historicality of the world, which, on the ground of ecstatical-horizontal timeliness, belongs to its timing.
>
> (388)

Heidegger's term 'world-history' is intended to indicate both the happening of the world in its essential unity with Dasein and the historical appearance of what-is within the world in so far as it is discovered with the world.

Heidegger remarks that equipment and things, buildings and institutions, all have their history. Books, for example, have their 'fates.' Nature, too, is historical as a country-side or a battlefield or the site of a cult (388f.). We ourselves do not determine how these things will appear to us, how they will speak to us or respond to us. The 'fate' of a book such as *Moby Dick* is a good example of this. Ignored or scorned in its own time, the book gave us insight into a future that we could only recognize when we arrived there. Since Dasein is essentially in a world which can reveal itself as historical in this way, Heidegger adds 'world history' to 'fate' and 'destiny' as

aspects of the existentiell possibility in which Dasein finds itself (394). Our fate is co-determined by how things can manifest themselves and how we respond to them.

Heidegger cuts short the discussion of the historicality of the worldly domains of what-is by announcing that following through on the problem would require him to transgress the limits of the existential analytic when at most 'the very aim of this exposition is to lead us face to face with the ontological enigma of the movement of happening in general' (389). The existential analytic is an investigation of Dasein's being, not of the meaning of being in general which discloses all domains of what is as what they are and hence grants them whatever history they have. Only the later analysis of being in general would put us in a position to understand how what is present-at-hand, or ready-to-hand, or part of nature can also have a history, even though one dependent on the existence of Dasein as the 'there' in which the being of what-is discloses itself. That a novel or poem appears to us differently in different epochs or that things begin to show themselves to be quantifiable and mathematically calculable along about the seventeenth century was not up to us but, of course, could not have happened without us.

Perhaps one of the reasons why Heidegger's intentions in his discussion of historicality are not obvious is that he concludes his chapter by letting Count Yorck do much of his talking for him. Heidegger uses Yorck's remarks in order to show that we cannot just stop at the distinction between what-is present-at-hand and what is historical, that is, between things and Dasein. If we did, we would end up with Husserl's viewpoint, not Heidegger's, and would regard *Being and Time* as simply an investigation of the particular domain of what-is which 'has a history' in a unique way. Rather than stopping with contrasting other domains of what-is with human being, we must come to see that the being of all domains of what-is is historically determined.

The notion of the timely and historical character of what-is brings us face to face with the problem requiring the phenomenological turn to being. Why does Dasein's understanding of being change? What is Dasein's insight an insight into? At this point, we already have a glimpse of Heidegger's answer. Now we need a detailed analysis of the Temporal disclosure of being in the cultural background practices and the Temporality of being.

Chapter 5

The Time of Being

In the first section of this chapter I contrast the Time of being with the timeliness of Dasein, giving particular attention to Kant as the first philosopher to glimpse the issue which grounds the distinction. Section 5.2 provides a concrete illustration of the Time of being with a discussion of 'presencing,' the way being has disclosed what-is in the history of metaphysical thinking, and suggests its contrast with the mythological way of taking being. Section 5.3 expands on Heidegger's notion of the 'Appropriation' which places Time and being in relationship.[1]

5.1 Kant and the Time of Being

From the perspective of his 1962 essay 'Time and Being,' Heidegger can say that the interpretation of time in *Being and Time* aims primarily at 'the timeliness of Dasein, at the ecstatic element which in itself already contains a reference to truth, to the clearing, to the unconcealment of being *qua* being, even though this is not explicitly spoken of in the published portion . . .' (TB 28/30). Since the published portion only articulates the meaning of Dasein's being as an understanding of being, that is, as the 'there' in which being is disclosed, this analysis of timeliness does not provide an explicit answer to the question of the meaning of being itself. However, as Heidegger indicated even in the Introduction to *Being and Time*, 'the ground will have been prepared for obtaining such an answer' (17).

The completion of the analysis of Dasein as timely and historical will bring us to the point where we 'cannot fail to see that the inquiry into being is itself characterized by historicality.' Thus we will find that the elaboration of the question of being demands that we inquire into the question's own history (20f.). This investigation of the history of the question of being will, Heidegger says, enable us to 'appropriate' the past as our own so that 'we may bring ourselves into the fullest possession of the ownmost possibilities of the question' (21).[2] Because of Dasein's unique character, the ownmost possibility of the question is not just that we should raise it anew but that we should answer it anew. Temporality is the condition for the possibility of the history of being in the same way that timeliness was the condition for the possibility of Dasein's historical happening.[3]

---

1 In Section 5.4 below we will discuss the meaning of Heidegger's own term, '*das Ereignis*,' and the web of meaning in which the term is embedded.

2 Here 'appropriate' translates '*Aneignung*.'

3 For my translation of '*Temporalität*' as 'Temporality,' see the section 'Texts and Translations'

With such remarks it is apparent that even in *Being and Time* Heidegger thought that the phenomenological turn from Dasein to being, which was required by the matter under investigation, would also prepare us for the turn that is a leap of thought bringing about a new understanding of being.[4] However, at the end of the published portion of *Being and Time*, leading into what would have been the missing section 'Time and Being,' Heidegger remarks that in the analysis so far the conflict in the interpretation of being has not yet been enkindled and therefore cannot be allayed (437). Presumably in that proposed next section he would have shown such an historical conflict in the interpretation of being by examining the ontologies of Kant, Descartes, and the scholastics, and Aristotle. The conflict would make us see the need for a decision and also lead us to wonder why Western civilization has had such a distinctive cultural history. The decision puts us in touch with the Temporality of being while our curiosity seeks an answer to its nature.

Looking back at his early works, Heidegger says that we would not see the direction that his later thought on the 'destiny' of being would take if we limited ourselves to thinking only about Dasein's historicality or represented the destiny of being only as something that happened to Dasein or as series of occurrences in some ordinary sense. 'In contrast, the only possible way to preview the later thought on the destiny of being from the perspective of *Being and Time* is to think through what was presented in *Being and Time* about the destructuring of the ontological doctrine of the being of what-is' (TB 9/9). No longer just Dasein's 'happening-with,' now 'destiny' refers to the Temporal happening of being.

Of course, *Being and Time* only offers sketchy introductory remarks about this 'destructuring' of ontology, this analysis of its origin and character, and the task was not begun in the published book. But Heidegger's comment is instructive nonetheless. True, as John Caputo points out, the Temporal structures of being presented in the later essay 'Time and Being' are 'patently isomorphic' with those of Dasein's timeliness. But Heidegger's suggestion that we look to the destructuring of ontology rather than Dasein to understand the destiny of being is not therefore 'misleading.'[5] The similarity between timeliness and Temporality does not mean that we are talking about the same structures or the same thing. What studying the structures of Dasein's timeliness or its historicality does not adequately bring to light is the priority of the disclosure of being, upon which Dasein's timeliness is dependent, and the way Dasein's understanding of being changes. Presumably both issues would have been clarified in the missing sections of *Being and Time*. Until we see the conflict in the interpretation of being and the horizon of Time against which it is disclosed, we cannot grasp what Heidegger means by the 'destiny' and 'Temporality' of being or even fully grasp the timeliness of authentic Dasein.

As the description of Part Two of *Being and Time* tells us, this phenomenological 'de-structuring' of the history of ontology would take 'the problem of Temporality' as its clue (39). Since we are now trying to understand Heidegger's conception of

---

4 The distinction between the phenomenological turn and the turn that is a leap of thought was examined at the end of Section 1.4.

5 Caputo, 'Time and Being in Heidegger,' *Modern Schoolman*, L (May 1973), p. 334.

the Time of being, perhaps we can reverse this procedure and, as he suggests in 'Time and Being,' take as our clue for understanding the destiny and Temporality of being his remarks about what he wanted to show in his investigation of the history of ontology.

In particular, we should consider Heidegger's remarks about Kant's failure to grasp the problematic of Temporality. He says:

> The first and only person who has gone any stretch of the way toward investigating the dimension of Temporality or has even let himself be drawn there by the coercion of the phenomena themselves is Kant. Only when we have established the problematic of Temporality can we succeed in casting light on the obscurity of his doctrine of the schematism . . . In the end those very phenomena which will be exhibited under the heading of Temporality in our analysis are precisely those *most covert* judgments of the 'common reason' for which Kant says it is the 'business of philosophers' to provide an analytic

Heidegger expects to show why the problematic of Temporality remained closed off to Kant, who 'shrinks back, as it were, in the face of something which must be brought to light as a theme and a principle if the term 'being' is to have any demonstrable meaning' (23).

Heidegger claims that his analysis will show 'why Kant never achieved insight into the problematic of Temporality.' Such remarks indicate that Temporality is quite a different matter than consciousness of things in time or the character of these things since, of course, accounting for these occupied Kant very explicitly. Besides, Heidegger indicates that the problematic of Temporality deals with what Kant saw as the most covert judgments of the 'common reason,' not just with time and space as forms of intuition. It deals with our understanding of being, not just with our experience of time. According to Heidegger, Kant failed to achieve insight into Temporality because he neglected the problem of being and did not provide an ontology of Dasein or, in Kant's terminology, of the subjectivity of the subject (24). That Kant takes for granted the nature of this subjectivity is symptomatic of his failure. At best Kant provides only an analysis of one epoch of Dasein's 'fallen' timeliness, that of subjects and objects, and perhaps only of the time-consciousness derivative from it.

Being, or what it is to be, was never seen as a problem by Kant because he took for granted a particular understanding of being and saw its fundamental categories as necessary for the very existence of 'subjectivity' or unified representational consciousness. For Kant, nature was necessarily Newtonian nature. Only because we experience Newtonian nature, with its quantifiable and controllable objects, can we experience ourselves. The conditions necessary for subjectivity are 'forms' of both intuition and understanding which we impose on our experience, and so the being of what-is was not only immutable, it was a 'product' or 'posit' of human activity, as Heidegger frequently puts it. For Kant, the being of what-is is under the domination of human subjectivity, but paradoxically what is has to be in a certain way in order for that subjectivity to be at all.

