SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND THE CARE FOR BEING

SELF-UNDERSTANDING AND THE CARE FOR BEING: HEIDEGGER'S ETHICAL THOUGHT

BY

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Abstract

Martin Heidegger is widely viewed as one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century. He is also generally viewed as an irrational metaphysician, as someone who has much to say about Being, but very little of it as making sense. Moreover, his thought is viewed as having very little to say about ethics; that is, the question of how we ought to live. In this thesis I argue that Heidegger's concept of Being is not irrational, and that his thought is primarily ethical. I argue that Heidegger's thought centres around the concept of authentic self-understanding, and that this form of self-understanding is deeply linked to solidarity with others and concern for things, what he describes as the care for Being.

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List of Abbreviations

Works by Heidegger

BW **Basic Writings**. Ed. David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

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

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

Niv **Nietzsche**, vol. 4. Translated by Frank A. Capuzzi. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

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

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

P "Postscript." In **Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre**. Edited and translated by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Meridian, 1975.

PLT **Poetry, Language, Thought**. Translated by Albert Hofstadter. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

QB **The Question of Being**. Translated by Jean T. Wilde and William Kluback. New Haven: College and University Press, 1959.

QCT **The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays.** Translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

ST **Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom.** Translated by Joan Stambaugh. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985.

SZ **Being and Time.** Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

WBGM "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics." In **Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre.**

WM "What is Metaphysics?" In **Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre.**

Works by Habermas

AA "Modernity - An Incomplete Project." In **The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture.** Edited by Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press, 1983.

PDM **The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.** Translated by Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987.

Introduction: Heidegger and the Question of Ethics

"Gentlemen of Athens," proclaims Socrates, "Believe Anytus, or do not. Dismiss me, or do not. For I will not do otherwise, even if I am to die for it many times over."[1] This is the voice of the aging Socrates, this is the man Heidegger describes as "the purest thinker in the West." This is the real and iconoclastic figure who stands outside of the accepted norms of Athenian piety, and faced unflinchingly its most extreme exaction: death. Socrates exemplifies in his life what Heidegger intimates in his thought, namely, that the most pressing question one faces is how one ought to live.[2] This is the question of ethics.

In this work I advance three claims. The first is that Heidegger's thought is primarily ethical. The second is that his concept of ethical life has to do with authentic self-understanding. The third is that authentic self-understanding is achieved by caring for Being; that is, through solicitude for others and concern for things. I hasten to add, however, that the term "self-understanding" is not Heidegger's. My justification for the use of this term derives from the fact that, for Heidegger, the understanding Dasein may have of itself can be either authentic or inauthentic. He associates

further the concept of inauthentic Dasein with what he calls the "they-self," and he distinguishes clearly this view of the self from the authentic self. "The Self of everyday Dasein is the **they-self** [**das Man-selbst**], which we distinguish from the **authentic Self** - that is, from the Self which has been taken hold of in its own way" (SZ.129). Further, since Heidegger never speaks of understanding in a free-floating manner, but always in relation to Dasein, I have decided to use the term self-understanding in order to capture this relationship. In light of these considerations, I have chosen to speak of Heidegger's ethical thought as one of **authentic self-understanding** because, as he himself makes clear, self-understanding can be either inscribed within **das Man**, or it can be something one achieves through individual struggle.

Some recent commentators support the claim that Heidegger's work is primarily ethical. Richard Bernstein claims that

> Heidegger, despite his scorn and scepticism about the traditional philosophic discipline of "ethics" and his apocalyptic declaration that "philosophy is over" was obsessed with Socrates' question.... Socrates' question is central to all of Heidegger's thinking.[3]

Bernstein argues, however, that Heidegger's concept of ethics gets subverted by his occult concept of the truth of Being. I disagree with Bernstein over this latter point. As I shall show, Heidegger's concept of Being or the truth of Being is not as mystical as some of his critics claim. Joanna Hodge claims also that "the question of ethics is the definitive, if

unstated problem of his [Heidegger's] thinking."[4] Hodge attributes to Heidegger a broad view of ethics; that is, she views Heidegger's thought as grappling with the problem of "what it is to be human."[5] In my interpretation of Heidegger's work I make extensive use of Hodge's broad view of ethics. While I find much to agree with in Hodge's interpretation of Heidegger's thought, I believe that she downplays somewhat some of the more radical aspects of Heidegger's thought. The key experience of **das Ereignis,** human finitude, is virtually absent from her treatment, which I view as central to Heidegger's thought. Instead, she emphasizes the ontological conditions for the formation of character. In my account of Heidegger's thought, I emphasize the experience of finitude and its relation to Being. I take Heidegger seriously when he emphasizes that in order to gauge what he is getting at we need to see that "freedom rules in all realms of beings," and thus necessitates a "foundation-shattering transformation" of thinking (ST.61). Therefore, I would like to think of my work as complementing Hodge's.

What I mean by ethics, and what I think Heidegger's texts address strongly is the question of how one relates to that which is other than oneself. I describe this as an ethics of authentic self-understanding. This view of ethics is not original. It has much in common with what Cornell describes as the "ethical relation." On her account, the ethical relation "focuses ... on the kind of person one must become in order to

develop a nonviolative relationship to the Other.... [It] is a way of being in the world."[6] Heidegger's ethics of self-understanding resembles the broader concept of a way of life, an ethos, what Foucault describes as "a practice; ... a manner of being."[7] An ethics of authentic self-understanding can be described, therefore, as the practice of trying to understand oneself fully by caring for others, beings, in the world.

This view of ethics bears very little relation to the received view of the subject. Ethics as authentic self-understanding is external to that of philosophical inquiry into the nature or general meaning of "good" or "right" or any such standard of human conduct, what is generally described as "meta-ethics." Neither does the view of ethics I shall be articulating bear any relationship to the practice of trying to find a fundamental principle or "ground" of ethical life, something Kant made central to his view of ethics as a practical form of universal legislation. Furthermore, I shall not be concerned with what in the last decades has been described as "virtue-centered" ethics. This view of ethics finds its first sustained treatment in Aristotle's thought, and has seen something of a renaissance in recent times. Although this view of ethics is very different from the philosophical practice of trying to find fundamental grounds and principles, it is, nonetheless, underpinned by something called a fundamental concept of human life or human flourishing. Taking this premise as fundamental, virtues are

then sought that shall further the development of human nature.[8]

Thus far, I have maintained that Heidegger's thought is primarily ethical, but it is incontestable that the concept of Being is central to his work. Indeed, Heidegger's early rhetoric of "fundamental ontology" continues to haunt the reception of his thought. He is still viewed as the herald of a new metaphysical, albeit, occult version of Being. He is the grand-master of the nostalgic, the archaic, in the most modern of societies: the postmodern.[9]

What does Heidegger mean by Being? Although I discuss the concept of Being in more detail in chapter 1, I shall say a word nonetheless on this very controversial topic. Heidegger points out that "'the meaning of Being' and 'the truth of Being' mean the same" (WBGM.274).[10] He also points out that his concept of the "meaning" of Being is not a ground which magically determines self-understanding (SZ.151). The meaning of Being is articulated, hence, shown in human action. Heidegger views Being as a possibility of understanding oneself; that is, as linked to the ethical practice of Being-in-the-world. A concept of Being is what allows us to make sense of ourselves, others, as well as things. Moreover, we have the freedom to understand ourselves in a particular way; that is, to care for others, things, in a particular way. On my account, Heidegger's concept of the truth of Being is not a postmodern supra-metaphysico-mystical ground. His thought is

a radical and worldly engagement with Being in the service of authenticity.

Because he links the meaning of Being to self-understanding, Heidegger rejects the distinction between ethics and ontology, theory and practice. "That thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who eksists, is in itself the original ethics" (BW.235). To understand oneself a certain way is to engage others in a certain way, this means that Being is ethically enacted in the world. Heidegger describes this form of ethical engagement as the care for Being. The idea of caring for Being goes back to two claims Heidegger makes in **Sein und Zeit**: "Dasein's Being reveals itself as **care**" (SZ.182); and, "**Reality is referred back to the phenomenon of care**" (SZ.211). The claim that reality is referred back to care does not mean that reality or Being is grounded in Dasein, therefore Being is subjective, that Being is what I say it is. The meaning of Being is achieved individually, and it is shown in the way I comport myself. Further, the care for Being as an ethical practice means simply that without human beings there is no "meaning" of Being. Conversely, in order to understand ourselves, no matter how rudimentary, we need a concept of Being.

> The fundamental thought of my thinking is precisely that Being, or the manifestation of Being, **needs** human beings, and that, ... human beings are only human beings if they are standing in the manifestation of Being.[11]

Thus far, I have given an abbreviated and general account of what Heidegger means by Being and its connection to self-understanding. But the much stronger concept of authentic self-understanding and its connection to Being is what he means by ethics. I discuss this below.

The experience of human finitude, our anguished relation to death, is crucial to understanding Heidegger's ethical thought. Heidegger wants to think Being, but he thinks that we cannot think it in a way that is truly meaningful unless we fully understand ourselves; that is, unless we make internal to the care for Being our mortality as human beings. The possibility of understanding ourselves as a whole, authentically, is also the condition of caring for Being beyond a ground. Conversely, to care for Being as a whole, inclusively, is also to affirm our finitude.

If Heidegger is an original speculative philosopher, what is remarkable is that his speculations come back again and again to the experience of finitude. He places this experience under a single concept: **das Ereignis**. I refer to this as the experience of finitude. The affirmation of finitude is what allows us to care for Being in a more expansive way. Death is the condition for the affirmation of a broader concept of world, a deeper form of solidarity with others. **Das Ereignis** is the fundamental experience in Heidegger's work that enables the turning away (**die Kehre**) from the philosophical obsession with principles and grounds,

and towards the care for Being in a more expansive way. This experience of our finitude decouples individual self-understanding from the everyday, the routine, indeed, the various traditions of thought and action we find ourselves in. This experience reveals what Heidegger describes as the "belonging together" of human nature and Being.[12]

Heidegger speaks of the experience of finitude in different ways and in many different texts. In **Sein und Zeit** and the essay "What is Metaphysics?", the experience of anxiety decouples self-understanding from its complacency with the accepted forms of Being, namely, **das Man** and scientific reason. In the essay "Language," the experience of pain is what reveals our finitude. In his various essays on technology, Heidegger harnesses the poetry of the mad poet Holderlin and describes it as "the saving power," and so on.

In rare and transient moments, the haunting presence of our finitude distances us from the habitual, the common routines of thought and action. It erodes whatever certitudes of self-understanding we may have at any given point in time. This brush with our finitude teaches us that we are "more" than any set of social and theoretical claims others might make about us, or that we might even make about ourselves. An episode of anxiety or pain decouples self-understanding from its various metaphysical doubles; for example, human nature as **cogito**, labouring being, transcendental subjectivity, and so on. Castoriadis describes the experience of finitude as one of

the many "lightning strokes, ... the intractable presence of the aporia" which unravels our inherited modes of thought and action.[13] This experience of finitude reveals the possibility of understanding ourselves as a whole.

Authentic self-understanding requires a certain tenacity, a certain courage and a certain style in order to be developed into personal identity, your ethical Being. This idea of ethical self-identity is developed by caring for the truth of Being. Heidegger describes this in **Sein und Zeit** as an "incredible exaction," because it entails becoming familiar with death in a positive manner, as well as on a full-time basis.

The suspicion may arise that subjectivism creeps into Heidegger's thought, hidden under the mask of authentic self-understanding. But this is not the case. Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding opens up the possibility of what Alberoni describes as an "alternative solidarity," and what I describe in chapter 1 as a postmodern view of community.[14] The idea is that the only way I can truly understand myself is by respecting and acknowledging the freedom of others, the deeper this acknowledgment the more profound my self-understanding. This alternative form of solidarity suggests that we can live in communion with others without forfeiting individual identity. This form of caring, Heidegger claims, "conducts human existence into the realm of the upsurgence of the healing" (BW.237).

The view that authentic self-understanding entails the care for others radicalizes the concept of individual autonomy, which Kant views as central to Enlightenment.[15] Whereas Kant views individual autonomy as external to others, and solidarity achieved only through universal law, Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding implies ethical and worldly engagement with others because they are internal to the way I understand myself as Being-in-the-world. Whereas autonomy in Kant's thought is achieved at the cost of dividing up human nature into two, namely, the empirical and the rational, for Heidegger, no such breach exists in human nature. To understand ourselves authentically, as a whole, everything about us has to be affirmed positively, even death. For Heidegger, ethical autonomy is neither achieved through the Kantian-legal model of rights, nor a communitarian construction of autonomy limited by inherited traditions. His view of authentic self-understanding cuts through both. To care for others while maintaining our autonomy in the world reveals our capacity for imaginative thinking and existential resolution.

Heidegger thinks that the many attempts by various thinkers in the tradition of Western philosophy to think about Being is an evasion of differences.[16] He wants to try and be true to the plethora of things, together with the relationships between them, that we find in the world. He wants to be true to differences. This is why the very idea of

Being as a ground is absent from his thought. To think Being with reference to a ground would be like trying to reduce Rabelais's idea of the marketplace or Bruegel's panoramic paintings of the human condition to a singular concept.

"There are gods here, too" (Frag.74), Heraclitus writes.[17] Aristotle recounts this statement of Heraclitus as being said to a group of curious strangers astounded to see the philosopher warming himself in front of a stove. Heidegger interprets Heraclitus's statement to mean: " '[E]ven there' in the sphere of the familiar, **einai theous**, it is the case that 'the gods are present'" (BW.234). Even in the realm of the commonplace, the gods are present. Even as rational beings, we are capable of death. Heidegger's concept of the truth of Being together with the concept of authentic self-understanding implies an inclusive ethic of letting be, an attempt to affirm those aspects of things, ourselves, which metaphysics forgets about.[18]

"It is the authentic function of philosophy," Heidegger writes, "to challenge historical being-there [Dasein] and hence, in the last analysis, being [Sein] pure and simple."[19] Ethical life as authentic self-understanding through the care for Being is Heidegger's challenge to the tradition of metaphysical reason. By affirming differences, that which metaphysics forgets, Heidegger's thought pursues the consequences of finitude. His thought can be viewed as posing the question of what it means to understand oneself as

finite, as an individual, within the tradition of metaphysics in order to go beyond it. His is "the thought from outside" which starts from the inside, the inherited tradition of metaphysical thought, in order to show the non-necessitarian character of our inherited modes of thought and action.[20] In Foucauldian terms, Heidegger's engagement with the history of metaphysics is a philosophical archaeology with an emancipatory aim. The outcome of Heidegger's concept of ethical life is a perpetual agonic and critical relation with the social present, a perpetual ethical activism.[21]

Heidegger's protracted interest and interpretation of the history of metaphysics makes the entire history of Western philosophy look like an endless repetition, albeit in different guises, of the same kind of thinking, namely, the attempt to think Being as a fundamental ground, a ground which, in some indeterminate fashion, determines thought and action, determines all that we can possibly do or imagine.[22] For Heidegger, however, no concept of Being is "necessary." His anti-necessitarian stance towards any concept of Being applies even to his own concept of the truth of Being.

> Whether the realm of the truth of Being is a blind alley or whether it is the free space in which freedom conserves its essence is something each one may judge after he himself has tried to go the designated way (BW.223).

There exists no necessary relationship between any concept of Being and self-understanding because we can always understand ourselves differently. Episodes of anxiety, pain and death

suggest a troubled, indeed, an irreconcilable relation between individual self-understanding and any ground.[23]

Heidegger's thought is aimed at loosening the hegemony of technical thinking. This is the idea of Being as ground, a standard around which thought and action are to be organized, what Putnam calls "criterial conceptions of reason."[24] We need to relinquish the idea that thought and action ought to be guided by a standard, or a canonical set of rules, or technical criteria that will guarantee order and meaning. Heidegger's aim is to bring us to a certain point in our biography where his thought is no longer needed. This is perhaps why he calls his thinking "prepatory." Once you have climbed up the ladder, kick it away. Heidegger's thought is the ladder, not the prize to be won.

His critical attitude towards inherited ways of understanding ourselves together with his attempt to articulate an alternative view of authentic self-understanding is his way of updating the Socratic imperative of caring for your self. It is Heidegger's contribution to a postmetaphysical view of ethical life.

To sum up, I advance three claims. First, Heidegger's thought is primarily ethical. Second, he puts forward a view of ethics as authentic self-understanding; that is, understanding oneself as a whole. Third, authentic self-understanding is achieved through solidarity with others, and concern for things.

In chapter 1, I show that authentic self-understanding is central to **Sein und Zeit**, and it is discussed with reference to the social ontology of **das Man**. In chapter 2, I discuss the concept of self-understanding with reference to Weber's concept of modernity, and I advance a reading of Heidegger as a postmodern thinker. Chapter 3 takes issue with Habermas's reading of Heidegger's thought as a species of postmodern irrationalism. I also discuss the relationship of Heidegger's thought with reference to National Socialism. Chapter 4 discusses the concept of self-understanding with reference to metaphysics. I advance a view of Heidegger's thought as a postmetaphysical contribution to ethics. I conclude by briefly restating the main claims of the thesis together with some general remarks.

Notes to Introduction

1. Plato, "Apology," in R.E. Allen, **Socrates and Legal Obligation** (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 30c-33c.

2. Leslie Thiele supports this reading of Heidegger's thought as Socratic. "When all is said and done, Heideggerian philosophy is importantly Socratic. Heidegger is a gadfly worrying the steed of contemporary Western society. In this respect, Heidegger is a cultural critic, and his philosophy, like Socrates', is an interminable questioning that assails cognitive and behavioral conventions." See Leslie Paul Thiele, **Timely Meditations: Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Politics** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 140.

3. Richard Bernstein, "Heidegger's Silence?: **Ethos** and Technology," in **The New Constellation** (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 85.

4. Joanna Hodge, **Heidegger and Ethics** (London: Routledge, 1995), 1.

5. **Ibid.**, 202.

6. Drucilla Cornell, **The Philosophy of the Limit** (London: Routledge, 1992), 13. The concept of the ethical that I am putting forward here is also closely related to Wyschogrod's, namely, "the sphere of transactions between 'self' and 'Other'." See Edith Wyschogrod, **Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), xv.

7. Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," trans. Catherine Porter, in **The Foucault Reader**, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 377.

8. See for example the key essay by G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," **Philosophy** 33 (1958): 1-19; see also Alasdair MacIntyre, **After Virtue**, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984).

9. See Stanley Rosen, **Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 44ff; Allan Megill, **Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida** (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 105-180; Jürgen Habermas, **The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity**, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987),

131-160; John D. Caputo, **Demythologizing Heidegger** (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 119-28.

10. Translation altered slightly. Kaufmann renders "**Sinn**" as "sense"; I render it as "meaning."

11. Heidegger, "Television Interview," in **Martin Heidegger and National Socialism**, trans. Lisa Harries, ed. Gunther Neske and Emile Kettering (New York: Paragon, 1990), 82.