Heidegger thinks that Kant failed to see that being is problematic and reveals itself to us in different ways at different times. This is precisely the 'problematic of

Temporality' as the meaning of being. Heidegger indicates that in his own analysis he does not want to supply Kantian ontology with a foundation that it neglected to supply for itself by, for example, showing that human beings must be subjects. Rather he wants to show that what is 'fundamental' in his own fundamental ontology of being 'is incompatible with any building upon it' (TB 32/34). What we arrive at when we discover the Temporality of being is not an immutable ground guaranteeing that being or human beings must be in a certain way but rather an abyss of possibility.[6] Heidegger's 'de-structuring' of the history of ontology would have shown, and indeed did show when he carried it off in other works, that the understanding of being in Ancient Greece or the Middle Ages was very different than the understanding of being found in Kant's philosophy. In order to account for this difference Heidegger directed our attention to the Temporality of being.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant comments that 'the schematism of our understanding, in its application to appearances and their mere form, is an art concealed in the depths of the human soul, whose real modes of activity nature is hardly likely ever to allow us to discover and to have open to our gaze.'[7] However, we can at least know the conditions for the possibility of this schematism, if not how we actually do it. For Heidegger, the 'art' of categorizing things as dogs and triangles is buried in our skills at dealing with them, and our finitude prevents it from being brought before our conscious gaze. In Dasein's world the paths that guide its resolute decisions about what it is to be are already cleared by being itself through the ways things show themselves in our dealings. An authentic decision bases itself on something not mastered, on something concealed (PLT 55/42), something not open to a gaze directed at either ourselves or things. Our finitude prevents us from transcending this limitation by turning the background practices into explicit knowledge. 'So profoundly does finitude entrench itself in existence that our ownmost and deepest limitation refuses to yield to our freedom' (WIM 108/118).

Thus, in Heidegger's version of a 'metaphysics of metaphysics,' unlike in Kant's, we do not acquire absolute knowledge about the relative conditions for knowing objects. The whole problem of 'laying the foundations of metaphysics' becomes the problem of Dasein as finite existence standing open for being (KPM 238/223). For Heidegger, the finitude of knowledge is an essential structure of knowledge that limits it even when it is turned back on itself rather than toward 'things in themselves.' Contrary to what Kant thought, we cannot know 'knowledge in itself' either. The essential finitude of the structure of knowledge is not a matter of the shortcomings of knowledge such as the instability, inexactness, liability to error, and so on, of our beliefs (KPM 27/21). Rather the finitude of knowledge is a matter of its grounding in an understanding of being which cannot be taken up in conceptual judgments. We should give up our quest for not only an absolute knowledge of things in themselves, as Kant thought, but also for explicit knowledge of the source of our knowledge (KPM 245/229f.). The goal of knowing the presuppositions of our knowledge, so

---

6 As Heidegger says, not a '*Grund*' but an '*Ab-grund*.'

7 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965), p. 183. See A141

devoutly pursued by Kant, Hegel, Husserl, and every other metaphysician, is unattainable.

But the finitude of Dasein's understanding of being is not the only finitude at issue now. We are moving from the finitude of Dasein's being to the finitude of being itself. When Heidegger first spoke of the finitude of being in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, he says later, he was thinking of it as finite in contrast with infinite. In the framework that Kant sets up, the finitude of the appearance of being in our world was a result of our own limitations. Being can appear to us in only one way. Infinite being belongs to the inaccessible noumenal world. At this stage in his work, Heidegger was interested in showing, against Kant, that there is no 'being in itself,' infinite or otherwise, and no immutable appearance of this being, just the various ways things show themselves as what they *are*.

Heidegger's later philosophy, however, comes to focus more and more on the limits of being. The concealed, dark realm of being does not reserve infinite or 'limitless' possibilities for us. Rather, in the contemporary epoch, the history of being as presence is coming to an end as its possibilities run out. Now the end of metaphysics is upon us. Here Heidegger's notion of the 'end' draws on another one of its meanings: a conclusion or the termination of a lease.[8] If Dasein is the 'site' in which being is revealed, then the end of metaphysics shows that we are just renting this ground and can be evicted at any time. Just as the timeliness of Dasein demonstrated our limitations, the Temporality of being shows its limitations.

Authentic timeliness is the impetus for fundamental changes in the way we deal with things, but this timeliness is dependent on the Temporality of being which lets things show up in different ways. Timeliness and Temporality are not distinct, independent phenomena. In the discussion of the notions in the Introduction to *Being and Time*, Heidegger emphasized the distinction, thus making timeliness seem to be a unique instance of Temporality in one specific domain of what is, that is, of Dasein. In contrast, in the contemporaneous *Basic Problems of Phenomenology* he said that he will call timeliness 'Temporality' in considering its role as the 'condition of the possibility of the understanding of being, both pre-ontological and ontological' (BPP 274/388). Here we see more clearly that the two phenomena are essentially related and that, without Dasein's timeliness, there would be no Temporality. Dasein's timeliness is the vehicle through which the being of what is manifests itself in a Temporal way both in our dealings with things and in the works of the creators.

In *Being and Time* this 'realm of the determination of being' is 'caught sight of from the clearing of Da-sein' (TB 27/29f.). After examining timeliness as the condition for the possibility of Dasein's view of being, Heidegger's original plan required us to reverse our perspective, as he did in the late essay 'Time and Being,' in order to 'anchor' this 'primordial time' in the 'more primordial relation' between Time and being generated by the 'Appropriation' (TB 27f./30). According to Heidegger's later account, the finitude of being is a manifestation of the finitude of this Appropriation (TB 54/58).

8 Heidegger's term is '*Ende*.'

5.2 Presencing

What prompted Heidegger to place time and being together? He answers:

> From the dawn of Western-European thinking until today, being means the same as presencing speaks of the present . . . being is determined as presence through time. (TB 2/2)[9]

Heidegger thinks that the Greeks took being as presencing in two senses: 'to be' was to be present at some here and now and 'to be' was to be something with which we could be involved or at-home-with.[10] Western civilization has remained within the circuit of this original understanding in which being was 'determined through time' in these two distinct though related senses.

At least since the days of Aristotle, we have taken 'to be' to signify 'to endure through time.' We can also attribute the view to Plato since the Ideas or Forms, though not in time, remained a constant presence through it, and the *idea* of a thing was its essence which endures. In later epochs even God is real in an eternal 'now' which encompasses all worldly 'nows.' Something was not taken to be 'really' real unless it *is* at some moment of time, that is, unless it has presence at some present.

We might take the claim that being is determined as presence as an obvious truism. Of course, we say, for something to *be* it must be *present* at some moment of time in which it was, is, or will be the present. But this is not what Heidegger means by saying that being is Temporal. Indeed, he is critical of the predominance of this sort

---

9 '*Anwesen*' will be translated with the participle 'presencing' to remind the reader of the verbal connotations suggesting 'being' which it acquires from its association with '*wesen*,' the archaic verb meaning 'to be.' We will also be able to preserve its difference from '*Anwesenheit*,' which will be translated as 'presence.'

We should keep in mind that, when Heidegger says that 'presencing' speaks of the 'present,' his German words '*Anwesen*' and '*Gegenwart*' are not as lexically related as our English terms are, and we should not be too quick in connecting the terms. Presencing is not simply the way all things show up in any Dasein's present, as many commentators seem to suggest. While the 'present' is an existential dimension of any Dasein, 'presencing' is the master existentiell form of Dasein's understanding of being in Western culture, a point for which this section argues.

See footnote 10 below for a discussion of the etymological and philosophical connections of '*Anwesen*.'

10 Heidegger's term '*Anwesen*' is etymologically analogous to the Greek '*parousia*,' Aristotle's 'second substance.' The Greek term '*ousia*' has come to be translated as 'substance,' but, Heidegger argues, in pre-philosophical speech it meant 'real estate' or 'premises,' that is, familiar territory, as does '*Anwesen*' (IM 61/46).

The specific etymological play of '*An-wesen*' is important for Heidegger's meaning. '*Wesen*' as a noun now means 'entity,' 'essence,' 'reality,' or 'nature,' but Heidegger wants to connect the word with the archaic verb '*wesen*,' which means 'to be' and also 'to live,' 'to work.' In order to capture Heidegger's meaning a preferable translation for '*Wesen*' would be 'way to be.' The German preposition '*an*' indicates 'at,' 'near,' or 'close by.' Then '*das Anwesen*' could etymologically connote a 'way to be' disclosed in the 'neighborhood' of everyday life.

of view. The traditional characterization of the being of what-is as temporal, timeless, or supratemporal is an ontic interpretation which treats time as an entity, as if it were a sort of container, and reduces being to the being of what-is, as if it were a property of things (BPP 306/434). In fact, in pointing out that we have taken being as presence disclosed in the horizon of the present dimension of time, Heidegger is suggesting that it could be otherwise. Our way 'to be' is only one possible way 'to be.'

In our culture we have been so long immersed in our own understanding of being that we find it difficult, if not impossible, to imagine an alternative way of understanding things. Jorge Luis Borges, the great Latin American author of philosophical fantasies and perceptive literary criticism, suggests such an alternative, and we can explore it to help to break the grip of presence upon us. Borges reports in one of his essays that 'a certain Chinese encyclopedia entitled *Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge*' divided animals into:

> (a) those that belong to the Emperor, (b) embalmed ones, (c) those that are trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous ones, (g) stray dogs, (h) those that are included in this classification, (i) those that tremble as if they are mad, (j) innumerable ones, (k) those drawn with a very fine camel's hair brush, (l) others, (m) those that have just broken a flower vase, (n) those that resemble flies from a distance.[11]

Michel Foucault comments that his book *Les Mots et les Choses* grew out of his laughter and astonishment at this taxonomy which demonstrates at the same time the 'exotic charm of another system of thought' and 'the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.'[12]

For Heidegger the Temporality of being has to do with the way that a unified historical context is set up in which we take what-is as being in a certain way, in our case, as presencing. One reason we resist accepting the taxonomy of the 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' as an alternative way of categorizing animals is that it involves no enduring being of what-is united across past, present, and future or specifiable in some 'now.' Animals could change categories moment to moment or fall into many 'species' at once. Science both ancient and modern is founded on the understanding of the being of what-is as presencing. Things stay put in their nature, no matter at what present moment we examine them.

To glimpse what it would be like to take being as something other than presence, we need to try to think of cultures radically different from our own, though perhaps not ones as fanciful as that depicted in the Chinese encyclopedia. Granting Heidegger's idea that being is displayed against a Temporal horizon, what would be a realistic alternative to presencing, then? What would it be like, for example, to

---

11 Jorge Luis Borges, 'The Analytic Language of John Wilkins,' in *Other Inquisitions*, translated by Ruth L.C. Simms with an introduction by James E. Irby (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), p. 103. As is frequently the case with Borges, one is left wondering if this 'certain Chinese encyclopedia' is real or as fanciful as its taxonomy.

12 *Les Mots et les Choses* is translated into English as *The Order of Things* (New York: Random House, 1970). For this quote, see the Preface, p. xv, of the Vintage edition.

disclose being against the horizon of the past, of having-been? We should look to the understanding of being that is evident in societies once or still immersed in a mythological view of the world where what is 'really real' happened 'once upon time' but yet in a time which cannot be systematically placed in any actual 'now' of human experience.[13] The mythological entities and events of this always-past past may be 'more real' than the events of the present, and the events of the present may derive their reality from a re-invocation of the power of this past through rituals and ceremonies.

In a discussion of the mythological tales of the Saulteaux natives of Canada, the anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell comments: 'On the whole, then, events that are believed to have taken place "long ago" are not systematically correlated with each other in any well-defined temporal schema. They are discrete happenings, often unconnected and sometimes contradictory. Yet the past and the present are part of a whole because they are bound together by the persistence and contemporary reality of mythological characters not even now grown old.' He adds that such characters 'in fact are actually more "real" than distant human ancestors no longer remembered.'[14] For such cultures, the mythological past may be 'more real' than anything merely having presence at some present. As Heidegger comments about the understanding of being in mythically oriented cultures: 'The past as such shows itself to be the genuine and ultimate "why" of all-which-is.'[15]

A different view of ordinary time may derive from this different Temporal disclosure matrix, for example, a time which is cyclical and not homomorphic in contrast to our notion of a linear time made up of identical 'nows.' Each year's rituals again invoke the 'past' into the present, starting the cycle of the seasons all over. The present loops back to rejoin the past rather than, as in our view, marching steadily into an unknown future. The rituals and royalty of a mythological culture get their authority from their participation in the past, not from how well they help us cope with the present.

If we think of 'telling tales' as part of the art of a culture, a form of its poetry, say, we see changes in the art, that is, the sort of tale that is told, correlated with changes in the culture's conception of time in the way Heidegger implies they should be. In his book *The Shapes of Times* Peter Munz suggests:

> The gradual transformation of mythical tales of the past into historical tales of the past is . . . linked to the invention of chronological schemes. The crux of the whole matter lies in

---

13 This idea was first suggested to me by Professor Peter Manchester.

14 See A. Irving Hallowell, 'Temporal Orientation in Western Civilization and a Preliterate Society,' *Culture and Experience* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1955), p. 232. Note that Hallowell's way of putting his point with his reference to persistence may be biased by his own understanding of being as presencing.

15 Heidegger's remark is made with reference to Ernst Cassirer's account of mythic cultures. See his review of Cassirer's book *Mythic Thought* in *The Piety of Thinking*, edited with commentary by James Hart and John Maraldo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), p. 35.

> the ability to index time, not in the ability to distinguish tall tales from true stories and to adhere to rigid standards of credibility.[16]

Munz also argues that historically based myths, as distinct from myths about the 'eternal return' of mythical characters, are 'the most fertile soil for the development of ordinary history.' He points out that it should be no surprise that the two cultures in which 'ordinary historical narratives emerge,' Greece and Israel, were 'the two places where bards had accustomed people to historical myths.'[17] Historical myths had already accustomed people to placing heroes in some previously present moment of time rather than the never-never-land of 'once upon a time.' Going from historical myths to stories about real people is an easy slide, not like the leap from myth to history. The time framework of the *Iliad*, for example, contrasts significantly with the 'Enuma Elish,' with its 'once upon a time' character, and reflects a significant difference in the understanding of time and history in the culture which gave it birth. The Greek ground is prepared for Herodotus and Thucydides.

This orientation toward the past or present indicates one sense in which being is 'determined through time.' However, since, as we have seen, Heidegger argues that the notion of time on which this version depends is derivative, the other sense in which being is 'determined through time' is more fundamental. This sort of time is the Time which holds together the cultural practices and gives us the stable horizon against which their changes are played out. This Time is the 'meaning of being' in general. Here presencing is not identified with some momentary 'now,' although the Temporal horizon of the present ecstasis of timeliness, or '*praesens*' as Heidegger calls it, has a special prominence in this way of Temporalizing, as did the past in the alternative orientation just described.[18]

Nonetheless, presencing is not the present or any one horizon or ecstasis of time. It is a specific instance of what Heidegger calls the fourth dimension of time or 'nearing.' Nearing is the way the other three dimensions come together to create a unified context for the understanding of being,[19] and presencing is the specific way of nearing in our culture's understanding of being. In analogy, perhaps, I suggest we

---

16 Peter Munz, *The Shapes of Time* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University, 1977), p. 122.

17 Ibid., p. 126.

18 '*Praesens*' is to the Temporality of being as 'making present' is to the timeliness of Dasein. See the preliminary reference to the notion of *praesens* in Section 4.5.

19 We noted the isomorphism between the three dimensions of Temporality and those of timeliness in Section 5.1. There is a further parallel here. Nearing as the fourth dimension of time corresponds to discourse as an existential structure of Dasein. In Division Two's timely re-interpretation of the existential structures of foundedness, understanding, falling, and discourse, discourse is given the status of a fourth dimension of timeliness which underlies the other three. (See, for example, p. 349 in *Sein und Zeit*.) Thus, discourse articulates disclosedness with its three ecstases of timeliness, and it 'underlies' all three in a way similar to the way nearing as the fourth dimension of the Time of being underlies the three horizons of Temporality. The prominence of discourse indicates language's role as the 'house of being,' a claim to be discussed below in Section 5.5.

call the specific instantiation of the fourth dimension of mythological cultures, or their way of nearing, 'pasting.'

In mythological cultures reality is displayed against the 'once upon a time' horizon of the past, and it seems to us to be remote, implacable, awesome, mysterious, and unpredictable. In contrast, *praesens* as the horizon schema of being 'determines primarily the timing of the timeliness of all dealings with the ready-to-hand' (BPP 308/438). The understanding of being as presencing takes what-is as something with which we can deal, something here and now which we can literally grasp, turn to and fro, modify to suit our needs, and so forth. The new orientation toward the ready-to-hand which arose in Ancient Greece is, according to Heidegger, a clear break from myth.

Heidegger pictures the transition from 'pasting' to presencing occurring in two steps. The culture moved from nature myths to the intermediate stage of culture myths, such as Homer's stories presumably, and then to an orientation toward tools and the famous Greek 'discovery of mind' or 'subjectivity.' He remarks:

> The further process of the disclosure of 'subjectivity' and its comportments is realized in the transition from nature myths to the culture myths, to finally the stage of manipulation of tools, which is more or less free from magic. At this stage of the process, the ontological context of things by itself becomes manifest as more independent in that man frees himself from magical bondage to things and, by stepping back from the world, it is possible for him to meet things objectively.[20]

The 'ontological context' that becomes manifest is one in which the cultural background practices let us encounter things as what they are, that is, 'objectively.' Such an ontological context does not exist for mythological Dasein, where connections between things are made by myth and magic, not use, and hence are evanescent and resistant to consistent manipulation – two features essential to our notion of objectivity.[21] Perhaps in a mythological culture we could say that things are encountered as what they are not, as, for example, a bear might refer one to an ancestor or a mountain to a god and in an important sense 'really be' one. Or, at least so it seems to us with our orientation toward tools and tasks.

---

20 Heidegger makes this remark in the review of Ernst Cassirer's book *Mythical Thought* mentioned in footnote 15. See *Piety of Thinking*, p. 37.

21 Or so they seem to us. Here we could use a discussion of magic and the reason why it does not create an 'ontological context' in which things can appear 'objectively.' As far as I know, Heidegger does not provide one, and I do not want to go off on a sidetrack of speculation which would take us away from our topic. Presumably, the basic point is that in a magical view of the world the relations between things are shifting and unreliable, perhaps as in the taxonomy of Borges' encyclopedia. In a sense, magical relations of significance are unintelligible because they are not fixed and determinable by any 'objective,' that is, public and verifiable, procedure. The relations are not simply between worldly things but rather between these things and an unseen, unfathomable dimension beyond this world, such as the past of myth. But, again, that is how it seems to us from within a different perspective, one which now has a 2500-year history to convince us of its obviousness.

As early as *Being and Time* Heidegger commented that 'Perhaps even readiness-to-hand and equipment have nothing to contribute as ontological clues in interpreting the primitive world; and certainly the ontology of thinghood even less' (82). The ontology of thinghood in which the enduring, definite present-at-hand shoves the ready-to-hand into the unnoticed background is even more removed from the world of myth and magic.

5.3 Nearing as the Fourth Dimension of Time

Presencing has a special relationship to the present, but, nonetheless, it is not the present or any one horizon or ecstasis of time. Presencing is a specific instance of what Heidegger calls the fourth dimension of the Time of being or 'nearing.' Nearing is the way the other three dimensions come together to create a unified context for the understanding of being, and presencing is the specific way of nearing in our culture's understanding of being. In analogy I suggest we call the specific instantiation of the fourth dimension found in mythological cultures, or their way of nearing, 'pasting.'

Presencing as a kind of nearing involves the way the future, having-been, and the present are related to each other. Heidegger suggests that both what-has-been and what-is-to-come have 'a manner of presencing and approaching which does not coincide with presencing in the sense of the immediate present . . . Not every presencing is necessarily a present' (TB 13/14). Presencing holds onto what has been but in a sort of 'denial'; it holds onto what-is-to-come but in a sort of 'withholding.' Heidegger adds that this nearing, with its character of denial and withholding, 'unifies in advance the ways in which what has been, what is about to be, and the present reach out toward one another.' In doing this, nearing 'preserves what remains denied in what-has-been, what is withheld in what-is-to-come' (TB 16/16). Such 'denying' and 'withholding' are, I would argue, distinctive to historical happening. Mythological cultures do not happen historically and thus have no past to deny or future to withhold.

We should not think of this 'holding together' of what-has-been and what is to come as that which keeps an individual object 'together' across time past, present, and future, as if it were some sort of inner gravity or species form. Heidegger speaks on the ontological level, the level of our changing understanding of being, not the ontic level of the continuity of specific things such as a particular plant or animal. True, Heidegger sometimes uses ontic examples to illustrate points about our timely dealings with things, and, since three of them are used in essays about Aristotle's conception of *phusis* and causality, it may seem as if his own notion of how things show themselves as presencing is similar to the Aristotelean notion of form as the inner principle of change or is indicative of how things come and go in the momentary present.