12. I am agreeing here with Krell's claim that "**Gelassenheit** is already at work in the analysis of anxious Dasein in **Being and Time** (1927), and that anxiety in the face of death remains central to **Gelassenheit.**" See David Farrell Krell **Intimations of Mortality: Time, Truth, and Finitude in Heidegger's Thinking of Being** (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 155.

13. Cornelius Castoriadis, **The Imaginary Institution of Society**, trans. Kathleen Blamey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 167.

14. See Francesco Alberoni, **Movement and Institution**, trans. Patricia C. Arden Delmoro (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 20.

15. See Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?'," in **Kant: Political Writings,** ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

16. The forgetting of differences is central even to the tradition of contractarian political theory. We find it in Hobbes's construction of political society when he postulates an equality of all before the laws of the state. But the inequalities of the state of nature (differences) get reinscribed negatively within political society when Hobbes states categorically that there shall be no retribution for past wrongs and no redistribution of property "unjustly" acquired before the construction of political society. Thus the old inequalities of wealth and influence come back to haunt the new society. We find also this effacement of differences in Rawls's concept of the "original position," where persons are deprived of knowledge of their social status in order for them to arrive at fundamental principles of justice. Rawls's "difference" principle acknowledges, however, that inequalities and social hierarchy are not so easily effaced, and they return to trouble the ideal of liberal procedural justice. See the discussion of negative recognition in Sheldon Wolin, "Democracy, Difference, and Re-cognition," **Political Theory** 21 (1993): 464-483.

17. **Herakleitos and Diogenes**, trans. Guy Davenport (San Francisco: Grey Fox, 1979).

18. Karl-Heinz Volkman-Schluck interprets Heidegger's ethic of **Gelassenheit** as an ethic of resolute care which allows a thing or person to preserve its particular identity. See his **Politische Philosophie** (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1974), 232.

19. Heidegger, **Introduction to Metaphysics**, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 11.

20. I borrow this phrase from Michel Foucault's description of Maurice Blanchot's thought. See Michel Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside," in **Foucault/Blanchot** (New York: Zone Books, 1986).

21. Unger takes the same line of argument in his polemic against the received view of legal thought, namely, formalism and objectivism. See Roberto Mangabeira Unger, **The Critical Legal Studies Movement** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 5-14.

22. I can only partially agree with Rorty's claim that "**the whole force of Heidegger's thought lies in his account of the history of philosophy.**" Rorty emphasizes the negative part of Heidegger's account of the history of philosophy, and neglects his positive attempt to give an account of Being as more inclusive. Rorty has no taste for this part of Heidegger's thought because he views Heidegger's invocation of the truth of Being as a kind of "gawky" throwback, a preservation of all that was bad in the tradition. See Richard Rorty, "Overcoming the Tradition," in **Consequences of Pragmatism** (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 52.

23. "No final balance," Unger writes, "can be achieved, either in the life of the mind as a whole or in any segment of this life, between what we might discover or communicate and the available ways of doing so; the opportunity for discovery and self-expression outreaches at any given time all the frameworks for thought or conversation that we can make explicit prospectively." See Roberto Mangabeira Unger, **Passion: An Essay on Personality** (New York: Free Press, 1984), 8.

24. See Hilary Putnam, **Reason, Truth and History** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 105-113.

Chapter 1

Self-Understanding and Social Ontology

This chapter advances an ethical reading of **Sein und Zeit**. The ethical question is this: How shall I relate to others, and how shall I relate to the world? The ethical question in this work is posed within the problematic of everyday life, what I describe as the social ontology of das Man. Heidegger believes that the way we answer this question is internal to the way we understand ourselves, what he describes as Dasein. Self-understanding, which can be either authentic or inauthentic, enables possible ways of existing in the world.

> The Being-possible which is essential for Dasein, pertains to the ways of its solicitude for Others and of its concern with the 'world' ... in all these, and always, it pertains to Dasein's potentiality-for-Being towards itself, for the sake of itself (SZ.143).

Ethics, on this account, is the practice of caring for others, and showing concern for the world based on the understanding one has of oneself, Dasein. I shall describe this as an ethics of self-understanding.

But is ethics based on any form of self-understanding? Is ethics as the practice of freedom in the world determined

by the everyday forms of understanding we inherit socially? If so, is ethical life determined fully by the social ontology of **das Man**? The answer is no. For the most part, Heidegger views the social forms of understanding available to us as **inauthentic**. By inauthentic he means that we do not understand ourselves fully as individuals. What Heidegger is after is what he describes as an **authentic** form of self-understanding. This means understanding oneself **holistically**. To understand oneself holistically is to understand oneself as capable of death. It is to grasp individual existence as finite. Understanding oneself in this manner enables an authentic, ethical disclosure of Being. That is, holistic self-understanding enables authentic forms of solidarity with others. Heidegger describes this penetrating form of self-understanding as based on a peculiar kind of "sight," which he describes as "transparency" (**Durchsichtigkeit**). "The sight which is related primarily and on the whole to existence we call 'transparency' [**Durchsichtigkeit**]. We choose this term to designate 'knowledge of the Self'" (SZ.146).

Anxiety towards death is the experiential condition of authentic self-understanding. Anxiety "provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein's primordial totality of Being" (SZ.182). If ethical life is to be based on authentic self-understanding, and death is internal to this understanding, then ethical life as a way of Being-in- the-

world must integrate this understanding of finitude in its practices.

> As such, holding death for true does not demand just **one** definite kind of behaviour in Dasein, but demands Dasein itself in the full authenticity of its existence (SZ.265).

Death as the limit of our finitude is the dark presence which illuminates our solicitude for others and our concern for things. This form of self-understanding is unavailable within the social ontology of **das Man**."Everydayness does not dare to let itself become transparent in such a manner" (SZ.258).

In sum, authentic self-understanding, anxiety towards death, and the care for otherness in general are the basic elements in Heidegger's ethical thought.

Thus far, I have given an abbreviated discussion of what I think Heidegger's work is about, namely, that solicitude for others and concern for things are not only ethical, but central to Heidegger's thought. In what follows I shall give a fuller treatment of this claim.

Five Theses on Dasein

In **Sein und Zeit**, Heidegger advances five theses on what he describes as the "**essence** of Dasein." Heidegger's **first** thesis is that "**the 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence**" (SZ.42). This sentence is arguably the most important one Heidegger ever wrote, and it has given rise to many misinterpretations. I shall spend some time discussing it.

Heidegger explains that he chose the term Dasein to show that "the involvement of Being in human nature is an essential feature of Being" (WBGM.270). Human nature, in his view, is constituted by finitude, death. Thus, the understanding we have of ourselves as capable of death is internal to the way we understand Being. Furthermore, this understanding of Being in light of our finitude has to be ethically enacted in the world.

Yet, given the ordinary meaning of the term Dasein, which means usually "existence," Heidegger's thesis to some commentators seems to be merely stating a tautology. He seems to be saying that there is no essence to human nature. This is a reading of Dasein which Sartre made famous.[1] This interpretation is not incorrect if we take essence to mean an "objective" metaphysical ground of some kind. Heidegger himself points out that his concept of existence "is not the realization of an essence" (BW.207). The absence of such a ground, however, does not render existence subjective. Existence is not "an achievement of subjectivity" (BW.207). Existence is not an achievement of subjectivity because Heidegger is referring to the ways we articulate Being in the world. In other words, the first thesis on Dasein obliterates the distinction between subjectivism and objectivism because these concepts themselves are existentially elaborated.

Rorty interprets Heidegger's concept of Dasein to mean "people who are unable to stand the thought that they are not

their own creations," and his claim about the essence of Dasein to be an "ironic" way of saying that we have no "essence."[2] He applauds Heidegger for dispensing with the idea that human beings have an immutable nature. Heidegger, to philosophers like Rorty, is daring enough to relinquish the philosophical dream of trying to ground human nature in an immutable essence, an essence that gives us a privileged ontological status in the great chain of Being.[3] To think that human nature is a distinct ontological category, Rorty writes, indicates "a confusion between ontology and morals."[4]

The distinction between ontology and morals which Rorty observes here is one which Heidegger rejects (BW.236). Heidegger is claiming that the essence of Dasein is existence, not moral existence or ontological existence. Rorty views this as a confusion of the distinction between two radically different categories of inquiry. I want to suggest that what Heidegger does deliberately here is to call into question Rorty's sharp distinction between public and private, politics and ethics.

If I understand Rorty correctly, he seems to be saying that if Heidegger takes his first thesis on Dasein as claiming something deep about human beings, namely, something "ontological," then Heidegger may come to believe that this thesis has ramifications for public culture, and not just ethics, which Rorty views as private. Rorty claims, however, that Heidegger as a "public" philosopher is "at best useless

and at worst dangerous."[5] As a philosopher of private morality, however, Heidegger is able to accommodate "the ironist's **private** sense of identity to her liberal hopes."[6] By restricting the interpretation of Heidegger's first thesis to the private sphere of morality, Rorty turns Heidegger into a philosopher of private perfection, an ironic theorist for the postmodern age. But Heidegger's rigorously holistic view of self-understanding entails a certain ethos, a certain way of Being-in-the-world which cuts across the divisions of public and private, politics and ethics. His concept of self-understanding forces us to take a stand on our finitude and what it might mean for ethical life in the wider social world. Indeed, Heidegger insists that this radical form of self-understanding is one that must be cultivated and enacted at all times, even if it means not living up to its "incredible demand." This holistic view of self-understanding, which is inflected in ethical life, is not to be compromised by accepting the claims of the wider society. What Heidegger is claiming about Dasein extends further than what Rorty's division of public and private can countenance.

Heidegger's **second** thesis states that Dasein is "distinguished by the fact that in its very Being, that Being is an **issue** for it" (SZ.12). Existence as the essence of Dasein is an issue because it is something made, not given. Existence is not magically determined because "one has an understanding of Being" (SZ.12). This understanding still has

to be articulated in the world. To try and make existence less problematic by linking it to a fundamental ground of some sort is to delude oneself. It would be to "tarry," as Heidegger put it, alongside the world. And even this, too, is a way of existing.

Heidegger's **third** thesis states that the "Being which is an **issue** for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine" (SZ.42). This thesis is not an endorsement of subjectivism. This thesis underscores the fact that the understanding of Being that I may have is something that I have to deliberate about and ultimately articulate for my self. Although the social world in which I find myself is responsible for producing the understanding I have of Being, its reproduction is dependent on me. That is, although Being is social, it is I who understand it, who ethically enacts it in the way I care for others, and the concern I show for things. This third thesis underscores further the point that existence entails worldly struggle.

Heidegger's **fourth** thesis advances the idea that self-understanding can be either authentic or inauthentic.

> Because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it **can**, in its very own Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only 'seem' to do so (SZ.42).

Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding implies, as I outlined earlier, understanding oneself holistically.[19] Heidegger's concept of authentic self-

understanding enables forms of existence which are pervaded by contingency. To understand oneself in this sense is what allows us to show authentic solicitude for others; it allows us to care for beings in multiple ways, in ways that are attentive to their differences, what Heidegger describes as letting beings be.[7] Through these ethical forms of concern, he suggests, we preserve our finitude.

In contrast, inauthentic self-understanding is pervaded by lack, incompleteness. Inauthentic self-understanding implies an avoidance of death. Inauthenticity implies viewing the forms of self-understanding one has been socialized into as having the last word in terms of how one cares for others, how one relates to the world. Heidegger describes this as "idolatry." On this account, the concept of inauthentic self-understanding may unfurl not only in light of a theoretical concept such as "rational being," but also along the social lines of class, gender, status, race, and so on. It implies that what others might say about you, together with the traditions of thought you inherit, is all there is to say about who you are.

Heidegger's **fifth** thesis states that Dasein's understanding of Being is elaborated in the world. He summarises this view with the concept of Being-in-the-world. "Being-in-the-world is a state of Dasein which is necessary **a priori**." Self-understanding, solidarity with others, and concern for things are all to be articulated and shown in the

way we exist in the world. Heidegger adds, however, a crucial qualification. He claims that everyday Being-in-the-world is "far from sufficient for completely determining Dasein's Being" (SZ.53). This qualification indicates that the way we understand ourselves in light of everyday social life is not all there is to say about who we are and who we might become. The concept of everyday Being-in-the-world is where the problem of authentic, ethical self-understanding begins.

In this section I looked at Heidegger's five theses on Dasein. I shall give a fuller treatment of the relationship between everyday Being-in-the-world and self-understanding below. In the next section, however, I shall look at Heidegger's concept of the "meaning of Being."

The Question of Being

What about Being? By emphasizing the ethical question in Heidegger's work and its relation to self-understanding, it might appear as if I am downplaying the ontological question, the so-called **Seinsfrage.** This is not the case. By emphasizing the centrality of self-understanding in Heidegger's thought, I want to de-emphasize the idea that the concept of Being in Heidegger's thought is some sort of metaphysical ground, a ground that determines self-understanding. I am suggesting that self-understanding is central to not only ethical life, but also the question of the "meaning of Being." Ontological self-understanding is also ethical self-understanding.

Even though Heidegger is critical of the idea of Being as some sort of ground, he himself uses locutions such as the "ground of Being," and the "ground of metaphysics" in a positive manner. These locutions need clarification because even some of Heidegger's most incisive commentators view his concept of Being as a reinstatement of an archaic metaphysical ground.

In an early assessment of Heidegger's thought, Rorty claims that "by offering us 'openness to Being' ... Heidegger helps preserve all that was worst in the tradition which he hoped to overcome."[8] More recently, he describes Heidegger's concept of Being as "gawky, awkward, and unenlightening."[9] Rorty views the concept of Being together with that of "openness to Being," as reactionary, a mystical throwback to what is bad in traditional philosophy. That is, Rorty views Heidegger's concept of Being as some sort of mystico-metaphysical ground, which only an equally mystical attitude, namely, "openness," can capture. As Caputo put it,

> Heidegger remains stuck in metaphysics for Rorty insofar as he remains attached to the fundamental illusion that instigated metaphysics in the first place: that there is a depth dimension, a **Sache**, a matter for thought.[10]

On Caputo's reading of Heidegger's work, which I am here agreeing with, the interpretation of the concept of Being to mean vertical depth, some sort of underlying ontological foundation, is where Rorty goes wrong. Heidegger's "deep" meaning of Being implies horizontal complexity and richness.

I shall take up Rorty's criticism in my discussion of Heidegger's concept of the meaning of Being.

There exists within metaphysics, Heidegger claims, an "essential" relation between the concept of Being and the concept of a ground (ER.33). To ask about the metaphysical ground of a thing is to also ask about its "Being." The metaphysical concept of a ground is what determines the identity of a thing. For example, the Cartesian view of Being as **certitude** is what determines self-understanding as **cogito**. The concept of a metaphysical ground has also been described as the "reason" for a thing's existence, as well as what makes a thing "true" (ER.6-7). We find the idea of Being as "reason" in Leibniz's concept of "the principle of sufficient reason." Leibniz's concept of reason as **appetite**, which Heidegger views as a development of Being as certitude, determines self-understanding as monadic appetitive will; that is, a thing **is** to the extent that it is comprehended by the subjective will. Similarly, something is "true" to the extent that it "corresponds" to its ground, to what is considered real. All three concepts of ground, as Being, reason, and true, can be described as metaphysical. All three share the fundamental assumption that the identity of a thing or a person is to be determined in light of a unitary concept. Furthermore, according to Heidegger, these different concepts of Being are present-at-hand views of Being. That is, these concepts stand in an external relationship to beings. Heidegger is suggesting

that for these different views to be "meaningful," they have to be enacted. In a sense, they have to be "consummated" in the world.[11] On Heidegger's interpretation of the history of Western metaphysics, the view of Being as a fundamental ground is what unites thinkers from Parmenides to the positivists.[12]

In my view, when Heidegger poses the question of the "meaning of Being," or asks about "essence of grounds," or talks about the "way back into the ground of metaphysics," we ought not to interpret these locutions to mean that he is trying to do a kind of super-metaphysics, that he is sinking his thought into an even deeper level of abstraction. He raises these questions in order "to gain access to and mark out the **realm** ... **concerning** the essence of grounds" (ER.8). What he means by the "essence" of grounds is not something deep but something lying near.

In asking about the essence of grounds, Heidegger is asking about the "meaning" of grounds. He is posing an ethical question: What does it mean to understand oneself as a "rational being," or as a member of a **Sittlichkeit**? To pose the question of grounds in terms of self-understanding, to ask what it might mean ethically to understand oneself in light of a particular concept of Being is also Heidegger's way out of metaphysics. "Insofar as a thinker sets out to experience the ground of metaphysics ... his thinking has ... left metaphysics" (WBGM.266).

Heidegger's thinking has left metaphysics because the concept of Being is no longer thought of as a ground, but as a possible way in which we understand ourselves. In short, Being becomes the "meaning of Being."

Heidegger writes:

> If we are inquiring about the meaning of Being, our investigation does not then become a 'deep' one [tiefsinnig], nor does it puzzle out what stands behind Being. It asks about Being itself in so far as Being enters into the intelligibility of Dasein. The meaning of Being can never be contrasted with entities, or with Being as the 'ground' which gives entities support; for a 'ground' becomes accessible only as meaning (SZ.152).

In light of this passage, it is clear that what Heidegger means by Being is not external to the way we understand ourselves. He is claiming that the concept of Being is available to us only as "meaning"; that is, the meaning of Being is internal to the project of authentic self-understanding, and vice versa. But what does Heidegger mean by mean by "meaning"?

Heidegger describes meaning as an "**existentiale** of Dasein" (SZ.151). The meaning we have of something is articulated through the many ways we exist in the world. Meaning is "not a property attaching to entities, [or] lying 'behind' them" (SZ.151). Meaning is not something deep, nor is it hidden. Heidegger's concept of Being is not a ground in the traditional metaphysical sense, as the above passage makes clear. Indeed, the meaning of Being, even if it were to be a ground, is enacted through the things we do and say. An

understanding of Being is what enables us to "disclose" beings in a certain way. Thus, "Dasein only 'has' meaning, so far as the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world can be 'filled in' by the entities discoverable in that disclosedness" (SZ.151). The "meaning of Being," then, is neither something out there in the world waiting to be discovered, nor is it inside our heads. The meaning of Being is embodied in human action, and it reveals its level of richness or paucity in our ethical relations.

Heidegger also describes Being as world. "[T]he lighting of Being ... alone is 'world'" (BW.206). Having a concept of "world" is what enables us to make sense of things. He identifies also the concept of world with "significance" (SZ.83). But only human beings have "significance" or "meaning." "**[O]nly Dasein can be meaningful [sinnvoll] or meaningless [sinnlos]**" (SZ.151). In short, only human beings, because they have an understanding of Being, can have a "world." Hence, only human beings "disclose" beings. "[W]hat is distinctive about Dasein is that it behaves towards being [**Seiendem**] by understanding Being" (ER.27).

The concept of world as "significance" implies that world has to be ethically enacted. World is not a present-at-hand concept, a ground that magically renders things intelligible. The concept of world is embedded in actions.[13] To understand ourselves implies an understanding of "world," an understanding of "Being." Indeed, the concepts of world,

other people, are all "there" in the way we understand ourselves. Heidegger describes this nexus of embedded concepts as being "equiprimordial" with each other. If one misses the interrelatedness of Heidegger's concepts of Being, world, meaning, Dasein, existence, and so on, then he begins to sound very metaphysical, as if he is grounding one concept in another.

In another context, he claims that "world grants to things their presence" (PLT.202). If one ignores Heidegger's concept of self-understanding as implying an understanding of world, this claim sounds rather magical. But what Heidegger means by presence is meaning. Without world, without human beings to "see" and enact the interrelationships that exist between things, there is no "presence." This does not imply that things do not exist without us, that Heidegger is a radical subjective idealist. Heidegger is talking about the understanding we have of things which grants them presence in the world. This does not mean, however, that Being or world is external to a thing, that world is something imposed on things by us. Heidegger is claiming that the relationship between world and thing is already there, because we already live it. He is simply making the understanding we already have of the relationship between world and thing more explicit.

The relationship between world and Dasein is not optional. This does not mean, however, that the world you or I might find ourselves in fully determines who we are, and is

the only possible way of understanding ourselves. The experience of our finitude, which happens through anxiety, may reshape self-understanding, and this in turn may reshape how we care for things. This means that we can change our understanding of world, Being. So when Heidegger talks about "openness to Being" what he means is grasping ourselves as a whole, understanding death as internal to individual identity. An unrelenting openness to our finitude furthers an openness to Being. This total openness to our finitude is, therefore, fundamental to ethical self-identity. On this account, there is nothing mystical to the idea of openness to Being as Rorty seems to imply. In my view, the locution "openness to Being" is just another way of saying that things in the world are meaningful because of the way we understand ourselves. We understand world or Being more fully when we understand our ourselves as a whole, even unto death. If this elucidation of the relation between self-understanding and Being is correct, how could it possibly be maintained that Heidegger's concept of Being or world is an occult concept, an other-worldly ground that preserves the tradition of metaphysics? Rorty, can maintain this only by downplaying the connection Heidegger makes between self-understanding as finite and the meaning of Being. I find it, therefore, difficult to accept Rorty's assessment of Heidegger's work as preserving all that was worst in the philosophical tradition.

The internal relation between Being and self-understanding raises the question of whether Heidegger is a radical subjectivist. He makes radical sounding claims such as "world belongs to selfhood" (ER.85); "**Freedom is the ground of grounds**" (ER.126); "Being ... is rooted in Dasein's freedom" (ER.125; WBGM.266). By making the world internal to freedom, is Heidegger's work a species of subjectivism? Is he claiming that world or Being is what you or I say it is? He raises the question of subjectivism himself: Is "the world ... made [into] something purely 'subjective'?" (ER.87).

Heidegger gives a qualified response. He admits that "the world is indeed subjective," but he adds that this does not means that the world "fall[s] within the inner sphere of a 'subjective' subject" (ER.89). I believe that Heidegger's thought is subjective in the trivial nominalist sense of the word: he is concerned with the subject. But more to the point, he is concerned with the way the subject understands itself. He is concerned with self-understanding. This is what he means by claiming that Being is rooted in freedom. Heidegger is saying that if we were not free to understand what Being means, then there would be no Being. Being would be inarticulable. The link between Being and beings is freedom: the possibility we have of understanding ourselves in particular ways and enacting this understanding in the world. On my reading of his work, this is the only reason he calls

freedom the "ground of grounds." Freedom is what enables the understanding of grounds.

Heidegger's thought concerns the way we understand ourselves as subjects, without being subjective. His concept of the subject is not to be antecedently defined, instead, the self-understanding of the subject is to be ethically articulated through acts of solicitude for others and concern for things. Also, denying that Being is subjective in the metaphysical sense, does not make it "objective." As he put it, his concept of self-understanding as the ethical elaboration of meaning in the world speaks "against 'subjectivism' and, at the same time, ... 'objectivism'" (ER.97).

By making self-understanding fundamental to the concept of Being, Heidegger, like Wittgenstein, draws our attention to the "remainders" that metaphysics evades when it views Being as a ground. By making self-understanding fundamental to Being, Heidegger makes death, anxiety, and the sense of ourselves as mortal subjects fundamental to Being. These are all experiences that most philosophers since Plato have sought to extirpate from philosophical discourse. Heidegger goes against the grain. He maintains that all of these experiences of the limits of our finitude shape our understanding of Being, and are integral to its articulation. Thus, his concept of "fundamental ontology" is not an attempt to reinstate a "deeper" concept of Being, but instead an

ethical attempt to make sense of the way we understand ourselves, and how we can be otherwise.

Freedom and self-understanding are pivotal concepts in Heidegger's work. His concept of freedom, however, is not something that is given or deduced, as we find in Kant's thought, that "freedom ... is revealed by the moral law."[14] Heidegger views freedom first as an experience, and secondly as a practice. He often refers to freedom as a "way," or an "origin," which enables us to get to that point where we can understand ourselves authentically; that is, as a whole. We undergo experiences of freedom in many ways; for example, through our emotional life, art, pain, insight, and so on. As he put it, freedom or "Dasein happens in man."[15] Freedom happens in man "so that he can be under obligation to himself in the essence of his existence, i.e., he can be a free self." (ER.103).

Heidegger's rejection of the idea of Being as a ground is simultaneous with his affirmation of authentic self-understanding as the ethical condition for caring for others as well as things. I view the relation between self-understanding and the experience of freedom as entailing certain ethical questions: Who am I? How shall I relate to others? How shall I show concern for things? In trying to answer these questions the question of Being gets refocused. The question of Being becomes an ethic of authentic self-

understanding. It becomes an ethic of how "Dasein makes a **self** of itself" (ER.85).

In this section I examined the concept of Being, and its relationship to beings, world, grounds, freedom and self-understanding. In the next section, I examine the relationship between self-understanding and Being-in-the-world.

Being-in-the-World

Being-in-the-world includes a number of constitutive elements. I shall focus only on what I consider the most important ones. The first is understanding. This concept determines the possible ways we show solicitude for others, concern for things, and how we understand ourselves. How we understand ourselves can be either authentic or inauthentic. The second is our relationship with other people, what Heidegger describes as "Being-with." The third is state-of-mind (**Befindlichkeit**). This has to do with our moods, our emotional life. "By way of having a mood, Dasein 'sees' possibilities, in terms of which it is" (SZ.148). Heidegger assigns moods, particularly anxiety, as a "methodological function." Anxiety reveals death. Anxiety reveals self-understanding as finite, groundless, problematic, and individual. In what follows, I examine in turn the constitutive elements of Being-in-the-world and their bearing on Heidegger's concept of ethical life as authentic self-understanding.

(i) Self-Understanding

There is no question that the concept of understanding is one of the most important in Heidegger's thought. He views understanding "as a basic mode of Dasein's Being" (SZ.143). Self-understanding is basic to Dasein because the significance of things, people, their "involvements," together with how I myself fit into this picture and how I do not, are all made possible by my understanding of Being, which I show when I act in the world. "The kind of Being which Dasein has, as potentiality-for-Being, lies existentially in understanding" (SZ.143). This understanding of Being makes available to me possible ways of seeing, saying, and acting. It makes available to me certain concepts and not others. These concepts presuppose a larger set of unarticulated background schemes and social practices. Understanding enables possible ways of Being-in-the-world. The understanding we have of the world is implicit in the way we show solicitude for others, concern for others, and ultimately, in the way we understand ourselves. Heidegger claims, however, that the everyday concept of understanding is more or less determined anonymously, no one person or institution is responsible for this understanding of Being which I possess.

As the concrete practice of freedom in the world, self-understanding can be either authentic or inauthentic. By authentic self-understanding Heidegger means understanding oneself as a whole. It means understanding oneself as finite,

as capable of death. To understand oneself in this way is to understand oneself as an individual. This penetrating form of self-understanding is what enables a fuller ethical identity. To understand oneself as a whole is the condition for a particular kind of **ethos**. It enables one to engage in mutual acts of solicitude with others in ways that respect their freedom. It enables one to show concern for things in a multitude of ways through the affirmation of differences, concepts not available to everyday Being-in-the-world. In short, authentic self-understanding, on Heidegger's account, enables a finite, ethical way of life in the world.

In this section I looked at the concept of self-understanding in general. The next section discusses the relationship between self-understanding, inauthenticity and **das Man**.

(ii) Self-Understanding, Inauthenticity and das Man

In chapter 4 of **Sein und Zeit**, Heidegger discusses everyday self-understanding; that is, "[E]veryday Being-one's-Self [Selbstsein]" (SZ.114). He discusses other people and Dasein's relations with them because "the world of Dasein is a **with-world**" (SZ.118). What issue, if there is indeed one, lies behind this trivial observation? Heidegger discusses the fact of living with other people because it bears directly on the question of authentic self-understanding. For Heidegger,

other people tacitly determine how we understand ourselves. Other people determine inauthenticity.

To focus sharply the question of other people in his discussion of authentic self-understanding, we should contrast his treatment of our relation to others with the philosophical problem of "other minds."

From an epistemological point of view, the real problem of other people, whether friend or foe, is described as a problem of "other minds." Historically, this description of other people derives from Descartes's concept of Being as **certitude**. To understand oneself in light of this concept of Being entails viewing oneself as **cogito**, because the latter cannot be doubted. When I think, I am certain of myself. But how can I be certain of the existence of other people? How can I be certain that they think as well? From the standpoint of the **cogito**, thoughts, sensations, images, and all of the other psychological concepts associated with consciousness are matters of non-inferential, immediate acquaintance. But since I can never have this immediate acquaintance with the thoughts of other people, there seems room for doubt as to whether there is any consciousness save my own. At best, my knowledge of the mental lives of others is secondary, and much less certain than knowledge of my own mind.

Heidegger views the epistemological problem of other minds as "naive" because its basic concept of Being as certitude remains unclarified.[16] For the concept of Being as

certitude to be meaningful, it has to be ethically elaborated in the world. This is perhaps why he complains that Descartes left the meaning of the "**sum**," the "I am," in darkness. For Heidegger, the concept of Being as certitude turns on the more fundamental question of self-understanding: What would it be like to understand myself as **cogito**? What would it be like to hold everything rigorously to the standard of certainty when I act in the world? The elaboration of self-understanding in light of this concept of Being essentially shows the problem of "other minds" to be a pseudo-problem. Were we to adhere rigorously to the standard of certainty in our relations with other people, the concept "other people" or "other minds" disappears. Other people become "automata," to use Descartes's term. In Heidegger's view, the problem of "other minds" emerges within the Cartesian problematic because we already know from an everyday perspective that other people exist, that they think and have "minds." The problem is trying to account for this everyday intuition from a noneveryday position, namely, Being as certitude. Heidegger is suggesting that if one understands oneself as **cogito**, the everyday intuition that other people exist ceases to be available, in the same way that ready-to-hand things become objects possessing present-at-hand properties. Heidegger does not only reject Descartes's concept of Being because it is a ground. He rejects it because Being as certitude does not do justice to

our pre-philosophical intuitions about other people, people who may make life difficult for us in all sorts of ways.[17]

Heidegger describes the everyday concept of Being which determines self-understanding as **das Man** or the "they." "[T]he 'they' itself prescribes that way of interpreting the world and Being-in-the-world which lies closest" (SZ.129). He also describes this concept of self-understanding as inauthentic. It is inauthentic because it "distances" and "alienates" us from a holistic understanding of ourselves.

The inauthenticity of **das Man** stems from an avoidance of death. In inauthentic self-understanding, finitude is downplayed, ignored, or viewed negatively. Death is viewed, Heidegger writes, as a "mishap," a "public occurrence" (SZ.253). Death is "veiled." Meaning that other people die and you too shall cease to be one day. But this inescapable fact is not grasped in a penetrating manner; that is, in a manner that shakes one's self-understanding, in a manner that makes you question who you are. Thus, an "evasive concealment in the face of death dominates everydayness" (SZ.253). This form of understanding transforms anxiety towards death into "fear" of death, fear of the end.

In this section, I looked at the relationship between self-understanding and inauthenticity. The next looks at the relationship between authenticity, self-understanding and anxiety.

(iii) Self-Understanding, Authenticity and Anxiety

Heidegger's concept of ethical life as authentic self-understanding in the world has to come to terms with the social ontology of **das Man** because this is the concept of Being which determines, for the most part, how we understand ourselves. He has to show that everyday self-understanding as determined by **das Man** "is far from sufficient for completely determining Dasein's Being" (SZ.53).

The emotional experience of anxiety is fundamental to Heidegger's thought in **Sein und Zeit** because it reveals not only death but freedom as well. Anxiety reveals freedom as making it possible for us to understand ourselves differently. This key experience of freedom shows up in Heidegger's later texts under the rubric of **das Ereignis**. But in **Sein und Zeit** Heidegger's five theses on Dasein draw their strength from this radical emotional experience. It is above all from a reflection on emotional life that Heidegger thinks he is justified in claiming that a holistic and resolute understanding of oneself as finite is the condition for authentic forms of solicitude and concern.

Before I discuss in more detail Heidegger's concept of anxiety, it shall be useful to compare it to Sartre's. Sartre connects anxiety to the humanistic ideal of universal self-legislation. I feel anxious because, by my radically individual choice of action, I am also choosing for everybody else, all humanity. This is Sartre's way of showing to his

critics that his doctrine of existentialism is not an exercise in self-romance, indeed, that it is not nihilistic. In contrast, anxiety in Heidegger's thought has to do with understanding oneself as a whole, that is, anxiety is the condition of authentic self-understanding. This form of self-understanding is neither objective nor subjective because self-understanding is ethically enacted in the world, self-understanding is shown in the way we care for others. From Heidegger's perspective, Sartre's concept of individual freedom functions as a ground, a standard for all humanity, the very thing Sartre claims his doctrine of existentialism rejects, namely, that human nature has no essence. For Heidegger, Sartre's existentialism is nothing but a refinement of modern subjectivism, which Heidegger rejects.[18]

For Heidegger, anxiety performs a "methodological function." When one undergoes an episode of anxiety, one's social self-understanding gets temporarily surpassed. In a sense, one stands outside of one's social identity. Any social or theoretical concept of Being, whatever its claims to exhaustibility, always fails to fully inscribe the context-breaking capacity of this emotion.

The deeper meaning of anxiety in Heidegger's thought is that it frees us from the social Being of **das Man**, "the idols" of everyday existence. "Anxiety ... takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself ... in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publicly interpreted"

(SZ.187). It does this by disclosing death as that which haunts everyday Being-in-the-world. Anxiety discloses death as the dim, dark presence which illuminates our freedom, death as that which makes authentic self-understanding possible. Anxiety keeps death's presence near, and, at times, "shatters all one's tenaciousness to whatever existence one has reached" (SZ.264).

Maintaining oneself in the presence of death is not simply a matter of thinking about death or holding a specific attitude towards death. Death demands much more. "It must be understood **as a possibility**, ... cultivated **as a possibility**, and we must **put up with it as a possibility**, in the way we comport ourselves towards it" (SZ.261).

Death as an invisible presence within everyday understanding is what "individualizes" us. Anxiety towards death is what decouples self-understanding from its estrangement in **das Man**. "When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone" (SZ.250). Anxiety towards death enables us to understand ourselves as a whole, in a positive manner, and without evasion. As Heidegger put it, the "uncanniness" of death "pursues Dasein constantly, and is a threat to its everyday lostness in the 'they'" (SZ.189). Indeed, death haunts everyday self-understanding. "All **Da-sein** quivers with its breathing" (WM.253). This is why Being-in-the world is

essentially anxious. Heidegger insists that we "maintain ... [ourselves] in this truth" (SZ.264).

The experience of anxiety is pivotal because it not only reveals freedom, it essentially decouples freedom in a radical way from its grounding in the social Being of **das Man** in particular, and from any ground in general. "Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its **Being-free for** (**propensio in** ...) the authenticity of its Being, and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always is" (SZ.188). But the experience of individual freedom in Heidegger's thought does not just rehearse a modernist gesture. That is, freedom does not break away from its social grounding so as to float above the world. Anxiety reveals freedom by unravelling it from its inauthentic social grounding, but it also frees us for the ethical task of caring for others in the world. Anxiety towards death frees us for an alternative solidarity. The insight that death and anxiety brings is that no concept of Being, social or theoretical can fully determine who you are, how you understand yourself. You can be otherwise.

In this section I examined the concept of Being-in-the-world, specifically the relationship of authentic self-understanding to **das Man** and anxiety. In the next section, I discuss in more detail Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding. I describe this as Heidegger's contribution to a postmodern concept of community.

Authentic Self-Understanding and Community

There is perhaps no other theme in Heidegger's thought that has generated as much debate and controversy as that of authenticity or individual freedom. As Dallmayr put it, Heidegger "is reproached for having carried the modern concept of freedom to an absurd point and thus for having promoted a blind and arbitrary decisionism."[19] The experience of individual freedom engendered by anxiety reveals a sharp rift between freedom and social understanding. Some commentators and critics view this rift between individual freedom and the social context of everyday life as a sort of aporia in Heidegger's thought, an ill-wrought modernist excess which deconstructs the project of fundamental ontology.[20] That is, the connection Heidegger makes between Being and ethical self-authenticity devolves into subjectivism.

Megill's claim is typical.

> For Heidegger (as for Nietzsche), freedom is radically personal. Freedom in the Nietzschean and Heideggerian sense is the freedom of the creative artist, who has somehow managed to escape from external trammels and limitations.[21]

If by "external trammels and limitations" Megill means a determining ground of some sort, I can only partially agree with him.

Heidegger's concept of authenticity does not simply imply escaping external determinations of freedom but **overcoming** them critically. The way to overcome them is by showing their ethical limitations: how they disclose Being. In

other words, there is an ethical imperative implicit in Heidegger's concept of authenticity which forces us to ask: What would it be like, for example, to exist in the world if I were to understand Being as subjectivism? How would I understand myself? How would I care for others? How would I show concern for things? In short, Heidegger's question is this: What is the ethical "meaning of Being" as subjective? And his answer, in light of his first thesis on Dasein is that the only possible meaning this concept of Being can have for us is to be worked out through existence. Even the idea of Being as subjective "becomes accessible only as meaning" (SZ.152). Megill can view Heidegger's concept of authentic freedom as a species of subjectivism only by ignoring a fundamental insight of his thinking, namely, that Being, subjective or objective, is always understood in some manner and is to be ethically enacted in the world. As Dallmayr put it,

> The turn toward authenticity signifies not properly a choice between ontic goals or objectives, but rather Dasein's move toward its own intrinsic "essence" or ontological ground - a ground that is always already implicit in everyday existence.[22]

This "ontological ground" that Dallmayr refers to here is what Heidegger describes as our finite freedom, our "**Abgrund**." Dasein's authentic understanding of itself implies understanding its freedom as constituted by death. This makes the articulation of Being individual, but it does not make it subjective.[23]

Self-understanding can be either authentic or inauthentic. These two possibilities of our self-understanding are revealed through the powerful mood of anxiety. You can either understand yourself as finite and care for others in light of this understanding and be authentic, or you can accept the claims others might make about who you are and how you ought to be, and allow that to determine your ethical relations with others and remain inauthentic.