However, if we look closely at these examples, such as wine turning to vinegar, a bicycle turning up missing, a silver chalice being made, and a book appearing from a publisher, we can discern an ontological point of quite a different sort. The wine

that turns to vinegar and the bicycle that turns up missing become 'absent' or 'missing' in a way that indicates the distinctive Temporal character of what-is ready-to-hand and the way things shift from being ready-to-hand to being unready-to-hand or present-at-hand (AP 266/296f.). The 'form' according to which the silver chalice is made indicates how nature can be converted to the ready-to-hand, or how something is made for a purpose, and the nature of a work of art.

In the case of the silver chalice, Heidegger notes that its creation – its coming to be – is ultimately dependent on the revealing which the Greeks called '*aletheia*.' This unconcealing lets nature, the ready-to-hand, and art works show up as what they are (QCT 11f./15). The being of one single thing, the silver chalice, is dependent on the whole network of cultural practices which articulates the interrelationships of natural material and artifacts, household wares and ceremonial objects, everyday activities and religious rituals, class status and occupational roles, and so forth. Similarly, a book can appear and in its presence provoke our concern (WICT 202/123) because of the whole network of authors, publishers, freight carriers, bookstores, advertisers, readers, and so on.

Thus, presencing 'holds together' as past, present, and future not individual things but the whole network of practices embodying our understanding of being and the different domains of what-is with their own ways of being present and absent. The sort of 'coming to be' at issue is ontological, not ontic, but it is also historical and not just concerned with the relations within the different domains of what-is. The understanding of being changes across time; being itself is Temporal. Nearing as the fourth dimension of the Time of being has to do with the way our understanding of the being of what-is 'hangs together' through the centuries, giving us a culture rather than a chaos and a history rather than a jumble of events. Being reveals itself in a Temporal way in the being of what-is, not just in the domains of what-is. *Idea*, *ousia*, *actualitas*, *ens creatum*, subjects confronting objects, and the will to power all come to presence, not just the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand, nature and language, or chalices and vinegar.

As noted above, Heidegger describes nearing, the fourth dimension of the Time of being, as having the character of 'denial and withholding.' It 'keeps open the approach out of the future by withholding it in the coming of the present.'[22] Nearing also 'preserves what remains denied in what-has-been' (TB 15/16). As we have seen, the future dimension contains concealed possibilities which lay out the path our understanding of being may follow. But the dimension of having-been is not put behind us as something over and done. Our understanding of our 'to come' encompasses where we have 'come from.' These two dimensions make each other what they are, and their reciprocal relation releases the present (TB 13/14).

We can illustrate this sort of Temporal 'holding together' of future, past, and present with an example from the recent history of being. Heidegger remarks about Nietzsche's insight into the being of what-is:

---

22 The word 'approach' translates Heidegger's '*Ankommen*,' which plays off the future as 'to come' or '*Zukunft*.'

> Nietzsche uses 'nihilism' as the name for the historical movement that he was the first to recognize and that already governed the previous century while defining the century yet to come, the movement whose essential interpretation he concentrates in the terse sentence 'God is dead.'
>
> (N4 4/3 2f.)

Nihilism was already governing the cultural practices of the previous century, yet even Nietzsche's contemporaries clung to the belief that God gave a purpose to everything. What-has-been as God's creation still had a hold on people, though their own activities 'denied' this view 'in practice' while they insisted on it 'in theory.' People still gave lip-service to the old beliefs, still attended church, and so on, but it was evident from their daily life that the world was no longer a sacred place. Correlatively, their daily practices in the wake of the Industrial Revolution gave a glimpse of the technological domination of nature that was yet to come.

We should recall Heidegger's claim that only because ontological propositions are Temporal propositions 'can and must they be *a priori* propositions.'[23] The different domains of what-is show up in the cultural practices as having a particular being before they are recognized as such by the authentic insight of Dasein: 'we recognize being only later or maybe even not at all' (BPP 324/462). Thus, things must have been showing up in a nihilistic way before Nietzsche could have his insight into the burgeoning practices of the late nineteenth century. It is not obvious what it means to say that things show up in a nihilistic way, so perhaps a simpler example should be drawn from the beginning of the modern epoch rather than the end, and I shall leave a detailed discussion of nihilism until Section 7.2. Descartes and Galileo did not just invent the idea that the essential characteristics of things could be translated into numbers. The cultural practices, especially in the economic realm, had already started to treat things as mathematically quantifiable. The breakdown of the medieval barter system, which exchanged quality for quality, and the increasing use of money, which translated goods into numerical quantity, prepared the ground for the subsequent insight into the being of what-is.[24]

The Temporality of being is the source of the historical revelation of the being of what-is, which, for the last 2500 years has moved within the circuit of presencing. Why presencing? As we have seen, in a way this is to ask for an explanation of the new orientation toward the ready-to-hand, and Heidegger seems to think that there is ultimately no answer to this question. It is also to ask why we thought 'to be' was to be here and now. An answer to this must also consider the shift from taking things as ready-to-hand to contemplating them as present at hand since here lies the origin of our conception of time as a series of 'nows' in which things are observed. And Heidegger does offer us an explanation, or at least a description, of this transition, which is the transition from pre-Socratic philosophy to Plato which we will examine in Chapter 6.[25]

---

23 For the introductory remarks about this notion, see Section 0.4.

24 We will return to these points in Chapter 7 when we discuss the modern epoch. [Chapter 7 is available online at *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/Q_White.htm*. – Editor's note.]

25 [Chapter 6 is available online at *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/Q_White.htm*. – Editor's note.]

It is worth noting now, however, that any general explanation, or even just description, of our understanding of being as presencing must consider that, during the 2500-year history of being as presencing, philosophy rather than a work of art or poetry has been the primary, or even sole, vehicle for the insight into what-is. Heidegger comments that we are bound to the characterization of being as presencing from the time of its unconcealment as 'something which can be said, that is, can be thought' (TB 7/6).

Perhaps the focus on presencing is a result of expressing the insight into being in words, as the Greek thinkers began to do, or of taking what-is present-at-hand as the model for every sort of entity, both intimately tied to philosophizing with its reflective stance toward things. We will examine this issue in the next two chapters.[26] But Heidegger insists that it would be a mistake to think that the being of what-is means, for all time, the presencing of what-is-present. Not that he himself investigates the other ways that the being of what-is might appear in other, for example mythic, cultures. He implies that determining the nature of presencing is quite enough to keep him busy (WICT 235f./143).

5.4 The Appropriation

Now that we have some concrete idea of what Heidegger means by presencing and the Time of being, his notion of the Appropriation will not seem quite so obscure. Indeed, this idea does not really add anything new to our discussion but rather provides us with a way of talking about certain aspects of the phenomena that we have already examined.

The primordial Time which determines being as presence is not, Heidegger argues in 'Time and Being,' the mysterious 'it' of one of his favorite expressions concerning being, 'it gives being.' This sentence indicates that being 'is' but avoids this verb that comes into question in the inquiry into being.[27] Taking the grammar of his German colloquialism too seriously, Heidegger argues that the 'it' which 'gives' being also gives Time; it gives both being and Time in their interrelation. The 'it,' he concludes, is 'the Appropriation.' Heidegger says: 'What determines both time and being in what is proper to them, that is, in their belonging together, we call the Appropriation' (TB 19/20).[28]

---

26 [Chapters 6 and 7 are available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* – Editor's note.]

27 Heidegger says '*es gibt Sein*,' relying on a colloquialism. English does not have an idiom exactly comparable to '*es gibt*.' The English translation of the phrase as 'there is,' while adequate in meaning, makes use of the 'questionable' verb. But the expression is analogous to the English sentence 'It is raining.' (If we asked, 'what is the 'it' that is raining?,' we would be taking the grammar of the sentence too seriously, as Heidegger seems to do in his argument.)

28 'Appropriation' is the common translation of Heidegger's technical term '*Ereignis*.' Its aptness is more a matter of its nested root 'proper' than its literal meaning; this root makes possible the wordplay apparent in this sentence. I capitalize the term 'Appropriation' in order to remind the reader of its technical origin.

Explicit discussion of the Appropriation is unique to Heidegger's later works, but the idea of something more fundamental which puts Time and being into relationship is not incompatible with anything said about either element in *Being and Time*. Indeed, if he had gone on to discuss Temporality as the meaning of being, the plausible next question could have been, what is the meaning of this primordial Time, that is, what makes it possible? As Heidegger remarked in the Introduction to *Being and Time*:

> In any investigation in this field where the 'thing itself is deeply veiled,' one must take pains not to overestimate the results. For in such an inquiry one is constantly compelled to face the possibility of disclosing an even more primordial and more universal horizon from which we may draw the answer to the question, what is 'being'?
>
> (36L)

As he later commented: in the question of being, horizons form only to dissolve.[29]

Heidegger may have only glimpsed this deeper level and not have been prepared to push the investigation of *Being and Time* back to it when he sketched out the project of that work. He does later say that the 'relations and connections constituting the essential structure of the Appropriation' were not worked out until 1936–1938 (TB 43/46). We should take this idea of 'constituting' quite literally: the Appropriation is not some kind of thing, not even a 'thing' in the loose sense of an event in time, as Heidegger's term '*Ereignis*' suggests. It is a matter of certain 'relations and connections,' and these were at least adumbrated in *Being and Time* even if they were not brought to light explicitly.

Heidegger announces that the term '*das Ereignis*' can no more be translated than the Greek '*logos*' or Chinese '*tao*' (ID 36/101). This seems presumptuous. The word itself is quite ordinary; in common speech it means 'event' or 'occurrence.' Heidegger picks it for its etymological resonance and turns it into his own technical term. What the term names may be ineffable or inexpressible in propositional speech, as Heidegger argues it is, but yet the word itself is a term of art without the traditional infusion of meaning which makes '*logos*' and '*tao*' so hard to translate. What an English word cannot duplicate and what makes '*Ereignis*' hard to translate is precisely its etymological resonance. For better or for worse, to grasp its meaning we must deal with these reverberations and wade through a thicket of Heideggerian language.

First of all, we should ignore the ordinary meaning of the term '*Ereignis*.' The Appropriation is not an event or occurrence in the usual sense. It does not happen in time, and its happening cannot be marked off by a span of time, even one with indefinite boundaries. Rather than meaning 'event,' Heidegger says, the term '*Ereignis*' should be taken as indicating an extending and sending which opens and preserves (TB 20/21). The Appropriation sends being which opens and preserves the clearing that is Dasein.[30]

---

29 David Farrell Krell quotes this remark in his editorial remarks in his translation of one of the *Nietzsche* volumes. See N4, p. 284.