The ethical practice of freedom in the world is thus limited and unlimited. It is limited because it is connected to the world, which includes social context. It is unlimited, however, because no concept of Being, social or theoretical, fully determines it. Because individual freedom finds its resolution in the social world, the care for Being becomes a practice of critique, critique as an individual ethos. This entails an unrelenting engagement with the sources of individual identity within the social world, in order to affirm one's understanding of Being in a fuller way.

Because authentic self-understanding is the ethical condition of Heidegger's concept of Being, and this form of understanding is driven by an unrelenting anxiety towards death, an anxiety which has the capacity to dissolve all social constraints, albeit temporarily, Heidegger's fundamental ontology devolves into the critical practice of freedom.[24] Heidegger's project of trying to think the meaning of Being beyond a fundamental ground becomes an ethical task -

the singular task of working on, caring for oneself by caring for others, beings.

What I want to underscore at this point is the important reversal Heidegger makes in thinking about freedom.

For Heidegger, freedom is individual because it is finite. At one point or another we have to take a stance towards this inescapable fact. The finite nature of freedom, how it shapes our self-understanding together with our understanding of the world, constitute the three elements of ethical life. That is, the penetrating insight into ourselves as mortals reshapes self-understanding, and this reshapes further how we show solicitude for others and concern for things. How we care for others reveals our level of self-understanding, our understanding of Being. By making this strong connection between the practice of freedom and the revelation of Being, Heidegger wants to make it clear that freedom is not subjective. "Man does not 'possess' freedom as a property. At best, the converse holds: freedom, ek-sistent, disclosive Da-sein, possesses man" (BW.129). On this account, authentic, ethical self-understanding is a "property" of our finite freedom.

The implication of Heidegger's strong concept of authentic self-understanding is that you are not free to will anything without running the risk of lapsing into some form of inauthenticity.[25] To be authentic is to affirm in a rigorous manner the freedom of others, the particularity of things. On

this account, freedom expends "our human being for the preservation of the truth of Being" (P.262). The negative outcome of this view of authentic self-understanding is the refusal of **any** concept of humaneness that diminishes or negates our finitude. Positively, ethical existence means the resolute care for beings in the world in light of our finitude.

Although the care for others, Being, is, "**particularly** undertaken," it is "not," Heidegger insists, "the deliberate action of a subject, but the opening up of human being ... to the openness of Being" (PLT.67).[26] The subject is not separated from others, things, but is already open towards them. Its authentic understanding of itself, what Heidegger describes as "a passionate freedom towards death" (SZ.266), allows us to engage Being as a whole. Understanding ourselves resolutely as finite, as deeply anxious about who we are and who we can become, deepens our forms of solicitude for others. Authentic self-understanding, in short, deepens our sense of community with others.

Michael Sandel argues that in order to understand ourselves fully, as having "moral depth," we cannot think of ourselves as radical subjects, subjects radically decoupled from social ties and communal ties. To have moral depth, Sandel argues, we need to understand ourselves

> as members of this family or community or nation or people, as bearers of this history, as sons and daughters of that revolution, as citizens of this republic.[27]

What I want to suggest is that Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding enables a concept of community that bears very little resemblance to Sandel's strongly constituted self, nor does his concept of individual authenticity remain at the level of abstraction of the Kantian deontological subject. In contrast to Sandel, Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding does not come down to a stark choice between a strongly constituted social identity and a radically subjective one. The link Heidegger makes between self-understanding and the care for beings undercuts this dichotomy. We are always caring for others in some fashion, even through neglect. Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding deepens our relationships with others because this deepens the sense we have of our freedom. By respecting and acknowledging the freedom of others we become more authentic. Through these acts of solicitude we open up ourselves further to our own finitude. By caring for others we further authentic self-understanding. Call this a postmodern concept of community.

This postmodern concept of community entails that we act as individuals in light of a full understanding of ourselves as mortal, at the same time, however, we need to see others as integral to our finitude. In order to understand myself fully, authentically, I need to deepen my acknowledgement and respect for other people. Authentic self-

understanding becomes more complete the more I care for and respect others.

The achievement of authentic self-understanding through community is what I describe as Heidegger's postmodern contribution to ethical life. I believe it is his way of continuing the project of Enlightenment. The concept of individual freedom was always central to Enlightenment. This concept, however, was usually subjectively interpreted, as for example, by Descartes, for whom freedom was grounded in the self-certainty of the **cogito**. Heidegger's rejection of the **cogito**, and reformulation of the concept of individual freedom as finite and deeply linked to the care for others is what makes him postmodern.

By reclaiming individual freedom, and making it central to ethical life, Heidegger remains faithful to the Enlightenment project of freedom and critique, while moving beyond modernity's subject. By challenging modernity's concept of freedom as subjective and independent of others, and making his concept of individual authenticity internal to the solicitude we show for others, Heidegger suggests a different view of community. This view of community deepens individual life without surrendering individual freedom to others.

On my account of Heidegger's work, authentic self-understanding is not wholly preoccupied with self. Authentic self-understanding implies necessarily the care for others and care for an environing world - what Heidegger describes as

"letting beings be." The call to let beings be, not to impose your will on them, indirectly moves us one step further towards freeing ourselves from the tyranny of public life. It not only furthers self-understanding, it becomes also a model for others to learn from, so that they too might understand themselves more fully. "When Dasein is resolute, it can become the 'conscience' of Others" (SZ.298).[28]

To see what Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding implies by way of ethical responsibility with respect to other people, I shall discuss his concept of solicitude more fully. Before I do this, however, let me distance my interpretation of Heidegger's thought from Stephen White's claim that Heidegger has nothing or very little to say about intersubjectivity. White claims that "the attractiveness of Heidegger's thinking about responsibility to otherness is marred only by his failure to consider its implications for intersubjectivity." White bases this claim on the ungrounded speculation that "Heidegger may have thought that any such speculation about intersubjectivity is inevitably and fatally polluted by the figure of the modern 'subject'."[29] I do not see how White can hold the first claim when so much of **Sein und Zeit** is taken up not only with an analysis of the negative impact of others, but also Heidegger's positive reconstitution of the concept of Being-with others through the concept of authentic solicitude. While it is indeed the case that Heidegger is highly critical and ultimately dismissive of the

modern interpretation of the subject, it is not the case that he has no concept of the subject. Heidegger's concept of the subject, if it can be thus described, is constituted through the practice of caring for others as well as beings. In a later interview, Heidegger strongly emphasized this point.

> The question of Being and the unfolding of this question presuppose an interpretation of **Dasein**; that is, a definition of the essence of human beings. And the fundamental thought of my thinking is precisely that Being, or the manifestation [**Offenbarkeit**] of Being, **needs** human beings and that, vice versa, human beings are only human beings if they are standing in the manifestation of Being.[30]

The concept of the subject that Heidegger has in mind here is derived from the understanding one has of oneself as finite, and how it enables an articulation of Being. The care for beings in light of this understanding deepens self-constitution. This is a view of the subject as capable of death. With this account of the subject, Heidegger draws attention to the fact that human existence is finite and that it is relative to but not reducible to thrown Being-in-the-world.

For Heidegger, the concept of Being-with others is fundamental to authentic self-understanding, because it is an integral part of ethical self-constitution. By "Being- with" he means ways of interacting with other people, how we treat them. Heidegger describes the care for others as solicitude. There are two senses attached to the concept of solicitude.[31] The first has to do with taking away the freedom of others. In

this instance the other's freedom is usurped by alien self-descriptions. That is, we interact with other people in ways that diminish their freedom, for example, by interacting with them in light of concepts determined by divisions and social hierarchy. "This kind of solicitude," Heidegger points out, "takes over for the Other that with which he is to concern himself" (SZ.122). Consequently, "In such solicitude the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remains hidden from him" (SZ.122). This kind of solicitude, or this way of caring for others is inauthentic. To show solicitude for others through self-assertive domination is, on Heidegger's account, a forfeiture of authenticity. In contrast, the second sense that Heidegger attaches to the concept of solicitude suggests the possibility of our helping another person to "become transparent to himself **in** his care and to become **free** for it" (SZ.122). By caring for and respecting the freedom of others, we can help other people to become more self-reflective, more critical in the way they care for others as well.

To show respect for others is, for Heidegger, authentic solicitude. This way of Being-with others is "guided by **considerateness** and **forbearance**" (SZ.123). Considerateness and forbearance entail a form of patient regard and respect for the other, because "the ... 'other' has itself the same kind of Being as Dasein" (SZ.124). Actions that are guided by these concepts hold out the possibility that our social

relationships may be free of the taint of domination. We show forbearance in our care for others when we help them to recognize their own freedom, but not by trying to live their lives for them. We are not acting freely if we take away or compromise the freedom of other people. The fact that I deepen self-understanding by showing respect for others makes it clear that Heidegger's concept of ethical life is not an exercise in self-romance.

It would be a serious error to view Heidegger's thought as indifferent to ethics, indeed, to view it as a species of nihilism, or as giving free reign to the self-assertive will under the mask of authenticity.[32] Questions of justice and injustice, right and wrong are not overlooked because authentic self-understanding demands that we care for others in a manner that respects their freedom.

A paradox, nonetheless, shadows Heidegger's concept of authentic solicitude. Although he talks about Being-with others, Heidegger claims that solicitude is "a state of Dasein's Being" (SZ.122). Solicitude as a way of Being-with others does not necessarily entail that there be other people with whom I have relations. "Even if the particular factical Dasein does **not** turn to Others, and supposes that it has no need of them or manages to get along without them, it **is** in the way of Being-with" (SZ.123). But this paradox only serves to underscore what I described earlier as Heidegger's postmodern concept of community. The other is already "there,"

in the way I understand myself. Therefore, to be authentic I must acknowledge and respect him or her. In short, other people are not independent of authentic self-understanding. The paradox is overcome by recognizing that authentic understanding of oneself can only be properly achieved if and only if we treat others with the care and respect they deserve.

An objection to my reading of Heidegger's concept of authentic solicitude at this point might run as follows. "Where does Heidegger get the concepts of considerateness and forbearance if not from public discourse which he so scornfully brands as inauthentic?" In order to give a proper reply to this objection, we need to further clarify how the concepts of considerateness and forbearance relate to Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding.

Admittedly, Heidegger is vague about how these concepts bear upon the context of social action - especially as they relate to other people - and how in turn these contexts are related to self-understanding. However, his idea seems to be that the concepts of considerateness and forbearance need to be given a wider sphere of articulation in human life. We need to connect them to the ethical practice of the care for others in an uncompromising manner. By this I mean to suggest that it is not unimaginable that the various divisions and hierarchies which constitute everyday social life do not in fact determine and hence limit how the concepts

of considerateness and forbearance are to be interpreted, to whom they apply, at what times, and the "appropriate" contexts. For example, that I show considerateness only to people of my own kind, however "of my own kind" might be interpreted. This stipulation restricts the concept of considerateness, limits its meaning. For Heidegger, however, the concepts of considerateness and forbearance cannot be so restricted. They cannot be restricted because full individual authenticity, the heightened way in which I understand myself, demands that I acknowledge others as deeply as possible. That is, by giving these concepts a wider interpretation in social life might help us to pay closer attention to the subtle forms of domination and exclusion that come into play in our treatment of others, indeed, they enable me to become more cognizant of my lapses, my evasions of myself when I evade others.

Considerateness and forbearance deepen our sense of community with others. These concepts help to make perceptible the taint of social hierarchy, a social hierarchy that might be based on birth, class, gender, race and so on. So, when Heidegger takes over the concepts of considerateness and forbearance from social discourse, a discourse which he describes as inauthentic, it does not mean that these concepts cannot be modified through criticism, when they are articulated in light of the ethic authentic self-understanding, our finitude.

In this chapter, I have shown that the key idea Heidegger advances in **Sein und Zeit** is authentic self-understanding, which entails showing solicitude for others and concern for things. I showed also that authentic self-understanding is not an exercise in self-romance because it is only through respect and acknowledgment of others that we become more authentic. I described this as Heidegger's postmodern contribution to ethical life.

In chapter 2, I examine the concept of freedom in the context of modernity.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. See Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in **Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre**, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: New American Library, 1975).

2. Richard Rorty, **Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 109.

3. See Richard Rorty, **Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

4. Richard Rorty, "Method, Social Science, and Social Hope," in **Consequences of Pragmatism** (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 203.

5. See Richard Rorty, **Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity**, 68. Although Rorty insists that Heidegger's thought, along with Derrida and Nietzsche, is dangerous to public culture, he does not tell us why it is dangerous. Responding to Rorty, Wolin asks: "Is it the ascetic, antitechnological Heidegger that Rorty wants to suppress because that Heidegger would be irreconcilable with the rich and technologically based democratic society that Rorty identifies with?" See Sheldon Wolin, "Democracy in the Discourse of Postmodernism," **Social Research** 57 (1990), 14.

6. Rorty, **Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity**, 68.

7. Wolin interprets Heidegger's distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity to mean that "human beings are divided by nature into leaders and followers." See Richard Wolin, **The Politics of Being** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 56.

8. Richard Rorty, "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey," in **Consequences of Pragmatism**, 54. See also Michael Ryan, **Marxism and Deconstruction** (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 16.

9. Richard Rorty, "Response to Simon Critchley," in **Deconstruction and Pragmatism**, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Routledge, 1996), 41.

10. John D. Caputo, "The Thought of Being and the Conversation of Mankind: The Case of Heidegger and Rorty," **Review of Metaphysics** 36 (1983), 680.

11. This is the idea behind Heidegger's claim that, in Nietzsche's thought, the metaphysics of the will to power has become actualized in the real world of modern technology.

12. For a more detailed analysis of the concept of ground in Heidegger, see Ingeborg Koza, **Das Problem des Grundes in Heideggers Auseinandersetzung mit Kant** (Düsseldorf: Henn, 1967), 89-119.

13. Okrent observes: "Husserl conceives of the fundamental form of intentionality as cognitive; Heidegger conceives of it as practical. As a result, Husserl thinks of the horizons in which beings are presented on the model of sensuous fields in which objects are placed before us for our intuitive apprehension, whereas Heidegger thinks of these horizons as fields of activity." See Mark Okrent, **Heidegger's Pragmatism** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 123.

14. Immanuel Kant, **Critique of Practical Reason**, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 5.

15. Heidegger does not use gender neutral language. To retain consistency, I maintain his usage. However, whenever possible, I use inclusive terms.

16. See Heidegger, **Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)**, ed. Friedrich-Wilhelm von Hermann (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1989), 427.

17. See sec. 13 of **Sein und Zeit** where Heidegger describes epistemology as a "founded mode" of Being-in-the-world.

18. See Jean-Paul Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism," in **Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre.**

19. Fred Dallmayr, "Ontology of Freedom: Heidegger and Political Philosophy," **Political Theory** 12 (1984), 208.

20. See, for example, Stanley Rosen, **Nihilism** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 44ff; and his more recent **The Question of Being** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). See also Charles Guignon, **Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge** (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 207.

21. Allan Megill, **Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida** (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 151.

22. Fred R. Dallmayr, "Ontology of Freedom: Heidegger and Political Philosophy," **Political Theory** 12 (1984), 213.

23. Megill's subjective reading of Heidegger's concept of freedom is linked to his overall interpretation of Heidegger's thought as an "archaizing idealism." The alchemism of archaism and radical subjectivism combines to form Heidegger's way out of modernity. See Allan Megill, **Prophets of Extremity**, 180.

24. Heidegger's concept of human identity as having a context-breaking capacity is closely related to Simmel's view; namely, that "a society is ... a structure which consists of beings who stand inside and outside of it at the same time." See Georg Simmel, "How is Society Possible?" in **On Individuality and Social Forms**, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 14-15. In a similar line of thought, Unger describes individual freedom as a "troubled particularity," which is "the belief that the capabilities and demands of the self are disproportionate to its circumstances." See Roberto Mangabeira Unger, **Passion: An Essay on Personality** (New York: Free Press, 1984), 4. Unger also makes this radical concept of human identity central to his social theory. See his **The Critical Legal Studies Movement** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 91-108; **Social Theory: Its Situation and Task** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-25; and **False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-40.

25. Murdoch's view of freedom invites comparison. She writes: "Freedom is not strictly speaking the exercise of the will, but rather the experience of accurate vision which, when this becomes appropriate, occasions action." See Iris Murdoch, **The Sovereignty of Good** (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 67.

26. Heidegger, **Discourse on Thinking**, trans. John M. Anderson and E. Freund (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), 81.

27. Michael Sandel, **Liberalism and the Limits of Justice** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 179.

28. See Friedrich Nietzsche, **The Anti-Christ**, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), sec. 13.

29. Stephen K. White, "Heidegger and the Difficulties of a Postmodern Ethics and Politics," **Political Theory** 18 (1990), 82.

30. Martin Heidegger, "Television Interview," in **Martin Heidegger and National Socialism**, ed. Gunther Neske and Emile Kettering, trans. Lisa Harries (New York: Paragon, 1990), 82.

31. Caputo claims that there are three: domination, indifference and assistance. See John D. Caputo, "Heidegger's Original Ethics," **New Scolasticism** 45 (1971): 127-138.

32. See the discussion, which amounts to an extended definition of political romanticism, in Carl Schmitt, **Political Romanticism**, trans. Guy Oakes (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986). See also Alasdair MacIntyre, **After Virtue** (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), chapters, 2, 3, and 6 for his criticism of modern ethics of authenticity. Consider also Tawney's warning: "Those who seek God in isolation from their fellowman, unless trebly armed for the perils of the quest, are apt to find, not God, but a devil, whose countenance bears an embarrassing resemblance to their own." See R. H. Tawney, **Religion and the Rise of Capitalism** (London: Penguin, 1990), 229.

Chapter 2

Anxiety, Death and Modernity: Heidegger as a Postmodern Thinker

The previous chapter argued that the ethical concept of authentic self-understanding is fundamental to Heidegger's thought in **Sein und Zeit**. This chapter develops further this concept. In this chapter, I examine Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding in the context of modernity. Specifically, self-understanding is discussed with reference to the concept of scientific reason, which Heidegger views as the metaphysics of modernity. I argue that Heidegger's decoupling of self-understanding from scientific reason does not devolve into a new archaism, as some of his critics contend, but instead reinstates what scientific reason denies, namely, human nature as mortal together with a much wider concept of Being. Hence, Heidegger's critical confrontation with modernity is best viewed as trying to answer the ethical question of how we ought to relate to the social present in light of our finitude.

For Heidegger, scientific reason is the metaphysics of modernity and its roots lie in the Cartesian concept of Being as self-certitude.

> [Modernity] has its own historical ground in the place where every history seeks its essential ground, namely, in metaphysics.... Descartes' metaphysics is the decisive beginning of the foundation of metaphysics in the modern age. It was his task **to ground the metaphysical ground of man's liberation in the new freedom of self-assured self-legislation** (Niv.100).