30 In Heidegger's words, the play in this sentence would be between '*schicken*' (to send) and '*Geschick*' (destiny).

This jargon simply points to the fact that at a time in our past our cultural practices lead to the raising of the question of being and the delimitation of a range of possible answers, and, ever since then, we have continued to raise and answer the question anew in response to the changing configuration of what-is. The notion of the Appropriation does not explain why the changes come about; it only gives us a way of talking about them that connects with other elements in Heidegger's typology. In this discussion we will go with the flow of Heidegger's story, saving reflections on the usefulness of its vocabulary until Section 7.5.[31]

The most obvious etymological connection we should keep in mind when thinking about the meaning of '*Ereignis*' is its relation to '*eigen*,' which means 'proper,' 'own,' or 'characteristic.' We already encountered this word as the root of '*Eigentlichkeit*' ('authenticity') and '*eigenst*' ('ownmost'). We should remember the root meaning of '*eigen*' as 'proper' for our translation of '*Ereignis*' as 'Appropriation.' The related verb '*eignen*' means 'to be adapted for' or 'to be characteristic of' or 'to belong to.' The meanings of two other derivative verbs also come into play: '*ereignen*' means 'to occur' or 'to come to pass,' and '*aneignen*' means 'to appropriate' or 'to acquire.' Thus '*Ereignis*' suggests a coming to pass in which something comes into its own or into that which is proper to it. Drawing on these meanings Heidegger comments:

> In the phrase 'being as Appropriation,' the 'as' means: being, to let-presencing, is sent in the coming to pass of Appropriation, time is handed over in the coming to pass of Appropriation. Time and being come into their own in the Appropriation.
>
> (TB 22/22f.)

Time and being come to pass by coming into their own in the Appropriation.

Through the Appropriation we also come into our ownmost being as Dasein. The Appropriation must appropriate it:

> Because being and time are there only in appropriating, the Appropriation has the specific character of bringing man into his own as the one who becomes aware of being by standing in authentic time. Thus appropriated, man belongs to the Appropriation.
>
> (TB 23/24)

Thus appropriated, human being becomes authentically Dasein.

Again Heidegger intends to capture this aspect of the activity of the *Ereignis* by the etymological connections of the term. '*Er-eignen*' may visibly appear to be derived from '*eigen*' as 'own' or 'proper,' but Heidegger also connects the verb to an etymological source in an archaic verb '*eräugnen*.' Formed from '*augen*' or 'eyes,' '*eräugnen*' means 'to place before the eyes' or 'to catch sight of.' Heidegger says that '*ereignen*' means primordially '*er-äugnen, d.h. erblicken, im Blicken auf sich rufen, an-eignen.*'[32] The *er-eignen* that brings Time and being into their own involves

---

31 [Chapter 7 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/CWhite.htm* – Editor's note.]

32 This sentence is left out of the English translation, perhaps because the wordplay is so difficult to capture in English. Compare ID, p. 36 and p. 100.

a catching sight of, that is, a perceiving, a summoning of insight, an appropriating. As Heidegger says elsewhere, playing on the etymological associations: 'Appropriation is a bringing to sight that brings into its own (*Ereignis ist eignende Eräugnis*)' (QCT 45/44).

In this way the archaic word '*eräugnen*' serves as the etymological bridge connecting the *Ereignis* and the *Augenblick* or moment of insight. Insight is in fact the 'happening' in which Dasein lets itself be taken up in the Appropriation of being. It is not so much that the Appropriation and the moment of insight are two different phenomena as that they are the same phenomenon viewed from the two different perspectives of an investigation of being and an investigation of Dasein. Dasein comes into its own in the moment of insight, and being comes into its own in the Appropriation; but the two phenomena are at least mutually dependent, and we could not have one without the other. In one passage Heidegger even seems to equate the two: in one sentence he refers to 'the Appropriation of the thought of the eternal recurrence,' and in the next sentence he describes Nietzsche's eternal recurrence as the 'temporality of the *Augenblick* (moment of insight)' (N2 140/402). In another work, a marginal note attached to a discussion of the term 'authenticity' instructs us to think of *Eigentlichkeit* as the '*Eignen des Er-eignen*,' that is, as belonging to the coming to pass of the *Ereignis* (LH 212/332). The *Ereignis* elicits the cultural practices into which the *Augenblick* gives us insight when we make them our own by bringing them into explicit focus in a creative work.

As the 'it' which gives being, the Appropriation 'rules as the destiny of being. Its history comes to language in the words of the essential thinkers' (LH 215/335). The Appropriation sends itself to Dasein, and Dasein receives it explicitly in the moment of insight:

> That which has the character of destiny moves, in itself, at any given time, toward a special moment of insight which sends it into another destiny, in which, however, it is not simply submerged and lost.
>
> (QCT 37/37f.)

The special moment involves both a new projection of being and hence furthers destiny, and a repetition of having-been and hence a preservation and continuity of destiny. The ways of world-building 'at work' in authentic historicality can be seen as the coming to pass of Appropriation. For example, in the addendum to the *Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger comments: 'Art is considered neither an area of cultural achievement nor an appearance of spirit; it belongs to the Appropriation by way of which the "meaning of being" can alone be determined' (PLT 86/73).

Now we may well take this language of 'giving' and 'sending' with a grain of salt, but it seems relatively harmless when we explore the way in which the Appropriation brings about the destiny of being. In Heidegger's later thought, as we saw above, destiny does not indicate some mechanical determinism but rather the way in which being is revealed to us in the Appropriation. Neither the Appropriation nor being is some particular thing that endures through changes. Being does not have a history in the same way that a person or a plot of land has a history. What is history like in

the history of being is determined by the way in which being happens, that is, as Heidegger would put it, by the way the Appropriation gives being (TB 7f./8). Imitating him further, though, we could also say that there is nothing – no thing – which gives or sends. The Appropriation refers to the whole configuration of being and Time.

Western culture did not just invent metaphysics back in Ancient Greece; it has lived metaphysics for 2500 years. The unfolding of this history lies in what Heidegger describes as the way the Appropriation gives being as Temporal: 'In every phase of metaphysics there has been visible at any particular time a portion of the way that the destiny of being prepares a path for itself over and beyond whatever is in sudden epochs of truth' (QCT 54/210). The truth to which Heidegger refers is truth as *aletheia*, unconcealedness. The 'epochs' of this disclosure are not discrete spans of time to be measured by years but rather the changing ways being shows itself. The immediate locus for this showing is the cultural practices, to which respond the works of art, thinking, poetry, and statecraft which explicitly set forth the changing understanding of being and give us insight into it.

Heidegger picks the term 'epoch' to describe these revelations of being because its Greek ancestor '*epoche*' indicates a 'holding back,' in particular a 'holding back of itself.' Being reveals itself by holding itself back. This notion is amplified by Heidegger in a number of ways. First, the destiny of being as 'what-has-been-sent'[33] always includes 'more' than the way being reveals itself in any particular understanding of being. As Heidegger says, 'in its openness being itself manifests and conceals itself, yields itself and withdraws; at the same time, the truth of being does not exhaust itself in Dasein . . .' (Way 271/373f.). Being is more than just the 'what it is to be' revealed in Dasein's 'there.' As suggested above, Heidegger thinks that being always prepares a path for itself over and beyond whatever is at any particular time, a process we glimpsed in the case of nihilism. The cultural practices point us in a certain general direction. Authentic Dasein finds itself on this path when it discovers what *can* be in a time and makes the future present.

Thus, the revelations of being do not come in discrete succession. As Heidegger puts it: 'In the destiny of being, there is never a mere sequence of things one after another.' We did not have a discrete Greek world and then a medieval one, next the modern world and then finally the contemporary technological one. Rather than these isolated worlds, Heidegger goes on to add, 'there is always a passing by and simultaneity of the early and the late' (PLT 184f./177). Worlds overlap; having-been and the 'to come' both are held in presencing, even if in the mode of denial and withdrawal. This is why Dasein can have one existentiell understanding of being, finding its world and what-is articulated by one way to be, and then, in authentic insight, discover being revealed in a new way. The new world which is coming to be is disclosed to authentic Dasein as already there. Heidegger remarks that 'The Greek thinkers already knew this when they said: that which is earlier with regard to the arising that holds sway becomes manifest to us only later' (QCT 22/26).

Heidegger does not mean to suggest that there is any kind of causality or determinism operating 'between' the epochs of being. We cannot say *why* the history

33 Remember that Heidegger's term '*Geschick*' etymologically suggests this meaning.

of being is in such a way, only *that* it is (TB 52/56). Heidegger comments: 'The epochs can never be derived from one another or even reduced to the course of a continuous process.' What continuity the epochs do have comes from their source in the Appropriation and 'does not run between them like a ribbon connecting them.'[34] The primordial leap which brought being into question let being come to pass in a way that prepares the ground for all future revelations, but, dependent on being as we are, we are never in a position either to predict the next revelation or to see the past as necessary.

So far, we have been discussing the way being conceals and reveals itself in the epochs of its history, but we have not fully captured Heidegger's notion of being's self-withdrawal in the Appropriation. His second point is that being never really reveals *itself*, at least not *as* itself or as the background practices. It holds itself back 'in favor of the discernibility of the gift, i.e., of being in regard to the grounding of what-is' (TB 9/9). What the Appropriation sends is being, but what is revealed is not being itself. Being lets what-is show up as what it is, but being gives its gift while itself remaining concealed. The contribution of the background practices recedes unnoticed in favor of the things that are.

Even the way being shows up as the being of what-is, for example, as *idea* or will to power, involves a self-concealment. The being of what-is does not show itself in the same way things do. As we have been seeing, this being is something that changes from epoch to epoch. Heidegger comments:

> As the ground, being brings what-is to its actual presencing . . . In accordance with the actual kind of presence, the ground has the character of grounding as the ontic causation of the real, as the transcendental making possible of the objectivity of objects, as the dialectical mediation of the movement of the Absolute Spirit, as the historical process of production, as the will to power positing values.
>
> (TB 56/62)

With Kant, for instance, the transcendental unity of apperception made possible the objectivity of objects and our experience of them, but this transcendental unity could not itself be experienced. It is not an object in the field of our experience but what makes that field possible. Being gives us the being of what-is which in turn gives us individual things, but neither sort of being reveals itself directly in the way that things do. Only the particular things show themselves as what they are. Grasping the being of what-is requires a special kind of insight, not just eyes and ears. Heidegger credits the pre-Socratics with recognizing the necessity of this insight, as we will see with our explication of Parmenides's notion of *noein* in Section 6.3.[35]

Now this may make it sound as if the reason that the being of what-is can change and that the Appropriation can 'send' it in different ways is that it is only a fanciful idea of ours to begin with, that there is really 'nothing' there. But Heidegger is not

---

34 Martin Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), p. 154.

35 [Chapter 6 is available online at: *http://www.scu.edu/philosophy/6_White.htm*. Editor's note.]

an idealist or a subjectivist who thinks that what-is is simply the product of the activity of our own minds or our overheated imagination. There are, to draw another example from the above quote, 'ontic causes' and real relationships between things. But a certain kind of context of concern had to 'come to pass' before we noticed such things. As Heidegger comments about Newton's laws:

> Through Newton the laws became true; and with them what-is became accessible in itself to Dasein. Once what-is has been uncovered it shows itself precisely as what already was beforehand. Such uncovering is the kind of being which belongs to 'truth.'
>
> (227)

Truth as unconcealedness sets up a context of concern in which truth as correspondence holds sway. These contexts change with the Temporal disclosure of being, but this does not mean that we perceive reality as changing. We are already dealing with things in a certain way when we come to notice their being, and, when we do, we perceive it as having been there all along. Plato, the first metaphysician, noticed the character of this objectification of our Temporally *a priori* understanding of being and described it as 'recollecting' (BPP 326/463f.). Nietzsche, the last metaphysician, described it as the 'eternal return of the same.'

Newtonian science, to pursue the above example, rests on a particular revelation of the being of what-is which presents things as knowable and calculable in a particular way. Sounding like Thomas Kuhn, Heidegger claims that the particular terms and theories of ancient and modern science are not comparable given the underlying difference in their understanding of reality. Greek science, for example, the study of nature in Aristotle, cannot be called 'inexact' in contrast to the exactness of modern science since, given the ancient understanding of what-is, it could not and need not be exact. Heidegger continues:

> Neither can we say that the Galilean doctrine of freely falling bodies is true and that Aristotle's teaching, that light bodies strive upward, is false; for the Greek understanding of the essence of body and place and of the relation between the two rests on a different interpretation of what-is and hence conditions a correspondingly different kind of seeing and questioning of natural events.

He adds that, just as we would not presume to say that Shakespeare is a better poet than Aeschylus, we should not assume that the modern understanding of what-is is more correct than that of the Greeks (QCT 117/77).[36]

Obviously this sort of relativism may leave Heidegger open for the same sort of criticism that has been leveled against Kuhn by Suppe, Scheffler, Shapere, and

---

36 For the common philosophical reaction to the sort of claim Heidegger is making about the objectivity of science, see Richard Rorty's discussion of the anxiety of not being able to distinguish science from poetry, literature, and so on, in *Philosophy and The Mirror of Nature*, Chapter VII, Section 4, 'Objectivity as Correspondence and as Agreement,' pp. 333–342, and the quotation from his book which appears at the end of my Introduction's Section 0.3.

others.[37] Whether these criticisms are compelling, or even directed at an accurate version of Kuhn's position, is another question. In Heidegger's case, we should at least note that he does not reject the notion of truth as correspondence, and therefore he allows for scientific statements to be true or false in regard to 'fitting the facts.' He just argues that this notion of truth depends on a more basic notion of truth as unconcealment. 'Facts' or states of affairs only appear in a background context in which things show up as mattering in one way or another. Relative to a given context, for example, the one in which there is concern for efficient causes, Newton's science is true and Aristotle's is false. Heidegger is really only claiming that the contexts themselves cannot be judged as corresponding to the facts or more accurately representing the way things are.

What interests us here, however, is not Heidegger's theory as a philosophy of science, adequate or inadequate, but rather how theories relate to an understanding of being. In this regard, Kuhn notes an important connection when he says that the theory that all natural phenomena could be explained by reference to corpuscular size, shape, motion, and interaction, which came into dominance after Descartes's scientific writings, involved a 'nest of commitments' both 'metaphysical and methodological.'[38] These commitments are not just in the theory but in practice.

The corpuscular theory of nature had been originally proposed by the Greek atomists. Why didn't the view take hold then, amongst thinkers, poets, and the people at large, in the way that it did in the seventeenth century? Heidegger's tacit answer is that the practices both to back up the theory and authentically set it forth were missing. The theory was conceivable as an idea, but it could not be put 'into practice' because it was not 'there' in the practices to begin with. What-is was simply not showing itself as quantifiable or calculable in advance as it later would, forming an accommodating background for the corpuscular theory whose postulated entities are defined by their numerical weight, shape, and motion. In the seventeenth century not only philosophers and scientists but people in general had started treating things differently; what-is had started presenting itself differently.

In regard to these contexts of concern, we can summarize the essential points conveyed by Heidegger's notion of the Appropriation of Time and being in three propositions: (1) the contexts of Western culture all share a Temporal orientation toward the present and items of use; (2) they change historically; and (3) they do so in a process of ordered, Temporal development.

Elaborating upon this last point by bringing in one of Heidegger's less familiar notions, we can say that the 'appropriation' is complemented by 'expropriation.'[39]

---

37 See, for example, Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967) and 'Vision and Revolution,' *Philosophy of Science*, 39: 366–374; Dudley Shapere, 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,' *Philosophical Review*, 73: 383–394 and 'The Paradigm Concept,' *Science*, 172: 706–709 (14 May 1971); and Frederick Suppe, *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, 2nd edition (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

38 Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, p. 41.

39 In Heidegger's words, '*Ereignis*' is complemented by '*Enteignis*.'

Expropriation is not something other than Appropriation but rather how Appropriation 'moves itself along.' Heidegger comments:

> Insofar as the destiny of being lies in the extending of time, and time along with being lies in the Appropriation, Appropriation makes manifest its peculiar property, i.e., that it takes away that which is its own from boundless unconcealment. Thought of in terms of the Appropriation, this means: in that way it expropriates itself from itself. Expropriation belongs to Appropriation as such. By this expropriation, Appropriation does not abandon itself but rather preserves what is its own.
>
> (TB 22f./23)

Expropriation indicates a kind of 'motion' in the Appropriation that keeps the history of being moving.[40] Once the conflict in the interpretation of the being of what-is has been engendered in a work which takes one stance toward being rather than another, it cannot be put to rest. Every interpretation leaves out something about the appearance of being and thus leaves something unsaid which the next creator will try to say. Yet in this saying the new creator preserves the old creation.

The notion of the Appropriation and its complementary expropriation refers us to the fact that Western civilization has kept 'moving' – not to say 'progressing' – as no other civilization has. We may be inclined to think of this history as a joint product of accident and invention, as if certain fortuitous technological discoveries have carried the momentum of social change, for example, the development of iron and other metals, steam power, the compass, and so on. Yet China, for example, had gunpowder, steel, pistons, and looms hundreds or even thousands of years before the West did, and their use remained isolated and restricted and the culture relatively static. Heidegger's notion of Appropriation and expropriation does not really explain why Western culture has been so distinctive but rather directs our attention to the 'relations and connections' that have made this movement not just possible but inevitable. We will explore this idea in the rest of the book.

In anticipation of the discussion to follow, though, we should note that Heidegger thinks that in the contemporary age we stand in need of the Appropriation, not just a new epoch in the metaphysical understanding of the being of what-is. He thinks that the history of being as presencing has run its course and that we have run out of possibilities for new metaphysical conceptions of the being of what-is. The modern epoch is in need of a new infusion of life, and Heidegger hopes that it will come in a transformation of being.

---

40 In a later marginal note in *Being and Time* Heidegger correlates expropriation and the anxiety or 'not-at-home-ness' involved in *Entschlossenheit* or resoluteness (189, 443*). Since the notion of *Enteignis* (Expropriation) does not really add anything to the notion of *Ereignis* (Appropriation), perhaps the term was prompted by the parallel with the '*Ent-*' prefix of *Entschlossenheit* and by a desire to fill out the parallel between Temporality and timeliness mentioned in Section 5.1. Resoluteness is a kind of 'motion' in Dasein's being just as expropriation is a kind of motion in being. In resoluteness Dasein comes into its own being, and the resolution of the moment of insight is its way of 'expropriating' its own being as the 'there' in which being is disclosed.

Heidegger indicates in his essay 'Time and Being' that we must carefully distinguish two different senses of the phrase 'transformation of being.' On the one hand, there are the various 'transformations' of being in the history of being as presencing or the 'epochal' stages of metaphysics. On the other hand, there is the transformation of being itself or of being as presencing which would send us out of the metaphysics of presence and into the Appropriation. What comes into question in Heidegger's later work is being as presence, and the leap which is under consideration there is as radical a leap as that of the primordial beginning which launched Dasein on the path of metaphysics. In comparison, the authentic insight of the thinkers, artists, poets, and statesmen of the last 2500 years have been small steps on a continuous path. In the later works Heidegger does not just describe how those small steps came about; he tries to prepare us for the radical leap of thought.

We might be tempted to say that we will be transformed by a new or another Appropriation, another and different Appropriation of Time and being. Heidegger insists, however, that the Appropriation is not and cannot be numerically plural: 'What it indicates happens only in the singular, no, not in any number, but uniquely' (ID 36/101). The Appropriation is not something that can be discriminated as a kind of thing or something of which there could be more than one. To do this, we would have to be able to identify what it *is* or understand its being, but of course this is precisely what is given *by* the Appropriation. The Appropriation makes what is what it is, and thus it itself cannot be something which is. We cannot even say what the Appropriation 'is.' Heidegger can only point at it but not say anything about it in communicative statements, which of course are couched in subject predicate form and make use of the verb in question (TB 25f./27). Nonetheless, Heidegger comments that 'The Appropriation is that realm, vibrating in itself, through which man and being reach each other in their essence . . .' Both being and humankind will win themselves anew by 'losing those qualities with which metaphysics has endowed them' (ID 37/102). When this happens, we will find ourselves in a new beginning.