Descartes's concept of Being as self-certitude becomes "a new determination of freedom" (Niv.97). The concept of Being as self-certitude underpins not only Descartes's concept of the subject as **cogito**, but also what would later become Nietzsche's concept of the subject as **Übermensch**. In Nietzsche's thought, however, the Cartesian concept of Being as self-certitude gets radicalized into that of will to power.

The roots of scientific reason extend much deeper than the modern metaphysics of self-certitude. Heidegger links scientific reason to the tradition of Western metaphysics, which he describes as "technological." "Modern science and the total state ... [are] consequences of the nature of technology" (PLT.112). Metaphysics as technique thinks Being, freedom, with reference to a fundamental ground. Scientific reason as the technology of modernity thus thinks Being as a whole.

Heidegger illuminates the totalizing character of metaphysics when he states that "every metaphysical question can only be put in such a way that the questioner as such is by his very questioning involved in the question (WM.242). On this account, the enterprise of metaphysics is self-referring.

When one asks about the nature of Being, one is also asking how one ought to understand oneself. It means that the answer we give to the question of Being, the unique question of metaphysics, indicates how we relate to Being. What has this to do with science? "Our existence ... is ruled by science" Heidegger writes (WM.242). Scientific reason as the dominant concept of modernity determines how we understand ourselves.

In a very useful essay, Wayne Hudson views Heidegger as a postmodern thinker who questions "**the notion of 'modernity' itself**" in order "to expose its totalizations, unifications and evasions."[1] As a postmodern thinker, I want to suggest that Heidegger confronts scientific reason by reinstating those things which scientific reason denies or evades in order to shake its hegemony.[2]

Scientific reason denies two things. "The self-assertion of technological objectification is the constant negation of death" (PLT.125). Scientific reason denies our nature as mortals, our finite freedom. What scientific or technological reason also denies are those aspects of things that cannot be calculated. "[Things] can no longer pierce through the objectification to show their own" (PLT.113). Heidegger wants to institute a way of relating to beings that is much broader, where we can think "Being ... [as] what is unique to beings" (PLT.131). He describes this style of thinking as ethical, and he views it as a possible way out of the modern epoch that is neither utopic nor nostalgic. In

short, Heidegger's thought relentlessly pursues the emancipatory consequences of human finitude by remaining critically and inextricably linked to the social present. He does this by reinstating death as fundamental to self-understanding as well as Being.

For Heidegger, understanding oneself as mortal, as capable of death, is the ethical condition of experiencing Being in the round, its "invisible" side, what Lyotard describes as the "**impresentable.**" These are aspects about ourselves, others, things, that are unavailable to scientific self-understanding because they escape calculation. Theses sides become visible when we shift perspective, when we understand ourselves as finite. It is this nether world of death and anxiety which haunts scientific reason. The invisible presence of death is the experiential basis of Heidegger's confrontation with scientific modernity.

The concept of death in Heidegger's thought denotes both an experience as well as a shift in perspective towards Being. Anxiety as an experience enables this shift to happen. The concept of "**death** is the most profoundly radical way of expressing this shift" in perspective.[3] Death is the condition of the postmodern.

In a much quoted account, Lyotard defines the postmodern to mean "incredulity toward metanarratives."[4] On this account, the postmodern is more a sceptical attitude one adopts towards the social present than a doctrine or method.

By a metanarrative Lyotard means second-order discourses which purport to legitimate or ground what we say and do, for example, Spirit, will to power, the laws of history, and so on. This account of the postmodern as a kind of generalized scepticism remains, however, parasitic on that of the modern. It does not move positively beyond the modern.

In a more positive formulation Lyotard describes postmodernism (not postmodern) as a radicalization of modernism. He claims that postmodernism is about the "invention of other realities."[5] On Heidegger's account, this view of postmodernism is nothing more than a restatement of the Nietzschean concept of the will to power. Postmodernism is indeed modernism, namely, a radicalization of the Cartesian **cogito**, a form of heroic willing without the need for metaphysical **certitude,** what Lyotard describes as the "stability of the referent." If this is what Lyotard means by postmodernism, then he is certainly vulnerable to the charge Taylor makes against him. "The 'post-modernism' of Lyotard turns out to be an overelaborated boost for the first spiritual profile of modernism, in the name of unrestricted freedom."[6]

But Lyotard also gives a more positive account of the postmodern (not postmodernism) which remains undeveloped in his work, and which Taylor's criticism does not address. On this account, "the postmodern would be that which, in the modern, puts forward the unpresentable (**impresentable**) in

presentation itself." As a kind of postmodern ethic, Lyotard urges that we "be witness to the unpresentable" by "activating ... differences."[7]

In my account of Heidegger as a postmodern thinker, I shall develop further Lyotard's concept of the "unpresentable" with reference to what Heidegger describes as "beings in the ... plentitude of all their facets" (PLT.124). This is the idea of affirming different facets of Being which are unavailable to scientific reason. This is an idea Heidegger speaks about in many different ways. For example, he speaks about "the multidimensionality of the realm peculiar to thinking" (BW.195); "the overflow beyond number" (PLT.128) and so on. What Lyotard lacks, however, is a positive account of the subject because he views the subject as inextricable from the circuit of representational thought to which he is opposed. Heidegger's concept of the subject as finite furthers in a positive manner Lyotard's postmodern ethic of affirming differences.

The ethical question that Heidegger poses with reference to scientific reason is the following. "What essential things are happening to us in the foundations of our existence, now that science has become our passion?" (WM.242). In order to give a fuller response to this question, and in order to gauge the "totalizing" character of scientific reason, I shall place it in the larger context opened up by Heidegger's remarkable contemporary Max Weber. This will allow

us to appreciate the importance of the question as well as the radical nature of Heidegger's response, which is to overcome scientific reason by reinstating human finitude as essential to the articulation of Being in the social present.

Fatal Reason: Weber's Profile of Modernity

Weber observes:

> The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations.[8]

The "times" in question is that of modernity, and, like Heidegger, Weber views scientific reason - what he terms **Zweckrationalität** - as central to its development. Weber views scientific reason as playing a central role in shaping the way we understand ourselves ethically, as well as Being central to the demise of a vast cultural world and its replacement with another, what he calls modernity.

Weber poses the question of the meaning of science as a vocation, as a way of understanding ourselves in relation to the social present. "[T]his process of disenchantment, ... this 'progress,' to which science belongs" as a link and motive force, do they have any meanings that go beyond the purely practical and technical?"[9] Weber's question goes beyond the positivist question as to whether scientific reason can address the question of value. Weber is asking what it means

individually and culturally, to be scientific - not just what it means to be a practitioner of science, but more importantly, to have our existence **ruled** by scientific reason, to give science the importance which in an earlier age people accorded to religion, community. What does it mean to be modern?

For Weber, scientific reason is not "the 'way to true being,' the 'way to true art,' the 'way to true nature,' ... the 'way to true happiness'."[10] Science has nothing to say about self-understanding beyond the public functional view of ourselves which it makes available. A nonfunctional view of self-understanding lies elsewhere, namely, in private life. What this means is that within modernity the individual has "to give himself **an account of the ultimate meaning of his own conduct.**"[11] This fact, Weber writes, "is the inescapable condition of our historical situation. We cannot evade it so long as we remain true to ourselves."[12]

The magnitude of the historical shift wrought by scientific reason, and its impact on the way we understand ourselves, is such that we are yet, according to Weber, to comprehend it fully. In spite of the fact that we live in an inescapable, fatally rational epoch, we still hanker after enchantment. It is hard to stifle the urge to populate the world with enchanted powers. We still hanker after ways of self-understanding that extend beyond the functional roles made available by scientific reason, ways that extend beyond

modernity.[13] Weber sums up this ongoing agonic relationship between historical reality and subjective desire:

> We live as did the ancients when their world was not yet disenchanted of its gods and demons, only we live in a different sense. As Hellenistic man at times sacrificed to Aphrodite and at other times to Apollo, and, above all, as everybody sacrificed to the gods of his city, so do we still nowadays, only the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity. Fate, and certainly not 'science,' holds sway over these gods and their struggles.[14]

By invoking the idea of fate as wielding dominion over the gods and not science, Weber reaffirms that scientific reason has nothing to say about nonscientific forms of self-understanding within the public culture of modernity. At the same time, he observes that

> [m]any old gods ascend from their graves; they are disenchanted and hence take the form of impersonal forces. They strive to gain power over our lives and again they continue their eternal struggle with one another.[15]

The old gods reappear in the form of floating ideological signifiers, such as, "the nation," "progress," "nature," and so on.[16] All of these dishonest words, as Nietzsche calls them, are for Weber terms of enchantment, nonrational terms, and he views them as having no place in modern public life because they lie outside of the purview of scientific reason.[17] Weber's view of modern self-understanding can be contrasted to a premodern one.

In the tightly knit world of feudal culture, with its lyrical hierarchies and attachments, historical values and

superstitions, one understood oneself as belonging to a family, village, town, province, nation, kingdom, empire, all of which were embedded within a universe constituted by natural law. Burke glorifies this particular view of social life.

> Each contract of each particular state is but a clause in the great primeval contract of eternal society, linking the lower with the higher natures, connecting the visible and invisible world, according to a fixed compact sanctioned by inviolable oath which holds all physical and moral natures each in their appointed place.[18]

With the passage of time, however, this pastoral picture of premodern culture, with its gradations of ranks and organic groups that existed over the individual "was more and more exposed to attacks which proceeded from a centralizing tendency," what Gierke describes as "the 'antique-modern' concept of the State-Unit as an absolute and exclusive concentration of all group life."[19] Locke defends the centralizing tendency of the modern state, together with its destruction of the older feudal culture on the grounds that this tendency accords with "true reason," and fosters what he describes as the "publick good." On his view, the state is justified in destroying "Customs and Priviledges" when the "reason for them are ceased."[20]

With the coming of political and cultural modernity, the decisive event being that of the French Revolution, the values of the pre-revolutionary world became quaint remnants of a long past era.[21] In the new world of rational politics,

a form of politics based on dehistoricized "evident truths," we witness the birth of a culture where the **practice** of politics is essentially eclipsed. Public political life, that is, the collective exercise of power, becomes based on abstractions and delocalized power. The only thing that now constrains action is bare will. In the words of Burke:

> nature is disobeyed, and the rebellious are outlawed, cast forth, and exiled, from this world of reason, and order, and peace, and virtue, and fruitful penitence, into the antagonist world of madness, discord, vice, confusion, and unavailing sorrow.[22]

In short, with the coming of the French Revolution, the old world of loose collective sentiments and attachments no longer exercises effective power. The forms of social understanding which we associate with feudal life are viewed as having a totalitarian tinge. Where politics as rational procedure is everything, substance as informed practice becomes nothing.[23]

The democratic counterpoint to the centralizing power of the modern state, and the new rational configuration of politics taking shape was popular revolution. The French Revolution, for example, although being the decisive popular event in the new formation of power, did not destroy the centralizing tendency of the state but simply gave it a democratic tinge. It inaugurated a rationalized form of democracy based on a constitutionally guaranteed set of rights of citizens. In this new democratically-centralized configuration of state power, access to and the exercise of power is circumscribed and defined within a system of formal

laws.[24] This attempt to push through a new form of state-sponsored virtue, Rousseau's dream of the virtuous republic, in opposition to the older culture, what de Tocqueville describes as the **ancien régime**, degenerated into a reign of terror.[25]

According to Hegel, state-sponsored virtue was without real substance because it was concerned only with the values of a particular class, and without wide public acceptance. Hence the only way for these new values to gain widespread public acceptance was through propaganda and force. Hegel introduced the concept of the **Sittlichkeit**, the ethical community, as a new all-embracing social ground in order to accommodate both individual and political freedom. Hegel's concept of the ethical community finds its most perfect articulation in the modern constitutional state.

> The state is the actuality of the ethical Idea.... [S]elf-consciousness ... finds in the state, as its essence and the end and product of its activity, its substantive freedom.[26]

The modern constitutional state functions as a kind of all-embracing redemptive ground of self-understanding because it unites civil society and political society through the institution of rational law. The constitutional state unites private and public understanding of oneself with the added back-up of historical Reason as progressive. The idea of rational historical progress, which Hegel makes internal to the modern constitutional state, frees one not only from the

reactionary forces of feudal politics, but also from the modern forces of irrational revolutionary politics unleashed by the destruction of the older culture. By the time we get to Weber, however, Hegel's dream of a new ethical community has been eroded by the rationalization of public life. A breach is driven into the subject's self-understanding, which sharply divides into public and private forms of self-understanding.

If for Hegel benevolent Providence had become progress through historical Reason, for Weber the latter has lost all substance, and becomes more explicitly formal and demonic. On Weber's account, the modern state is nothing more than a political association that successfully claims the monopoly on legitimate violence.[27] The legitimation of violence is based solely on its relative success in achieving its ends because there exists no larger ethical framework within which to comprehend action other than that of instrumental efficiency. This modern view of political power was first announced by Hobbes in 1651 in his definition of felicity.

> Felicity of this life consisteth not in the repose of a mind satisfied. For there is no such **Finis ultimus** ... nor **Summum Bonum**.... Felicity is a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another;.... [A] perpetual and restless desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in death.[28]

Hobbes's concept of a degrounded power, power that legitimizes itself solely on its success in achieving its aims, explains why political modernity has as one of its most important features the concept of the nation-state, where the nation

becomes a function of state power. Indeed, in modern politics, given that the state has no substantive end or **telos**, even social welfare becomes a function of state power.

> In the final analysis, in spite of all 'social welfare policies,' the whole course of the state's inner political functions, of justice and administration is repeatedly and unavoidably regulated by the objective pragmatism of reason of state. The state's absolute end is to safeguard (or to change) the external and internal distribution of power.[29]

In light of the sharp division between public and private, reason and value, ethical questions can only be addressed in the sphere of private life. Public morality becomes synonymous with legality, following the rules laid down. Public morality becomes formal, procedural rather than substantial and, concomitantly, the concept of a public good - a concept that had some substance in premodern politics in that it bore a direct relationship to the preservation of the organic character of feudal culture - becomes fainter and fainter until it finally disappears to be replaced by subjective private life. As Hobbes put it, "Private, is in secret free."[30] Modernity enables private perfection.

Substantial reason, a name Weber attaches to the kind of value thinking that goes on in religion and morality, is, within modernity, an archaic residue, a premodern form of reason that exists at the margins of modernity in private conscience. Weber is not affirming, like the positivists, that values are **inherently** subjective in comparison to scientific

reason which is objective. He is suggesting that values have become subjective within modernity because scientific reason has driven them into the marginal realms of private conscience. Myth and enchantment are no longer publicly available. This is the meaning behind his claim that "fate, and certainly not 'science', holds sway over these gods and their struggles."

Between the rational world of public life and the threshold of private conscience, there exists an irreconcilable breach. In an age that is dominated by scientific reason, the sensibility that enabled earlier peoples to see a god behind a bush or a divine force in a stream has been pushed back behind the subjective threshold of conscience. Although aesthetic, religious and ethical relations are indeed important because they lend meaning and value to life, they are, however, publicly unavailable. They are private values. To invoke these values in the modern field testifies to their impotency, to the irreducible aspect of alienation that haunts expressions of individual freedom in the historical present. For Weber, then, there are no real resources of hope in the historical present, only nostalgic gestures toward what is no longer, what he calls the myth of the "eternal yesterday." To recognize and accept the fact that values have no place in the rational world of public affairs is to have what he calls "plain intellectual integrity."

In an economic context, we see the movement of

societal rationalization played out in what Marx describes as the "antithesis" between capital and landed property.[31] Capital, the economic embodiment of instrumental reason, is a form of exchange that is necessarily subservient to the augmentation of surplus-value. Landed property, in contrast, represents for Marx a form of economic exchange that embodies sensuous, culturally localised values, values not easily modulated to the exigencies of mobile capital. Landed property symbolises a kind of inefficient **ancien régime**, agrarian-based and local countervalent to the newer urban-based, centralizing tendency of commercial and financial capital. For capitalist rationalization to move forward, it becomes necessary to reduce or efface these earlier inefficient forms of economic relationships.

Adorno and Horkheimer view the internal imperialism of instrumental reason with mixed feelings because, with the progress of reason and the material benefits it clearly brought about, the human subject was becoming more and more insubstantial.[32] On their account, the older feudal world enabled a larger field of development for self-understanding, although at the cost of certain liberties and instituted material hardships. Their response to societal rationalization is to seek redemption in aesthetic experience. They view modernist art as a form of mimesis, an intimation of a form of reason that is noninstrumental and socially reconciliatory. Their ambition is to articulate forms of social existence

based on aesthetic values. Non-instrumental aesthetic values enable a broader development of freedom than modernity allows for. The new forms of aesthetic expression that modernity allows for are going to give rise to forms of social life that negate modernity.

For Weber, in contrast, to be modern is to be passionate and "relentless in viewing the realities of life." But more importantly, it means that you "measure up to them inwardly."[33] To be modern means that individual freedom has be reconciled to scientific reason. To turn away from what you might consider the "stupidity of the world," for something "higher," something moral, something more sublime, is to confess to being out of step, alienated from the times, an unhappy conscience. It is to admit that there is no space available in this field, as such, for ethics, a mythical notion, but only politics, which is to say strategic rational action with violence as its decisive means. Ethics, as a species of enchanted discourse, finds no resonance in the rationalized public world of modernity. It is basically a silent language, an unspeakable language, an invocation of the archaic in the midst of an insurmountable modernity.

To be in step with the powers of rationalization that dominate the modern field is how one achieves autonomy, intellectual integrity. To go against them is to go against history, fate, our "inescapable condition." It is to bring the new powers in conflict with the older, enchanted powers that

have been driven from the field, older powers that are now powerless because they inhabit a transcendental world, a phantom ideal world.

For Weber, there was no way out of this "iron cage" of rationalization and he condemned in harsh terms the type of human beings that were coming to prevail in modernity.[34] Because of his anguished acceptance of the social present as "fate," he is best viewed perhaps as what Hegel describes as the "unhappy conscience." Weber basically leaves the social present to scientific reason and a form of politics that is in accord with this form of reason, namely, strategic violence. Weber's response to modernity can be viewed as laying the groundwork for what would be described later as "aesthetic modernism," insofar as he thinks that the individual must give an account of the ultimate meaning of his or her life, but in private.[35]

The fact that scientific reason has nothing to say about ethical self-understanding, the ultimate meaning of life, of the movement and direction of history, raises the question of action: What shall you do? Can you, Weber asks, "stand up under the ethical-irrationality of the world?" Or are you going to engage in "mystic flight from reality?"[36] His advice is that we not give in to the urge to reenchant the world. We should stand our ground and see things for what they are, namely, that rationalization, science, is inescapable. In short, be modern.

Deranged Life: Heidegger as a Postmodern Thinker

Although Weber's counsel is poignantly honest, it is not, by Heidegger's lights, critical enough. It is not critical enough because Heidegger does not think that scientific reason has the last word on how we might possibly understand ourselves, nor how reality is to be articulated. Science is not fate. This does not mean that Heidegger is anti-science, or that he denies the validity of scientific knowledge. He observes that "scientific knowledge is compelling" (PLT.170). But he adds a crucial qualification. Scientific knowledge "is compelling within its own sphere, the sphere of objects" (PLT.170). It is not the case that Heidegger is postulating a realm of things beyond this world, some sort of Kantian noumenal world. Heidegger wants to understand beings in the round, beyond their objectification by scientific reason. Scientific reason offers us a limited view of things, of ourselves. This claim was first sounded in **Sein und Zeit**. "Scientific research is not the only manner of Being which ... [Dasein] can have, nor is it the one which lies closest" (SZ.11).