5.5 Language and Death

It is not surprising that Heidegger has to resort to such allusive language in order to talk about the relationship between being and Dasein since ultimately the relationship intrinsically involves the articulate order upon which all speech is based. Language is not very well equipped to talk about the conditions for its own functioning. Ordinarily, we just let language function and do not attend to its workings. As John Searle comments, making a similar point: 'The price we pay for deliberately pomp against ordinary language is metaphor, oxymoron, and outright neologism.'[11]

Language, says Heidegger, is 'the house of being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home.' (LH 217). In an interview he suggests to his Japanese interlocutor that, with their different languages, their cultures occupy different such houses and hence belong to

11 Searle, *Intentionality*, p. 157

a different truth of being (OWL 5/90). In Heidegger's use, the term 'language' refers ambiguously to both language in the ordinary sense and the articulated cultural ordering which was called 'discourse' in *Being and Time*[42] and which we might now, after the turn to being, view as the ordering of being to which discourse responds.

Even within Western culture this articulated order has changed dramatically and hence our use of language has undergone revolutions. For Heidegger, it is no coincidence that literacy begins in Greece about the same time as metaphysics, that a new, Christian understanding of being changes our relationship to the written word and invests it with ultimate authority, or that printing arises about the same time that modern philosophy and science do. If these new relationships to language do not build new houses of being, they at least extensively remodel the inherited one. The nature of the connection between these changes in our use of language and our particular understanding of being would require an extended discussion, one for which we will not take time in this book.

Not surprisingly, even language bears an essential relationship to death:

> Mortals are they who can experience death as death. Animals cannot do so. But animals cannot speak either. The essential relation between death and language flashes up before us, but remains still unthought.
>
> (OWL 107/215)

Language can draw us into its possibilities of significance and transform us just as death can. Heidegger comments that 'Language is much more thoughtful and open than we are' (HS 127/203). But there will always remain something 'unthought' about language, as about being. We dwell in language in the same way we dwell in our skills. That we cannot know the nature of language, at least not know it according to the traditional concept of explicit cognition, is not a defect in our abilities any more than finitude itself is. In fact, says Heidegger, it is an advantage by which we gain admittance to that special realm where we can dwell as *mortals* (OWL 134/266).

For Heidegger language is not simply the utterance of a living creature, and its essence can never be adequately thought if we only pay attention to its symbolic character or its ability to signify. He is far, far from thinking that, as Quine claims, the 'two basic purposes of language' are 'getting others to do what we want them to, and learning from others what we want to know.'[43] Instead, Heidegger calls language the 'lighting-concealing advent of being itself' (LH 206/326).[44] This language is not brought to words in everyday speaking, but only because of it can we speak a language 'and so deal with something and negotiate something by speaking.' This fundamental language manifests its linguistic character precisely when we cannot find the right word for something that concerns us (OWL 59/161).

---

42 Heidegger's word is '*Rede*.'

43 W.V. Quine and J.S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief* (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 125.

44 The phrase 'lighting-concealing advent' tries to capture Heidegger's '*lichtend-verbergende Ankunft*.'

We perceive an articulate order that we cannot find the words to describe. Here, too, there is a 'saying' but one without words, a saying which is essentially a showing. 'All signs arise from a showing within whose realm and for whose purposes they can be signs' (OWL 123/254).

When the issue is to put into language something which has never yet been spoken, 'then everything depends on whether language gives or withholds the appropriate word. Such is the case with the poet' (OWL 59/161f.). The thinker, too, we might add. This is not just a case of finding words in the ordinary sense but the deeper one of an articulate showing as well. Heidegger argues that the greatest thought of both poet and thinker is the 'unspoken' and 'unthought' message of his writings.[45] Authentic insight lies deeper than the spoken or written word, and it has already become the banal chatter of the Anyone by the time it can be stated in mere words. Poets themselves do not, as is often thought, use a higher form of ordinary language, says Heidegger. Rather everyday language is a kind of 'fallen' poem expressing the now well-worn understanding of being.[46]

Heidegger thinks that Greek language in both the sense of showing and saying was extraordinarily rich with 'appropriate words' or it never would have provoked the attempt to put the unthought into words. Heidegger is often criticized for arguing that the requisite appropriate word is simply the copula verb 'to be.'[47] Derrida, for instance, is right to point out the difficulty of proving that 'to be' is unique to Indo-European languages or of determining whether other languages do or do not have an equivalent linguistic device.[48] Even in Greek and Latin one can omit the copula and express a proposition by simply juxtaposing a name and a general term. Hebrew and Chinese supposedly have no copula verb at all. Yet Heidegger's position is more subtle than these criticisms suggest. He himself argues that no language can exist without expressing the 'to be' in some way. Speaking about things at all presupposes that we understand their being (IM 82/62). So we must look deeper than this if we are to find what was special about the Greeks.

---

45 For the comment about poets, see OWL 160/37f.; for the one about thinkers, see *Der Satz vom Grund*, p. 123f.

46 See PLT 208/31.

47 For a detailed example of such an argument in quite a different style, see Charles Kahn's 'The Greek Verb "To Be" and the Concept of Being,' *Foundations of Language*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (August, 1966), pp. 245–265, and his book length study *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel, 1973).

48 See Jacques Derrida's 'The Supplement of Copula: Philosophy Before Linguistics,' *Margins of Philosophy*, translation and notes by Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982), pp. 175–205.

Bibliography

Adamczewski, Z. (1970), 'On the Way to Being (Reflecting on Conversations with Martin Heidegger),' in J. Sallis (ed.), *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Aristotle (1996), *Poetics*, trans. M. Heath, New York: Penguin.

Becker, E. (1973), *The Denial of Death*, New York: Free Press.

Bernasconi, R. (1993), *Heidegger in Question: The Art of Existing*, Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

Blattner, W. (1994), 'The Concept of Death in *Being and Time*,' *Man and World*, **27**, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 49–70; repr. in H.L. Dreyfus and M.A.Wrathall (eds) (2002), *Heidegger Reexamined, Vol. I, Dasein, Authenticity, and Death*, London: Routledge.

Borges, J.L. (1964), *Other Inquisitions*, trans. R.L.C. Simms, New York: Simon and Schuster.

Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Outline of a Theory of Practices*, trans. R. Nice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, N.O. (1959), *Life Against Death*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Caputo, J.D. (1973), 'Time and Being in Heidegger,' *Modern Schoolman*, **50**: 325 349.

——— (1993), *Demythologizing Heidegger*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Carman, T. (1998), *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

——— (2003), *Heidegger's Analytic: Interpretation, Discourse, and Authenticity in Being and Time*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caudill, W.A. and Weinstein, H. (1969), 'Maternal Care and Infant Behavior in Japan and America,' *Psychiatry*, **32**: 12–43.

——— and Schooler, C. (1973), 'Child Behavior and Child Rearing in Japan and the United States: An Interim Report,' *Journal of Nervous Mental Disease*, **157**: 323–338.

Collins, J. (1952), *The Existentialists, A Critical Study*, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co.

Dannhauser, W. (1982), 'The Trivialization of Friedrich Nietzsche,' *The American Spectator*, **15** (5): 7–13.

Demske, J. (1970), *Being, Man, and Death*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Derrida, J. (1982), *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. A. Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dreyfus, H. (1979), *What Computers Can't Do*, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1991), *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time*, Division I, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 305.

——— (2000), 'Could anything be more intelligible than everyday intelligibility? Reinterpreting division I of *Being and Time* in the light of division II,' in J.E. Faulconer and M.A. Wrathall (eds), *Appropriating Heidegger*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dreyfus, H.L. and Dreyfus, S. (1988), *Mind over Machine: The Power of Human Intuitive Expertise in the Era of the Computer*, New York: Free Press, revised paperback edition.

Dreyfus, H.L. and Spinosa, C. (1997), 'Highway Bridges and Feasts: Heidegger and Borgmann on how to affirm technology,' *Man and World*, Vol. 30.

Edwards, P. (1979), *Heidegger and Death: A Critical Evaluation*, La Salle, IL: The Hegeler Institute.

——— (1975), 'Heidegger on Death as a Possibility,' *Mind*, **84**: 548–566.

——— (1976), 'Heidegger and Death: A Deflationary Critique,' *The Monist*, **59** (2): 161–186.

Farías, V. (1989), *Heidegger and Nazism*, ed. by J. Margolis and T. Rockmore, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ferry, L. and Renaut, A. (1990), *Heidegger and Modernity*, trans. F. Philip, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, M. (1970), *The Order of Things*, New York: Random House.

——— (1984), 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History,' in P. Rabinow (ed.), *Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon Book.

Gadamer, H.G. (1975), *Truth and Method*, New York: Seabury Press.

——— (1983), *Heidegger's Wege*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

——— (1985), 'Wilhelm Dilthey nach 150 Jahren,' in E.W. Orth (ed.), *Dilthey und die Philosophie der Gegenwart*, Freiburg: Alber.

Guignon, C. (1983), *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 135–136.

Hallowell, I. (1955), 'Temporal Orientation in Western Civilization and a Preliterate Society,' in *Culture and Experience*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hammett, J. (1961), *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. R. Manheim, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 2–3.

——— (1977), 'Thinker and Poet: Heidegger, Rilke and Death,' *Soundings*, **60**: 167.

Harries, K. (1978), 'Heidegger as a Political Thinker,' in M. Murray (ed.), *Heidegger and Modern Thought*, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, pp. 304–328.

Haugeland, J. (2000), 'Truth and Finitude: Heidegger's Transcendental Existentialism,' in M.A. Wrathall and J. Malpas (eds), *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honor of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Volume 1*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Havelock, E. (1983), *Language and Thought in Early Greek Philosophy*, ed. K. Robb, La Salle, IL: The Hegeler Institute.

Hegel, G.W.F. (1969), *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller, New York: Humanities Press.

——— (1977), *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, London: Oxford University Press.

Heidegger, M. (1959), *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. R. Manheim, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

——— (1977), *Basic Writings*, ed. D.F. Krell, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1962), *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1996), *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

——— (1957), *Der Satz vom Grund*, Pfullingen: Neske.

——— (1977), 'Der Spruch des Anaximander,' *Holzwege*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 5, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1978), 'Der Zeitbegriff in der Geschichtswissenschaft,' *Frühe Schriften*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 1, ed. P. Jaeger, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1984), *Die Frage nach dem Ding*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 41, ed. P. Jaeger, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1983), *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt – Endlichkeit – Einsamkeit*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vols 29–30, ed. P. Jaeger, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1975), *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 24, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1962), *Die Technik und die Kehre*, Pfullingen: Neske.

——— (1969), *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. J.M. Anderson and E.H. Freund, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1975), *Early Greek Thinking*, trans. D.F. Krell and F.A. Capuzzi, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1953), *Einführung in die Metaphysik*, Tübingen: Niemeyer.