So, in contrast to Weber's overwhelmingly stark assessment of modernity, Heidegger's is somewhat upbeat. Whereas Weber views the domination of scientific reason as an unavoidable fate, for Heidegger, "It is never a fate that compels" (QCT.25). Scientific reason is "sustained and guided by a freely chosen attitude on the part of our human

existence" (WM.243). By this he means that scientific reason is a possible way of disclosing the world, a way of understanding ourselves. This form of reason renders beings intelligible within a specific historical and social context. From Heidegger's point of view, the forms of social life that scientific reason makes possible do not command our assent necessarily. We can be otherwise. On this account of scientific reason, Weber's stance is too fatalistic and insufficiently self-questioning, not modern enough; that is, not radical enough. Weber fails to see that scientific reason is a "determination of freedom," but it is not the only one. How we get to the point where we are able to see that science as the ground of modernity is indeed based on a "freely-chosen attitude" is discussed in detail below. What is clear from these abbreviated remarks, however, is that Heidegger's intention is evidently radical: to put scientific reason to one side and show it to be just one among many ways of Being-in-the-world. The ground of modernity is to be undermined.

In 1929, two years after the publication of his seminal text **Sein und Zeit**, Heidegger published a short lecture entitled "What is Metaphysics?" Heidegger uses the occasion to settle scores with scientific reason in a radical way. In this famous lecture Heidegger poses the question: "What about nothing?"

For scientific reason, nothing is "that which is

absolutely not" (WM.245). Scientific reason is concerned with reality and nothing else. Science is unable to think about experience together with the way we understand ourselves beyond that of a rigorously defined method of making sense of the world, namely, that which is quantifiable. Beyond what is revealed by this method, nothing. In the same way that scientific reason demotes myth in order to promote itself, it avoids dealing with the concept of nothing.[37] In the same way that science dismisses mythic accounts of the world as so much nonsense, it views the concept of nothing as unworthy of interest. Heidegger opposes this scientific view of nothing and claims that "Nothing ... reveals itself as integral to the Being of what-is" (WM.255); and that "Being ... is only revealed in the Transcendence of **Da-sein** as projected into Nothing" (WM.255).

Not surprisingly, the self-appointed guardians of scientific reason, people like Ayer and Carnap, are scandalized. They view Heidegger as claiming that there is something called nothing, hence they claim that Heidegger is "misusing" language. If Heidegger wants to talk about nothing he should have followed Nietzsche's example and written poetry, and not try and squeeze nonsense into the citadel of positive reason, namely, philosophy.[38]

Wittgenstein, an idiosyncratic philosopher of genius, was more circumspect in his judgment of this essay and claimed to understand "what Heidegger mean[t] by Being and dread."[39]

Heidegger himself, apparently swayed by the ferment and misunderstandings generated by his project in general and his 1929 lecture in particular, jumped back into the action and added, in 1943, a nine-page "Post-script" to the original text. Not satisfied with this effort, in 1949, he added another instalment to the text, a fifteen-page introduction to the original lecture entitled "The Way Back into the Ground of Metaphysics." This latter text was intended to show that his concern with metaphysics was not for the sake of a deeper or better metaphysics, but an attempt to show the inextricable relationship of Being to human finitude.

In contrast to the positivist reception of Heidegger's concept of nothing, some French philosophers, especially Foucault and Blanchot, admire Heidegger's daring, his defiant and seemingly outrageous attempt to think Being with reference to nothing, the "**impensable**," what Foucault describes as "the silence beyond all language and the nothingness beyond all beings."[40] But Heidegger's opposition to scientific reason is not an attempt to defy reason by making nothing into "something" as the positivists claim, nor is it as dramatic as the French philosophers make it out to be. Heidegger opposes scientific reason because it denies us a holistic understanding of ourselves as mortal together with a fuller, more rounded view of Being.

What Heidegger means by "nothing" is death. "The essence of man ... belongs to nothingness" (QB.83). For

scientific reason, however, death is that which is absolutely not. Hence, scientific reason is "the constant negation of death" (PLT.125). In contrast, Heidegger does not view death "negatively," as nothing. Death, as the "other" side of life has to be taken "positively," because "death and the realm of the dead belong to the whole of beings as its other side" (PLT.124).

For Heidegger, death represents the invisible side of Being, Lyotard's "**impresentable**," which remains inscrutable to scientific reason, but which, nonetheless, has to be affirmed. This side of life has to be affirmed because "as the shrine of Nothing, death harbors within itself the presencing of Being.... [D]eath is the shelter of Being" (PLT.178-179). Death as the other side of life which is negated by scientific reason is internal to the concept of Being itself. To affirm death is to affirm an expansive, more authentic concept of beings. To affirm death is to affirm the invisible as internal to the visible.

For Heidegger, death functions as a perspective as well as an experience. As a perspective, death imparts a richness to the visible world. Death functions as a marker, a limit to scientific reason. It indicates that things are more than objects of the self-legislative will. As a perspective on the daylight world of scientific reason, death suggests that things have "dim" sides to them, a dimness that suggests "an underlying depth," an underlying richness (PLT.109). "And

Dionysos," Heraclitus asks, "do they realize that he is the same god as Hades, Lord of the Dead?" (Heraclitus, Frag.77).[41] As this Hades-Dionysos identity suggests, there is an overflowing richness associated with death. Self-understanding is deepened in a profound way when we affirm Being by affirming also its invisible side, which is death. Death is neither null nor void.[42]

As an experience, death "presences" in human life. "We ... call mortals mortals - not because their earthly life comes to an end, but because they are capable of death as death" (PLT.179). The idea of understanding ourselves as mortal does not mean simply that we die, that our lives come to an end. The concept of death as a presence in life holds a profound meaning in Heidegger's thought. We are "capable of death as death" because we are moved, we are made anxious by the feeling that we shall be no more. This invisible presence is a force which could and does shape the way we understand ourselves, death deepens the sensibility we have in our rapport with the world. "If I die," Lorca writes, "leave the balcony open!"[43]

The presence of death in life is what fosters a turn toward death as a perspective, it is what fosters the idea of understanding ourselves authentically. Death takes us to the other side of life, which, in Heidegger's words, is nothing. Death as an invisible presence in life opens up a larger perspective on Being. It allows us to care for beings in the

widest possible way. This ethic of affirming that which remains inscrutable to scientific reason is, as Heidegger put it, an attempt to "will nothing" (PLT.140).

Because we are capable of death, we have a unique relation to the Being of beings. Because we are touched by the invisible presence of death, we are able to see things beyond their determination by scientific reason. To achieve this larger perspective, however, as "rational beings," we "must first **become** mortals" (PLT.179,182). How do we become mortals? That is, how is death, nothing, revealed?

The reclamation of death as internal to our self-understanding is concomitant with the decentering of scientific reason. Heidegger does this by making central to his thought experiences which, as he put it, cannot be "commandeered." These experiences reveal the limits of our finitude; for example, love, pain and anxiety. These experiences show the limited nature of scientific self-understanding because they show in a radical way that this form of self-understanding is incomplete, and we can understand ourselves differently. They reveal scientific understanding to be a possibility of our freedom.

Heidegger makes the emotions central to his concept of ethical life, yet, ever since Plato, philosophers have been trying to stamp out and eliminate the "distortions" that the passions introduce into rational thought and action. In contrast, Heidegger doubts that we can entertain a notion of

reality outside of our affective life. He claims that even when we attend to reality in an objective and detached fashion we are merely attending to it in an indifferent mood, we have merely "dimmed" reality "down to the uniformity of what is purely present-at-hand" (SZ.138). So in the same way that many philosophers of science have come to accept the fact that observations are theory-laden, we can say that things, as they give themselves to us, are also already worked-over by our affective life.

Heidegger is suggesting that what anxiety makes manifest, namely, Being "itself," is not wholly translatable into the language of objectivity or scientific discourse. The magma of significations released by the emotions are not translatable into the univocal language of scientific discourse. Thus, to affirm these meanings entails living with contingency and instability, living without a prewritten script.

Heidegger describes our emotional life as the "ground phenomenon of our **Da-sein**" (WM.248). The emotions lend a certain unsteadiness, a certain irreducible play to the world that scientific reason would like to banish.[44] "There is a new sun for every day" (frag.36), writes Heraclitus. Everyday Being-in-the-world, as refracted through our emotional life, makes the world ebb and flow, things reveal and conceal themselves in an unstable manner. Instead of having a single meaning, the world acquires multiple senses, multiple

textures. "[W]hen we see the 'world' unsteadily and fitfully in accordance with our moods," Heidegger writes, it is "never the same from day to day" (SZ.138).

In the unsteadiness of anxiety, the world expands. All images, concepts of reality, in the distress brought on by anxiety, take on a new, volatile life. The diffused and generalized distress that anxiety brings has the capacity to decompose our image of the world. The referent becomes something volatile, in constant motion. "[I]n the very act of drawing away from us everything turns towards us". This return of reality to a kind of original fullness "oppresses" us because "there is nothing to hold on to" (WM.249).

"It is night," Nietzsche writes, and "only now do all songs of lovers awaken. And my soul too is the song of a lover."[45] Anxiety, like death, sleep, dream, love, is an offspring of Night.[46] Heidegger returns anxiety to its mythical nocturnal context when he states that "[a]nxiety can arise in the most innocuous Situations." But "[i]n the dark there is emphatically 'nothing' to see, though the very world itself is **still** 'there', and 'there' **more obtrusively**" (SZ.189). In the night world of anxiety, dream, and death, reality obeys no prewritten objective script. In the nocturnal world of death, things acquire a magma of significations which ineluctably collide with those of waking life. From the perspective of waking life, the nocturnal perspective of death is deranged, mad. "If one takes ... everyday representation as

the sole standard of all things, then philosophy is always something deranged (**verrücktes**)" writes Heidegger.[47] In the nocturnal world, the psyche follows its own inexorable movement, working on, transfiguring and expanding the stable images of waking consciousness. The night-world of "death and the realm of the dead" is not as black or as dead as Hegel would have us believe.[48]

According to Dodds, "the original Earth oracle at Delphi had been a dream-oracle."[49] And Socrates's last words, if we are to believe Plato, are these: "Crito ... we owe a cock to Asclepius: Please pay the debt and don't neglect it."[50] On the threshold of death, Socrates demands of his friend Crito a libation to Asclepius the god of healing. But not only is Asclepius skilled in the art of healing, he also practices his craft from the shadowy depths of the underworld.[51] This is the world of psyche, dream, death. Socrates is about to enter this world on a fulltime basis. I conjecture that he is thankful for the health of his soul, and not his body. Spending most of his adult life trafficking between the waking world of Athenian daily life and that of his daemonic voice, he is at last free to return to the nocturnal world of psyche, as if to vindicate the claim he makes in the **Phaedo** that philosophy is indeed the preparation for death.

"By breaking with the objectivity which fascinates waking consciousness and by reinstating the human subject in

its radical freedom," Foucault writes, "the dream discloses paradoxically the movement of freedom toward the world."[52] Foucault affirms here what Heidegger suggests an episode of anxiety can bring about, namely, a radical break with our accepted ways of self-understanding, hence, our ways of Being-in-the-world. In the same way that Foucault views the dream not as a phenomenon to be interpreted in the stable language of waking life, but instead as a nocturnal manifestation of our freedom, Heidegger views death and anxiety as pointing us toward an expansive view of self-understanding; that is, a deeper form of engagement with the world.

Anxiety towards death returns beings to their particularity, by expanding their range of significations beyond that of scientific reason. The experience of our finitude decouples self-understanding from its modern grounding in scientific reason. We become mortals.

> "Were **Da-sein** not, in its essential basis, transcendent, that to say, were it not projected from the start into Nothing, it could never relate to what-is, hence could have no self-relationship" (WM.251).

To affirm death, nothing, "positively" is to affirm a more authentic view of self-understanding. It is also to affirm differences, the "**impresentable**." It is to affirm those sides of life which scientific reason avoids. The erosion of scientific reason portends a deeper, more expansive relation between ourselves and the world. Heidegger describes this as the care for Being.

To affirm differences beyond a constitutive ground demonstrates one's capacity for what Keats describes as "negative capability." On Keats account, one demonstrates negative capability when one is "capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason."[53] Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding as the affirmation of Being in the round is an affirmation of negative capability as an ethical practice. It is life beyond any organizing principle or fundamental ground.

Death and anxiety are intimate with the daylight world of reason, and they are forces to be reckoned with. Scientific reason is undermined by the experience of anxiety, which reveals death. Thus, scientific reason as the dominant concept of what we call modernity cannot fully determine how we understand ourselves. Anxiety reveals that the way we understand ourselves is internal to the way we understand Being. Heidegger takes anxiety and death seriously because they indicate in an intuitive way that beings, together with the way we understand ourselves can be otherwise.[54] The positive outcome of the undermining of scientific reason is a rethinking of Being as finite. Being now becomes internal to the way we understand ourselves ethically in the world. This is a form of ethical self-understanding which remains open to chance and mystery. I describe this as Heidegger's postmodern concept of ethical life.

The concept of freedom is central to philosophical modernity. But freedom, in this context, is determined by scientific reason. Heidegger decouples freedom from this ground and, at the same time, recovers those aspects of ourselves which scientific reason avoids or denies. I view this recovery of authentic freedom in Heidegger's thought as a deepening of the project of modernity. In this sense, Heidegger remains faithful to the Enlightenment ideal of freedom, while expanding its range.

This settling of scores with scientific reason continues Heidegger's battle to overthrow metaphysics, the practice of thinking Being with reference to a fundamental ground. In his unrelenting effort to overcome this style of thinking which he equates with metaphysics in general, Heidegger denies not only science and value, but, like Nietzsche, even God (BW.226).[55] But denying God and value are merely shock effects of Heidegger's thought. Heidegger is concerned more with the meaning(s) these concepts have in human life, in the way we understand ourselves. He is claiming that these concepts are meaningful only in the way they are articulated in the world, in the kinds of actions within which they are embedded, in the way they determine self-understanding. Some commentators describe this as Heidegger's pragmatism.[56]

Heidegger wants to think ethically. His thought is ethical because he views any concept of Being as a possible

way of understanding ourselves, as enabling forms of solicitude and concern. He insists, however, that Being has to be thought with reference to human finitude. It is this insistence which leads him to reject scientific reason and seek a more expansive view of Being, a view of Being that includes the affirmation of death, nothing, as part of its positive constitution.

"It is toward the great essence of man that we are thinking" (QCT.40), Heidegger writes. To understand oneself fully, as finite, beyond the security of a ground is "the grand ambition" of his thought. This ambition reveals itself as the ethical task of understanding oneself by caring for Being. This ethical form of existence finds, indeed, seeks its reference point in human finitude. Insight into our finitude reveals that to be who you are as an individual you have to go beyond the claims society or any theory might make about who you are. Beyond all claims about your identity, there is always something "more." This more is your freedom, and it is the condition for fashioning an ethical identity that is your own. Thus, it is our nature to go beyond the accepted, the given, to return to what Nietzsche describes as our "spiritual **fatum.**"[57] It is our nature to go beyond the accepted, the habitual routine and context of thought and action because to accept the claims about who you are as an **individual** in any context is to deny yourself a possible self-relationship.

The experience of nothing, our finitude, is what makes

us fully conscious of the fact that Being is to be ethically enacted, that scientific reason is but one possibility of understanding ourselves. The outcome of understanding ourselves as finite is that "[p]hilosophy is ... set in motion" (WM.257). But what is philosophy? As Heidegger himself put it, philosophy is deranged thinking. Deranged thinking takes up the task of trying to care for Being authentically. This is an inclusive form of thinking because it thinks Being beyond the limits of any ground. Deranged thinking lets things "stay in their own way" (PLT.173). This style of thought dares to think outside of the historical present, beyond scientific reason, the metaphysics of modernity. It dares to think differently, something other than what is and what has been.

This means that the practice of philosophy is essentially the ethical practice of affirming Being, affirming those differences that lie beyond the reach of any ground. The practice of affirming differences is a way of furthering self-understanding. The practice of trying to affirm, care for beings, others, expansively is a way of labouring on ourselves, a way of fashioning an individual ethical identity.

The next chapter examines Habermas's criticism of Heidegger's postmodernism.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. See Wayne Hudson, "Postmodernity and Contemporary Thought," in **Politics and Social Theory**, ed. Peter Lassman (London: Routledge, 1989), 151.

2. Here Heidegger anticipates Derrida's deconstructivist strategy of using that which reason denies to undermine reason itself. For example, in his discussion of Husserl's concept of ideal objectivity, Derrida reinstates what Husserl brackets, namely, the material sign, in order to deny the view that meaning is wholly ideal. See Jacques Derrida's "Introduction," to Edmund Husserl's **L'Origine de la géométrie**, 2nd ed. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974).

3. See James Hillman, **The Dream and the Underworld** (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 66.

4. Jean-François Lyotard, **The Postmodern Condition**, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

5. **Ibid.**, 77.

6. See Charles Taylor, **Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 490.

7. Lyotard, **The Postmodern Condition**, 81, 82.

8. Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in **From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology**, ed. Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946). 155.

9. **Ibid.**, 139

10. **Ibid.**, 143.

11. **Ibid**, 152.

12. **Ibid.**, 152.

13. Against Weber, one might argue that the need for enchantment **is** fate. It is as if we cannot think and act outside of something akin to Truth, a greater narrative beyond ourselves. Even the unrepentant modern ethic of "possessive individualism" is such a narrative, because it postulates a universal condition of fear and desire to all mankind. This

desire for a larger truth beyond ourselves is what Foucault began to question at the end of his life, and which Rorty suggests that philosophy seems unable to do without because it has been a central part of its self-image for such a long time. See Michel Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in **The Final Foucault**, ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 15. See also Richard Rorty, **Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 373ff. Nietzsche is the great figure who lies behind much postmodern scepticism towards the concept of truth. See his **Beyond Good and Evil**, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), Part 1, s. 1. where he discusses the "will to truth."

14. **From Max Weber**, 148.

15. **From Max Weber**, 149. Weber seems to have written this in direct opposition to Burckhardt's claim that "without a transcendent urge which outweighs all the clamour for power and money, nothing will be of any use." See Karl Löwith, **Meaning in History** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 28.

16. See Carl L. Becker's classic discussion in **The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-century Philosophers** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932). See also Reinhart Koselleck, **Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society** (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 127-37.

17. Wolin describes this as the "irreducible element of alienation" which accompanies any affirmation of transcendental values within the official means-end hermeneutic of late-modernity. See Sheldon Wolin, "Postmodern Politics and the Absence of Myth," **Social Research** 52 (1985), 217.