——— (1959), *Gelassenheit*, Pfullingen: Neske.

——— (1970), *Hegel's Concept of Experience*, no translator identified, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1979), *Heraclitus Seminar 1966/67*, trans. C. Seibert, University of Alabama: University of Alabama Press.

——— (1970), *Heraklit: Seminar Wintersemester 1966/67*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1985), *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, trans. T. Kisiel, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— (1969), *Identity and Difference*, trans. J. Stambaugh, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1962), *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. J. Churchill, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— (1973), *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1978), 'Logos,' 'Moira,' and 'Aletheia,' in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Pfullingen: Neske.

——— (1978), *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Logik im Ausgang von Leibniz*, *Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 26, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1976), 'Nachwort zu "Was Ist Metaphysik,"' in *Wegmarken*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
——— (1973), 'Nietzsche as Metaphysician,' trans. J. Stambaugh, in R. Solomon (ed.), *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Anchor.
——— (1961), *Nietzsche I*, Pfullingen: Neske.
——— (1961), *Nietzsche II*, Pfullingen: Neske.
——— (1982), *Nietzsche: Volume Four, Nihilism*, trans. F. Capuzzi, ed. D.F. Krell, San Francisco: Harper and Row.
——— (1979), *Nietzsche: Volume One, The Will to Power as Art*, trans. and ed. D.F. Krell, San Francisco: Harper and Row.
——— (1987), *Nietzsche: Volume Three, The Will to Power as Knowledge and as Metaphysics*, trans. D.F. Krell, J. Stambaugh, and F. Capuzzi, ed. D.F. Krell, San Francisco: Harper and Row.
——— (1984), *Nietzsche: Volume Two, The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. and ed. D.F. Krell, San Francisco: Harper and Row.
——— (1976), 'Nur noch ein Gott kann uns retten: Spiegel-Gesprach mit Martin Heidegger am 23 September 1966,' *Der Spiegel*, **26**: 267–284.
——— (1976), 'On the Being and Conception of Physis in Aristotle's Physics B, 1,' trans. T. Sheehan, *Man and World*, **19**: 219–270.
——— (1971), *On the Way to Language*, trans. P. Hertz, New York: Harper and Row.
——— (1972), *On Time and Being*, trans. J. Stambaugh, New York: Harper and Row.
——— (1976), 'Only a God can save us: *Der Spiegel*'s interview with Martin Heidegger,' trans. M. Alter and J. Caputo, *Philosophy Today*, **20**: 267–284.
——— (1992), *Parmenides*, trans. A. Schuwer and R. Rojcewicz, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
——— (1962), 'Plato's Doctrine of Truth,' *Philosophy in the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, ed. W. Barrett and H. Aiken, New York: Random House.
——— (1971), *Poetry, Language, Thought*, ed. and trans. A. Hofstadter, New York: Harper and Row.
——— (1967), 'Preface' (Letter to Fr. Richardson), *Heidegger: Through Phenomenology to Thought*, trans. W. Richardson, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
——— (1979), *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs, Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 20, ed. P. Jaeger, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
——— (1972), *Sein und Zeit*, 12th edn, Tübingen: Niemeyer.
——— (1977), *Sein und Zeit*, 14th edn, Tübingen: Niemeyer.
——— (1982), *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. A. Hofstadter, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
——— (1973), *The End of Philosophy*, trans. J. Stambaugh, New York: Harper and Row.
——— (1969), *The Essence of Reasons*, trans. T. Malick, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
——— (1984), *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. M. Heim, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— (1976), *The Piety of Thinking*, trans. J.G. Hart and J.C. Maraldo, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

——— (1977), *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. W. Lovitt, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1975), 'The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics,' in W. Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, 2nd edn, New York: New American Library.

——— (1959), *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Pfullingen: Neske.

——— (1976), 'Vom Wesen und Begriff der Physis. Aristoteles, Physik B, 1,' *Wegmarken, Gesamtausgabe*, Vol. 9, ed. F.W. von Herrmann, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

——— (1961), *Was Heisst Denken?*, Tübingen: Niemeyer.

——— (1967), *What is a Thing?*, trans. W.B. Barton, Jr., and V. Deutsch, Chicago: Henry Regnery Co.

——— (1968), *What Is Called Thinking?*, trans. J.G. Gray and F. Wieck, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1969), *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Henle, P. (1958), *Language, Thought, and Culture*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Hinman, L. (1978), 'Heidegger, Edwards, and Being-toward-Death,' *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, **16** (3): 193–212.

Hochschild, A.R. (1997), *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*, New York: Metropolitan Books.

Hoffman, P. (1986), *Fear and Trembling*, trans. A. Hany, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

——— (forthcoming), 'Dasein and "its" Time,' in H.L. Dreyfus and M.A. Wrathall (eds), *Blackwell Companion to Heidegger*.

Husserl, E. (1965), *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Q. Lauer, New York: Harper and Row.

Kahn, C. (1966), 'The Greek Verb "To Be" and the Concept of Being,' *Foundations of Language*, **2** (3): 245–265.

——— (1973), *The Verb 'Be' in Ancient Greek*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Kant, I. (1955), *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics*, trans. T. Abbott, London: Longmans, Green and Co.

——— (1965), *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. N.K. Smith, New York: St Martin's Press.

Kierkegaard, S. (1954), *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

——— (1957), *The Concept of Dread*, trans. W. Lowrie, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

——— (1962), *The Present Age*, trans. A. Dru, New York: Harper and Row.

——— (1980), *The Concept of Anxiety, Kierkegaard's Writings*, Vol. 8, trans. R. Thomte, ed. A. Anderson, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kisiel, T. (1993), *The Genesis of Heidegger's 'Being and Time'*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

——— and van Buren, J. (eds) (1994), *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

——— (1992), 'The genesis of *Being and Time*,' *Man and World*, **25** (1): 21–37.

Kosinski, J. (1970), *Being There*, San Diego: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich.

Kuhn, T. (1970), *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

——— (1977), *The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Llewelyn, J. (1983), 'The "Possibility" of Heidegger's Death,' *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, **14** (2): 127–138.

McCormick, P. (1975), 'A Note on "Time and Being,"' *Philosophy Today*, **19**: 95–99.

Machiavelli, N. (1985), *The Prince*, trans. H.C. Mansfield, Jr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Magurshuk, D. (1979), 'Heidegger and Edwards on Sein-zum-Tode,' *The Monist*, **62** (1): 107–118.

Mandel, R. (1978), 'Heidegger and Wittgenstein: A Second Kantian Revolution,' *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*, ed. M. Murray, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Margolis, J. and Rockmore, T. (eds) (1989), *Heidegger and Nazism*, trans. P. Burrell and G. Ricci, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

——— (1992), *The Heidegger Case on Philosophy and Politics*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Marx, W. (1971), *Heidegger and the Tradition*, trans. T. Kisiel and M. Greene, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Mirfenderesky, J. (1979), 'Concerning Paul Edwards' "Heidegger on Death": A Criticism,' *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, **13** (2): 120–128.

Moehling, K. (1981), 'Heidegger and the Nazis,' in T. Sheehan (ed.), *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, Chicago: Precedent Publishing, pp. 31–42.

Morsbach, H. (1980), 'Major Psychological Factors Influencing Japanese Interpersonal Relations,' *Studies in Cross-Cultural Psychology*, Vol. II, ed. N. Warren, New York: Academic Press.

Munz, P. (1977), *The Shapes of Time*, Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press.

Murray, M. (ed.) (1978), *Heidegger and Modern Thought*, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Phillipse, H. (1998), *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Planck, M. (1949), *Scientific Autobiography and Other Papers*, trans. F. Gaynor, New York: Philosophical Library.

Pöggeler, O. (1963), *Der Denkweg Martin Heideggers*, Pfullingen: Neske.

Quine, W.V. and Ullian, J.S. (1970), *The Web of Belief*, New York: Random House.

Rorty, R. (1981), *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, New Haven, CN: Yale University Press.

Sallis, J. (ed.) (1970), *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.

Sartre, J.-P. (1966), *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology*, trans. H.E. Barnes, New York: Pocket Books.

——— (1968), 'The Humanism of Existentialism,' *Essays in Existentialism*, ed. W. Baskin, New York: Citadel Press.

Scheffler, I. (1967), *Science and Subjectivity*, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

——— (1964), 'Vision and Revolution,' *Philosophy of Science*, **72** (39): 366–374.

Schrag, C. (1961), *Existence and Freedom*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

——— (1970), 'Heidegger on Repetition and Historical Understanding,' *Philosophy East and West*, **20** (3).

Searle, J.R. (1979), *Expression and Meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— (1983), *Intentionality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shapere, D. (1973), 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,' *Philosophical Review*, **64** (73): 383–394.

——— (1971), 'The Paradigm Concept,' *Science*, **172**: 706–709.

Sheehan, T. (ed.) (1981), *Heidegger: The Man and the Thinker*, Chicago: Precedent Publishing.

Sherover, C.M. (1971), *Heidegger, Kant and Time*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Sluga, H. (1993), *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Solomon, R. (ed.) (1973), *Nietzsche: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New York: Anchor.

Spinosa, C., Flores, F. and Dreyfus, H.L. (1997), *Disclosing New Worlds. Entrepreneurship, Democratic Action, and the Cultivation of Solidarity*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Suppe, F. (1977), *The Structure of Scientific Theories*, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Tolstoy, L. (1960), *The Death of Ivan Ilych and Other Stories*, New York: New American Library.

Vernant, J.P. (1983), *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

White, C.J. (1976), 'Paul Edwards, "Heidegger on Death: A Deflationary Critique",' *The Monist*, **59** (2): 161–168.

——— (1984), 'Dasein, Existence and Death,' *Philosophy Today*, **XXVIII**: 53.

Whitrow, G.J. (1980), *The Natural Philosophy of Time*, London: Oxford University Press.

Wittgenstein, L. (1958), *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell.

——— (1969), *On Certainty*, ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright, trans. D. Paul and G.E.M. Anscombe, New York: Harper and Row.

Wyschogrod, M. (1969), *Kierkegaard and Heidegger*, New York: Humanities Press.

Young, J. (2001), *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zimmerman, M. (1975), 'The Foundering of *Being and Time*,' *Philosophy Today*, **75** (19): 100–107.

——— (1981), *The Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, Athens: Ohio University Press.

Index