18. Edmund Burke, **Burke's Politics: Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke on Reform, Revolution, and War**, ed. Ross J.J. Hoffman and Paul Levack (New York: Knopf, 1949), 318.

19. See Otto Gierke, **Political Theories of the Middle Ages**, trans. F.W. Maitland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900), 21. Marx describes the monopolization of state power as a "political revolution." The monopolization of state power is a revolution because it "**abolished the political character of civil society.**" By this Marx means that the centralization of political power destroyed the intermediary ranks and social hierarchies that acted as countervailing powers to the state. With the shattering of these intermediary powers, and their absorption by the state, the latter now had

a **direct** connection to "individuals." See Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in **Early Writings**, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregory Benton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 232. For a more recent discussion on the social and cultural consequences wrought by the centralization of state power, see Claus Offe, "Political Culture and Social Democratic Administration," in **Contradictions of the Welfare State**, ed. John Keane (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

20. See John Locke, **Two Treatises of Government**, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), Bk.II, 157.

21. This new context of rational politics brings with it the idea of an eternal beginning, of authentic historical action starting from ground zero, a form of rational politics which is most clearly symbolized in the archaic revival of the oath as the pledging of one's will. See the discussion in Christopher Hibbert, **The Days of the French Revolution** (London: Penguin, 1989), chapter 1. See also Jean Starborinski **1789: Les emblèmes de raison** (Paris: Flammarion, 1979). From a mythological perspective, Hillman writes: "The frigid river Styx (whose name, "hateful" or "hatred," derives from **stygeo**, "to hate") is the deepest source of the Gods' morality, for on its water they swear their oaths, implying that hatred plays an essential part in the universal order of things." In the same vein, "Styx's children are called Zellus (zeal), Nike (victory), Bios (force) and Cratos (strength). Their mother's cold hatefulness is converted by them into implacable traits we have come to accept as virtues. Her children provide the prototypes for that crusading morality which accompanies the ego on its righteous tasks of destroying in order to maintain itself." See James Hillman, **The Dream and the Underworld**, 57f.

22. Burke, **Burke's Politics**, 318.

23. This is what Simmel describes as the "tragedy of modern life"; that is, in order to affirm what you might consider your "true" identity, you have to move "outside" of official society, and into private life. See Georg Simmel, "The Conflict in Modern Culture," and "How is Society Possible?" in **On Individuality and Social Forms**, ed. Donald N. Levine (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

24. See the discussion in Roberto Mangabeira Unger, **Law in Modern Society: Toward a Criticism of Social Theory** (New York: The Free Press, 1976), 127-33.

25. See Hegel's discussion of state terror in **Phenomenology of Mind**, trans. J.B. Baille (New York: Harper, 1967), 599-610.

26. G.W.F. Hegel, **Philosophy of Right**, trans. Tom Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 257.

27. **From Max Weber**, 78.

28. Hobbes, **Leviathan**, ed. C.B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 160-61.

29. **From Max Weber**, 334.

30. Hobbes, **Leviathan**, 401. This historical achievement is perhaps best symbolized by the sharp line that the absolute sovereign introduced, defined, and enforced between the political realm which was public and governed by law, namely his, and that of morality, which was private and governed by conscience. See the theoretical and historical analysis of the dialectic between morality and politics in Reinhart Koselleck, **Critique and Crisis: The Pathogenesis of Modern Society.**

31. Karl Marx, **Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844**, trans. Martin Milligan (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988), 85ff.

32. On Adorno's and Horkheimer's account, the development of Western civilization entails that scientific reason be used to subdue both subjective and objective nature because this is the only way, not only to control external reality but also to control subjective desires, - desires unleashed after the break-up of the older feudal culture. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, trans. John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1973). Habermas describes the rationalizing and centralizing tendencies of modernity, specifically the intrusion of instrumental reason into more and more spheres of life as the "colonization of the life-world." See Jürgen Habermas, **The Theory of Communicative Action**, Vol. 1, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 143ff.

33. **From Max Weber**, 127-28.

34. See Max Weber, **The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism**, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Scribner's, 1958), 182.

35. In contrast to Weber's anguished liberal engagement with modern technological reason, and its relation to politics and ethical life, Rorty is somewhat more upbeat. He views modernity as making possible what he calls "private irony." This is the view that individuals can happily accept the material benefits of modern technology, **and** happily pursue their own ends of private moral perfection. See Richard Rorty,

Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). See also Sheldon Wolin's sharp response to Rorty in his essay "Democracy in the Discourse of Postmodernism," **Social Research** 57 (1990): 5-30.

36. **From Max Weber**, 122, 128.

37. In this sense, scientific reason adheres to the ideology that Comte spelled out in his **Cours de philosophie positive**. This is the relegation of the mytho-theological consciousness to the earliest stage of mankind. See Auguste Comte, **Auguste Comte and Positivism: The Essential Writings**, ed. Gertrud Lenzer (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 72.

38. See Rudolf Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics through Logical Analysis of Language," in **Logical Positivism**, ed. A.J. Ayer (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1959); this text first appeared in **Erkenntnis** 2 (1932). See also A.J. Ayer **Language, Truth and Logic** (London: Gollancz, 1946), 43-44. When all the heat generated by Heidegger's text had abated somewhat, but as a testimony to both its enduring strength and legendary status, Quine, a positivist-inspired pragmatist, as late as 1960, also added his bit against Heidegger's concept of nothing. See W.V.O. Quine, **Word and Object** (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 133. For a brisk response to the positivists' misinterpretation of Heidegger's concept of "**das Nichts**," see Paul Feyerabend, **Science in a Free Society** (London: Verso, 1982), 191.

39. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Heidegger on Being and Dread," in **Heidegger and Modern Philosophy**, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 80.

40. Michel Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot: The Thought From Outside," in **Foucault/Blanchot**, trans. Brian Massumi (New York: Zone Books, 1987), 16.

41. **Herakleitos and Diogenes**, trans. Guy Davenport (San Francisco: Grey Fox, 1976); all quoted fragments of Heraclitus are taken from this text.

42. Hillman augments Heidegger's affirmation of death as a positive perspective on life. "[Hades] ... was referred to as 'the unseen one', more often as Pluto ('wealth', 'riches') or as Trophonios ('nourishing').... Pluto refers to the hidden wealth or riches of the invisible.... Hades was the wealthy one, the giver of nourishment to the soul. Sometimes he was fused with Thanatos ('Death').... Hades is not an absence, but a hidden presence - even an invisible fullness." See James Hillman, **The Dream and the Underworld**, 28.

43. Federico García Lorca, "Despedida," in **The Selected Poems of Federico García Lorca**, ed. Francisco García Lorca (New York: New Directions, 1955), 53.

44. This seems to be the idea behind Claudel's remark that "a certain blue of the sea is so blue that only blood would be more red." See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, **The Visible and the Invisible**, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 132.

45. Friedrich Nietzsche, **Thus Spoke Zarathustra**, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 129.

46. See Hesiod, "Theogony," in **Hesiod and Theognis**, trans. Dorothea Wender (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), 30, 48.

47. Heidegger, **What is a Thing?** trans. W.B. Barton and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967), 1-2.

48. Hillman writes: "There is a **zoe**, a vitality in all underworld phenomena. The realm of the dead is not as dead as we expect. Hades too can rape and also seize the psyche." **The Dream and the Underworld**, 45.

49. E.R. Dodds, **The Greeks and the Irrational** (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), 110.

50. Plato, **Phaedo**, trans. David Gallop (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 118.

51. On one account, "So skilled a physician was Asclepius ... that when Hippolytus died, Artemis appealed to him to restore her devoted follower to life. Asclepius agreed and was successful but incurred the wrath of Zeus for such a disruption of nature. Asclepius was hurled into the lower world by a thunderbolt." See Mark P.O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, **Classical Mythology**, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1977), 163. See also the discussion of the cult of Asclepius in Dodds, **The Greeks and the Irrational,** 110-116; 193.

52. See Michel Foucault, "Dream, Imagination and Existence," trans. Forrest Williams, **Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry** 19 (1984-85), 51. This essay was originally published as the "Introduction" to Ludwig Binswanger's **Le Rêve et l'existence** (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1954), 8-128.

53. See **The Letters of John Keats**, ed. Maurice Forman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931), 75-78. See also Michael Oakeshott's use of this locution in his essay "Rationalism in Politics," in **Rationalism in Politics** (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 6; see also Roberto Mangabeira

Unger, **The Critical Legal Studies Movement** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 93-94.

54. From a sociological perspective, Alberoni describes the experience of freedom as a "fundamental experience which is in itself metahistorical." This experience may in turn generate or intimate an "**alternative solidarity**." See Franceso Alberoni, **Movement and Institution**, trans. Patricia C. Arden Delmoro (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 20.

55. Not surprisingly, some view Heidegger as "Lucifer in person." See Iris Murdoch, **The Sovereignty of Good** (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), 72.

56. See Mark Okrent, **Heidegger's Pragmatism** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); and Robert Brandom, "Heidegger's Categories in **Being and Time**," **The Monist** 60 (1983).

57. Friedrich Nietzsche, **Beyond Good and Evil**, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1966), sec. 231.

Chapter 3

Habermas on Heidegger's Postmodernism

In this chapter, I examine Habermas's criticism of what he describes as Heidegger's postmodernism. Habermas views Heidegger's concept of Being as a mystical ground, hence Heidegger's attempt to overcome philosophical modernity in light of this ground leads to a form of postmodern authoritarian irrationalism, a style of "cryptonormative" thinking open only to Heideggerian "initiates." I argue that Habermas's interpretation and criticism of Heidegger's thought fails for a number of reasons. The first and obvious reason is that his interpretation of Heidegger's concept of Being as a ground is unsustainable. On my account, Heidegger's concept of Being is internal to the way we understand ourselves, and it is ethically articulated through action. His concept of the "meaning" of Being is shown in the way we care for beings together with the forms of solidarity we have with others. Secondly, Habermas's criticism fails because he does not adequately come to terms with Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding. Habermas views this as a species of ontological subjectivism, but Heidegger's concept of authenticity is tied to the idea of holistically understanding

ourselves; that is, understanding ourselves as finite. Thirdly, Habermas's critique fails because his misreading of Heidegger's concept of Being as a ground disenables him from seeing that Heidegger's retrieval of individual freedom is an attempt to overcome the Cartesian determination of freedom as **cogito**. On my account of his work, Heidegger's reclamation of freedom as finite, beyond the idea of a fundamental ground, is a deepening of the project of modernity. I describe this as Heidegger's postmodern concept of ethics. By this I mean to suggest that Heidegger's retrieval of authentic self-understanding is an attempt to further the critical concept of freedom which Kant associates with Enlightenment. Heidegger's work underscores Wellmer's claim that "the critique of modernity has been part of the modern spirit since its very inception."[1]

Habermas misses the deeper meaning that authentic self-understanding has in Heidegger's thought because he views it as subjectively determined. The philosophical category of subjectivism does not, however, capture what Heidegger means by authenticity. Authenticity, as I pointed out above, has to do with understanding oneself in a penetrating manner as capable of death. This holistic self-understanding is ethically elaborated ethically in the world. Authentic self-understanding is not determined by a subjective concept of Being. Habermas thinks, however, that Heidegger grounds authenticity in a subjective concept of Being. Although

Heidegger describes authentic self-understanding as a "**singulare tantum**," something "unique" (ID.36), this does not make it subjective. But neither is authenticity determined by a universal essence. Heidegger's view of authentic self-understanding entails worldly struggle because it finds its articulation in the world. This means further that the respect we show for others enables a heightened understanding of ourselves. The ethical relation we have with others, what I described much earlier as a postmodern concept of community, is crucial for an authentic understanding of ourselves.

The concept of authentic self-understanding entails ethical enactment in the world. The ethical understanding one has of oneself, its "meaning," is elaborated in the world. This renders Heidegger's thought deeply historicist. In his attempt to show that Being, however one may understand this term, is ethically enacted in the world, and is not a ground, Heidegger opposes constantly his thinking with the philosophical tradition, which thinks Being with reference to a fundamental ground. He is unrelenting in his criticism of his philosophical predecessors, from Plato to Nietzsche. In his view, "it is the authentic function of philosophy to challenge historical being-there [Dasein] and hence, in the last analysis, being [Sein] pure and simple."[2]

Habermas's theory of communicative action, which forms the basis of his critique of Heidegger's thought, and is put forward as the only alternative to the modern philosophy of

the subject, downplays the experience of finitude which is central to Heidegger's thought. Habermas relegates the revelatory capacities of our emotional life to the realm of aesthetics. By failing to give due weight, as Heidegger does, to our passionate life, which reveals freedom in a radical manner, Habermas ends up giving a one-sided articulation of what he describes as "the project of modernity." From Heidegger's perspective, the concept of freedom is central to modernity, and his reclamation of individual freedom beyond its determination as **cogito** is a deepening of this project. This is what makes Heidegger a postmodern thinker.

From Heidegger's perspective, Habermas's theory of communicative action is a denial of authentic self-understanding. Although Habermas views the **cogito** as a one-sided account of the human subject, he does not reject the premise which underpins this concept of the subject. The premise is that human nature is constituted by a fundamental ground of some sort. Habermas puts forward a broader concept of the subject in comparison to the **cogito**, but his theory of communicative action still remains attached to the very idea of a ground. On this account, Habermas's theory of communicative action becomes one more attempt to give a definitive view of human nature. In light of Heidegger's unrelenting attempt to extirpate the very idea of a ground, Habermas's project takes on the appearance of a conservative, countermodern discourse.

Heidegger rejects the concept of the modern subject **and** the premise which underwrites it. It is this radical style of thought which makes Heidegger's work appear irrational to so many critics, including Habermas. In his discussion of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida, Castoriadis and others, Habermas's discourse is almost Manichean. He gives the impression that he has little to learn from these thinkers when he combatively associates their work with "exhaustion," "withdrawal," "negativity," "deprival," "purism," "subjectivism," "self-forgetfulness," "relativism," "cryptonormativism," "contradictory," "dead end," "inaccessible," "bare power," "exclusion," "esoteric," "pseudonymous," "primordial power," "rapturous transcendence," "readiness for excitement," "subversive force," "destructive," "anonymous," "hollow," "aggressive." And the list goes on. (PDM.chap xi).

For critics like Habermas and others, it has become convenient to view Heidegger's thought as rife with authoritarian arrogance.[3] This attitude blinds Heidegger to the fact that his reflections on Being are utterly empty and baseless. The path that led to this dead-end was supposedly taken by Heidegger because of his inexplicable fixation on the so-called ontological difference, the space between Being and beings where he thought that he could think Being itself outside of any connection to beings. Unknown to Heidegger, he was only "repeating," to use a Derridean trope, in its purest

form, one of the fundamental strategies of metaphysical thought. Heidegger was seeking an **arché**, a first principle that was outside of the world, but one that was, nonetheless, going to do the job of anchoring the world. Thinkers as different as Adorno, Rosen, Rorty, Derrida - even the one-time Heideggerian Caputo - all view Heidegger as a thinker pathetically preoccupied with the ontological difference of Being "itself."

Habermas's criticism of Heidegger's work, therefore, is not unique. Habermas, however, has intensified the controversy over Heidegger's work by claiming that the motifs which led to Heidegger's irrationalism are partially to be found in his texts, and partially outside. Internally, the path that led to Heidegger's later irrationalism stems from the bankruptcy of the subjective ontological turn of **Sein und Zeit**. Faced with the aporias of ontological solipsism, Heidegger embraced a social concept of Being, which led to his involvement with the conservative politics of National Socialism. That is, Heidegger took National Socialism as a way out of the subjective problematic of **Sein und Zeit**. When he became disillusioned with the politics of National Socialism, and unable to explain his "blunder" without compromising his earlier work in **Sein und Zeit**, Heidegger's thought became intensely mystical, but remained authoritarian. Heidegger became an antimodern; he gave up the legacy of reason, Enlightenment, because he identified reason with its

historical articulations. The concept of Being became decoupled from history.

Habermas thinks that Heidegger's effort to think the ontological difference, Being "itself," does away with the critical tradition of philosophical modernity, which is to criticise unrelentingly the imperfect embodiments of reason in society. In his extensive and combative critique of Heidegger's work, Habermas admits grudgingly in a single sentence that "Heidegger's originality consists in delineating the modern dominance of the subject in terms of a history of metaphysics" (PDM.133). This restrained assessment confirms, to a certain extent, what Margolis, in a short insightful essay, voices about the recent reception of Heidegger's work, namely, that it has become increasingly difficult to admit Heidegger's "conceptual powers: We think **we** may be tainted if we admit them. But his gifts are there, his conceptual discoveries cannot be denied."[4]

Thus far, I have given an abbreviated account of Habermas's criticism of Heidegger's work. Before I take up in greater detail this criticism, I sketch Habermas's view of modernity and his theory of communicative action to see what he wants to affirm when he dismisses Heidegger's work.

Habermas in Context

(i) The Project of Modernity

Since roughly about the time of Kant's death, and the publication of Hegel's **Phenomenology of Spirit**,

> [T]he discourse of modernity has had a single theme under new titles: the weakening of the forces of social bonding, privatization, and diremption - in short, the deformations of a one-sidedly rationalized everyday praxis which evoke the need for something equivalent to the unifying power of religion (PDM.139).

Call this need the desire for "wholeness," for substance, what Weber describes as "enchantment."[5] This is the need that philosophy is supposed to fulfil, the larger cultural and spiritual hope that would connect us to Truth, relieve us from the condition of alienation. This is the need that Hegel thought he fulfilled when he gave Spirit a home, after its long sojourn in the despotic East, in the modern constitutional state. This serendipitous fit between individual freedom and public morality is what Hegel called ethical. It is this project Heidegger takes up, Habermas suggests, by attempting to make philosophy fulfil this cultural need that is peculiar to the West, except that Heidegger "vaporized this concrete need by ontologizing it and foundationalizing it into a Being that is withdrawn from beings" (PDM.139). By substituting vapour for substance, Heidegger forfeits the philosophical project of modernity.

Although the concept of modernity is usually linked, "to the development of European art," we need to shift focus,

according to Habermas, from the content of modernity to the "project of modernity" (AA.8). On Habermas's account, the project of modernity, as formulated in the 18th century, had a theoretical and practical purpose. Theoretically, this project entailed the development of "objective science, universal law and morality, and autonomous art according to their inner logic" (AA.9). Practically, the project aimed "to release the cognitive potentials of each of these domains from their esoteric form" for the improvement of humankind (AA.9). In other words, the theoretical project of modernity had an emancipatory end, namely, to use the "accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday life" (AA.9). These forms of autonomous knowledge would promote general happiness in humankind through moral progress, just institutions, and a greater understanding of the world fostered by natural science.

This faith in the project of modernity was shattered in the 20th century. The various domains of knowledge became sharply separated from the social life-world. Expert culture was separated from the "hermeneutics of everyday communication" (AA.9). Indeed, expert culture has been seen as complicit with the various systems of reification that "rationally" administer society. This led Adorno to proclaim that "as long as the world is as it is, all pictures of reconciliation, peace and quiet resemble the picture of death," and to seek redemption in aesthetic experience.[6]

Social reification "has given rise to efforts to 'negate' the culture of expertise" (AA.9) through a return to subjective experience, "[A]n undefiled, immaculate and stable present"(AA.5). Paradoxically, the project of modernity has given rise to a "modernist culture" that wishes to negate this very project.

Habermas thinks that we can overcome this paradox if we recognize that the

> occasions for protest and discontent originate precisely when spheres of communicative action, centered on the reproduction and transmission of values and norms, are penetrated by a form of modernization guided by standards of economic and administrative rationality - in other words, by standards of rationalization quite different from those of communicative rationality on which those spheres depend (AA.8).

On this account, it becomes a question of decoupling the spheres of communicative action from those of administrative and economic reason. In Weber's terms, the value spheres of substantive reason have to be decoupled from the spheres of **Zweckrationalität**. The project of modernity can then be developed further, according to Habermas, by reconstructing the concept of reason in the social life-world. Such a reconstruction would reappropriate "the expert's culture from the standpoint of the life-world" (AA.13). For example, the reappropriation of aesthetic experience from the judgments of the professional art critic and setting it to work in an individual life can help "to illuminate a life-historical

situation" (AA.13). The project of modernity is therefore an attempt to connect the various autonomous spheres of societal modernization to "an everyday praxis." But this everyday praxis has to be recognized as having its own form of reason that is more encompassing, and less onesided, than the various autonomous spheres of the experts which have their own internal logic. The reason of everyday praxis - communicative action - can "steer" societal modernization "in a new direction" away from economic and administrative reification (AA.13).

(ii) The Theory of Communicative Action

For Habermas, the concept that is central to philosophical and cultural modernity is the human subject as **cogito**. The subject as **cogito**, however, leaves no room for an adequately elaborated, expansive concept of social praxis. This concept of the subject leaves public life, the social life-world, free for economic and administrative domination. Habermas thinks that the concept of the human subject as **cogito** is onesided, and it cannot function as a powerful social countervalent to societal reification. According to Habermas, however, a properly worked out theory of communicative action, namely, social praxis, shows that "the philosophy of the subject is by no means an absolutely reifying power that imprisons all discursive thought and leaves nothing but a flight into the immediacy of mystical

ecstasy" (PDM.137). Indeed, a theory of communicative praxis shows that "there are **other** paths leading out of the philosophy of the subject" (PDM.137). Such a theory is what Hegel first develops and Marx revolutionizes, but which, nonetheless, remains "ensnared" in the problematic of subject-centered philosophy (PDM.137).

The concept of individual freedom grounded on the Cartesian **cogito** first finds its theoretical development and articulation in Kant's moral philosophy. Kant develops the concept of the **cogito** to include morality and art, but he gives it a transcendental grounding in an ideal world. Accordingly, Kant's account of freedom forces a self-division of the subject. His account makes

> the paradoxical demand to regard one's self, as subject to freedom, as noumenon, and yet from the point of view of nature to think of one's self as a phenomenon in one's own empirical consciousness.[7]

Hegel views Kant's elaboration of freedom as one-sided.[8] Hegel recognizes that Kant's concept of freedom entails a radical decoupling of freedom from the social world.[9] In order to make freedom more concrete and less negative, Hegel incorporates Kant's development of the subject and connects it to a broader social context.

Without social embodiment, freedom is nothing. For freedom to be real, on Hegel's account, it has to be externalised; it has to be embodied in social action and recognized in public institutions. For Hegel, this is one of

the fundamental lessons of the French Revolution. He develops the Kantian concept of subjective freedom by placing it in a wider concept of subjectivity, which he describes as Absolute Subjectivity.

Absolute Subjectivity encompasses the realm of culture and politics. For example, the legal concept of the person is, for Hegel, externalised freedom. This form of freedom he calls ethical as opposed to moral; the latter he identifies with freedom that is subjectively internal. Thus, the "system of right," which, for Hegel, is that of law, becomes "the realm of freedom made actual."[10] Hegel refers even to the social institution of law as "sacrosanct" because it is "the embodiment of the absolute concept or of self-conscious freedom."[11] The absolute character Hegel associates with freedom is transferred to those institutions which embody this concept.[12]

The grounding of freedom in social institutions severs the link, Marx claims, between freedom and its particular articulations. Hegel leaves out of his account the development of freedom amongst the labouring class. On Marx's account, Hegel's omission is not innocent. Hegel's theory of social freedom gives voice to the ascending class in society, which is the bourgeoisie. Hegel's theory of social freedom, on this account, becomes a conservative obfuscation, a onesided historical account of freedom which is nothing but an absolutization of middle-class Prussian institutions.[13]

In Marx's reworking of Hegel's development of freedom, the connection to social praxis is retained. But he reverses the view that subjective freedom is prior to social reality. Instead, Marx claims that it is social reality that determines subjective consciousness. "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness."[14] In Marx's view, real freedom can only be achieved through social emancipation; subjective freedom does not entail social emancipation.

The link that Marx makes between freedom and social praxis is developed in his theory of the laws of historical development. What he means by this is that history is driven by the contradiction between the relations of production and the forces of production. When the latter outstrips the former we see an overall change in the very structure of society and human consciousness. Marx claims that the latest economic formation, namely, bourgeois capitalism, is "the last antagonistic form of the social process of production." That is, "with this social formation ... the prehistory of human society comes to an end."[15] The end of human "prehistory" means that human emancipation is inevitable and imminent. Emancipation, however, is only achieved by collective revolutionary action. "The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can only

be grasped and rationally understood as revolutionary **practice.**"[16]

For Marx, the achievement of freedom is not a theoretical but a practical problem. The achievement of freedom rests in the collective hands of a real group of human beings who exist at the margins of economic modernity: the proletariat. This group is the immediate producer within modern capitalist society, but who do not own the means of production - not even their own labour. Marx views the proletariat as embodying a real and revolutionary emancipatory potential because being classless, their interest is not determined by anything except the desire for freedom. Thus, he ascribes to the proletariat a general as opposed to a particular interest, namely freedom. The concept of historical freedom that Hegel talks about now finds, in Marx's theory of social revolution, real embodiment. The proletariat as the negation of bourgeois capitalist society becomes social freedom in its yet to be realized form. Political and economic revolution brought about by this marginal group is what enables the redemptive moment in history in a real and decisive way.

When mass social revolution did not come about as Marx predicted, the major practitioners of Critical Theory, namely, Adorno and Horkheimer, explained it away as due to the objective domination and manipulation of the masses by the various processes of rationalization in many institutionalized

spheres of life. With the development of the natural and social sciences, and their close relations to the bureaucratic institutions in capitalist society, the social masses were being objectively dominated, and individual subjectivity, namely freedom, was drying up.

Adorno and Horkheimer were ultimately pessimistic about reason in the form of science leading to any kind of social emancipation. Adorno especially began to view art and aesthetic experience, particularly avant-garde art, as being the one redemptive frontier that stood outside of modern administrative objectification. That is, in modernist works of art, one is able to experience, intuit a possibility of freedom that is irreducible to instrumental determination.

Habermas thinks that the rejection of reason by the earlier generation of critical theorists in favour of aesthetic experience is unwarranted. They reject reason because they identify it wholly with instrumental reason, **Zweckrationalität**. This concept of reason is one they uncritically took over from Weber, and which he viewed as central to modernity. Insofar as Habermas remains committed to the emancipatory aims of the young Hegelians, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, his ambition is to reconstruct a concept of communicative action that is more holistic and connected to a social form of subjectivity. Marx's dream of emancipation through revolutionary action has been replaced by a rational theory of communicative action.

For Habermas, communicative action is not geared primarily towards representing objects, which is the paradigm of subject-centred reason. Instead, it orients itself towards intersubjective understanding and mutual recognition between subjects who share a common world. According to Habermas, communicative action is the basis of both the natural and social sciences. As technical systems of thought, these sciences arise out of what Habermas, following Husserl, calls the life-world. This is what Gramsci calls civil society. This is a rich and socially complex world which functions as background for both everyday understanding and the various domains of expert knowledge.

In **Knowledge and Human Interests** Habermas identifies what he calls three "quasi-transcendental" cognitive interests. They are technical, practical, and emancipatory. These interests correspond to the three principal forms of human knowledge.

> The approach of the empirical-analytic sciences incorporate a **technical** cognitive interest; that of the historical-hermeneutic sciences incorporate a **practical** one; and the approach of critically oriented sciences incorporates the **emancipatory** cognitive interest.[17]

He calls these interests quasi-transcendental because they function as conditions of knowledge for their various domains, but they are not **a priori** in the strict transcendental sense. Instead, these cognitive interests are empirically derived from what Habermas calls the "reconstructive" sciences of man.

Habermas derives the idea of quasi-transcendental conditions of human knowledge not from the physical sciences but from empirical sciences such as Piaget's theory of cognitive development, Chomsky's theory of generative grammar, and Kohlberg's theory of moral development. These reconstructive sciences of man, according to Habermas, view reality as structure-dependent. That is, they study the necessary empirical structures inherent in human beings that allow us to have the kinds of experiences that we do, and how reality is articulated through these structures. These sciences have the virtue of being not only self-reflective, but methodologically empirical. Unlike the Kantian transcendental conditions of knowledge, the claims of these reconstructive sciences are testable. This is why Habermas calls these cognitive structures that he identifies as interests quasi-transcendental.

The idea of an empirical reconstructive science of the human mind goes back to Dilthey. This was articulated in his project of constructing a descriptive as opposed to an explanatory psychology. For Dilthey, the theoretical task of constructing a descriptive psychology entailed following "Kant's critical path to the end" in order to "establish an empirical science of the human mind ... to get to know the laws which govern social, intellectual and moral phenomena."[18] Habermas thinks that the work of Piaget, Chomsky and others have yielded results that are necessary for the reconstruction

of reason on transcendental grounds, albeit a radically modified concept of transcendence. These results enable Habermas to construct what he calls a "universal pragmatics."

A universal pragmatics articulates the ideal social conditions of claims to knowledge. Because claims to knowledge are ultimately intersubjectively validated, what Habermas is able to do with his theory of universal pragmatics is to expand the concept of the subject **and** reason. He is thus able to view modern subject-centered reason, with its orientation towards representing the world truthfully, as part of a much broader concept of reason that is oriented more towards intersubjective understanding rather than propositional truth. "The pragmatically expanded theory of meaning overcomes the fixation on the fact-mirroring function of language" (PDM.312).

Habermas's expanded view of the subject and its relation to language is not solely derived from the reconstructive sciences, but also from speech-act theory.

> Elementary speech acts display a structure in which three components are mutually combined: the propositional component for representing (or mentioning) states of affairs; the illocutionary component for taking up interpersonal relationships; and finally, the linguistic components that bring the intention of the speaker to expression (PDM.312).

These three functions of language correspond to (i) truth, (ii) rightness (legal and moral), and (iii) truthfulness (sincerity, good faith on the part of the speaker). They also

correlate in a striking way to the three principal cognitive interests Habermas outlines in **Knowledge and Human Interests**: technical, practical, and emancipatory.

By introducing (ii) and (iii) as necessary components for assessing knowledge claims, Habermas is in a sense expanding not only the concept of human reason, but also the world of facts. The mirroring-function of the Cartesian subject is no longer enough. "'Worlds' analogous to the world of facts have to be postulated" (PDM.313). Postulating analogous world of facts is another way of saying that "rationality" has to be "assessed in terms of the capacity of responsible participants." The concept of a responsible participant, a concept derived from the reconstructive sciences, is someone who orients his or her self towards knowledge "claims geared to intersubjective recognition" (PDM.314).

From the standpoint of communicative action, Habermas thinks he is able to retrieve the project of modernity, combat the reifying or colonizing tendencies of modern societies, as well as demonstrating the utter bankruptcy of postmodern theories of the subject, theories he associates with thinkers such as Foucault and Heidegger. Habermas is able to view modern subject-centered reason, and the idea of individual moral autonomy as "derivative moments that have been rendered independent from the communicative structures of the life-world" (PDM.315). Against Weber's and Adorno's claim that

subject-centered instrumental reason is constitutive of the life-world, Habermas claims that it is in fact the life-world that first constitutes this form of reason.

> The communicative potential in reason first had to be released in the patterns of modern life-worlds before the unfettered imperatives of the economic and administrative subsystems could react back on the vulnerable practice of everyday life and could thereby promote the cognitive-instrumental dimension to domination over the suppressed moments of practical reason" (PDM.315).

Once this process of social colonization is recognized, the emancipatory project of modernity grounded in an expanded concept of subjectivity derived from the reconstructive sciences of man can now be further developed.

Habermas's Complaint[19]

(i) The Early Heidegger's Ontological Subjectivism

When the Young Hegelians finished with Hegel, especially the young Marx, Hegel's castle, as Kierkegaard labelled the latter's idealistic system, was placed in ruins. Everything was turned upside down. Instead of spirit ruling matter, as Plato argued it should, and Hegel concurred, matter now ruled. In other words, the forces of production and class antagonisms now drove historical development; the external ruled the internal; social being determined consciousness; objective ruled subjective, and sense intellect. In short, political and social reality became first philosophy. However, the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries saw an idealistic backlash against the philosophical heresy of historical materialism in the "back to Kant" movement. Habermas places what he describes as Heidegger's intuitive phenomenological ontology in this context of the neo-Kantian backlash against the young Hegelians. Viewed in this context, Heidegger's thought looks like an attempt to put philosophy back in the driver's seat of culture.

> Heidegger puts philosophy back in the dominant position from which it had been driven by the critique of the Young Hegelians.... Heidegger returns to philosophy its lost plentitude of power (PDM.131-32).

That is, Heidegger reinstates the metaphysical concept of Being, albeit as existential ontology, as first philosophy.

From as early as **Sein und Zeit**, Habermas claims, Heidegger is already heading down the garden path to philosophical prophecy when he makes the concept of fundamental ontology internal to the subjective constitution of Dasein. In this work, Habermas claims that Heidegger is trying to reinstate metaphysics as first philosophy by finding a fundamental concept of Being. He was sufficiently inspired in this undertaking by Husserl's phenomenological method of "essential intuition."

Essential intuition derives from the cognitive method of imaginative variations of an object in order to "intuit" what is essential to that object. Once intuited, the phenomenologist recognizes that with the removal of this essential aspect, the object ceases to be what it is. For

example, in order for a state to be a state, it is crucial that the apparatus of legitimate violence be monopolized by a centralized authority. If not, you might end up in a state of anarchy. This monopolized violence is Weber's infamous definition of the state.

According to Habermas, the early Heidegger holds on to Husserl's intuitive method in order to carry out his project of fundamental ontology by making the concept of Being dependent on the subjective intuition of Dasein. Predictably, Habermas claims that Heidegger in **Sein und Zeit** makes the concept of Being subjective, that is, Being becomes what Dasein makes it out to be because it is subservient to the project of self-authenticity. Dasein "grasps the world as a process out of the subjectivity of a will to self-affirmation" (PDM.151). Accordingly, Habermas claims that the problem of "ontological solipsism" comes to haunt Heidegger's early thought. The problem of ontological solipsism derives from the connection Heidegger makes in **Sein und Zeit** between Being and self-affirmation. As a result, Being becomes radically subjective, and this internally undermines the project of fundamental ontology. Furthermore, because the existential project of self-authenticity is carried out with reference to social life, Heidegger fortuitously makes the concept of time, historical existence, internal to the question of Being. Heidegger's subjective concept of Being as first philosophy grounds history (PDM.139ff).

Unable to get past the problem of ontological solipsism associated with the internal connection he makes between authenticity and Being, Habermas claims that the later Heidegger merely throws out the existential subject. Heidegger reverses the problematic of **Sein und Zeit**. Instead of grounding Being on subjective self-affirmation, the later Heidegger grounds the subject on an occult concept of Being. This occult concept of Being and its mysterious relation to the subject is Heidegger's way out of the philosophy of the subject, and becomes the focus of his thinking after **Sein und Zeit**.

Although the later Heidegger decouples the concept of Being from the existential project of this early work, he nonetheless holds on to the project of first philosophy as well as the phenomenological method of essential intuition in order to make his non-argumentative claims about Being. In other words, the later Heidegger makes the concept of Being inaccessible to positive method and empirical scrutiny while, at the same time, turning history into an open space where this mystery of Being can unfurl.

As the later Heidegger focuses more intensely on Being as ontological difference, individual freedom fades into the background. Habermas observes a sharp difference between the decisionistic language of **Sein und Zeit** and that of the later Heidegger, where human beings are described as shepherds and guardians of Being (PDM.141). In the earlier Heidegger, one

has the impression that individual Dasein could decide and possibly win its authenticity through existential resoluteness; in the later Heidegger there is a shift in terminology from Dasein to "mortals." With this terminological modulation comes a different view of human agency. Mortals can only wait, hope, and ultimately submit to the social present, which is supposedly determined by Being. The later Heidegger "rejects existential ontology's concept of freedom" in favour of dwelling with Being. "Dasein is no longer considered the author of world-projects ... instead, the **productivity** of the creation of meaning that is disclosive of world passes over to **Being** itself" (PDM.152).[20] This is how, in order to overcome the problems associated with the concept of the modern subject, Heidegger "negates ... the foundationalism of a thinking that has recourse to a first principle" (PDM.153). The irony of course is that although the later Heidegger abandons the modern subject, he still holds on to modernity's project of first philosophy.[21] "Inasmuch as he propagates a mere inversion of the thought patterns of the philosophy of the subject, Heidegger remains caught up in problematic of that kind of philosophy" (PDM.160).

Thus far, Habermas's account of Heidegger's thought can only be described as grossly misleading. Heidegger's concept of Being is neither a subjective nor an objective ground. In **Sein und Zeit** Heidegger stresses that he is concerned with the "meaning" of Being. What he means by this

is that Being is not a present-at-hand-concept which determines self-understanding. Being is meaningful only insofar as it is understood by human beings. This understanding of Being is shown in the way we care for others and the concern we show for things in the world. He points out further that even if Being were to be a ground, it would still have to be ethically enacted in the world. In short, Being is not some concept that magically reveals beings in the world. "When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it," Heidegger points out painstakingly,

> It does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated, ... its primary kind of Being is such that it is always 'outside' alongside entities which it encounters and which belongs to a world already discovered (SZ.62).

Further, Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding is not connected in any way to the idea of subjective choice, although it is connected to individual choice. By authentic self-understanding Heidegger means understanding oneself as a **whole**, understanding oneself as finite. Authentic self-understanding entails understanding Being-in-the-world in light of one's finitude. Heidegger thinks that it makes an enormous difference in the way we show solicitude for others if we take the concept of authenticity seriously. Our solidarity with others is changed because authenticity entails viewing the "meaning" of other as internal to my self-understanding, as part of myself. This

means that I achieve a deeper understanding of myself only through acknowledging and respecting the freedom of others. On this account of what Heidegger means by Being and authenticity, I do not think we need take seriously Habermas's charge of ontological solipsism.[22]

If one misses the ethical relationship between self-understanding and its articulation in the social world, then one ends up claiming, as Habermas does, that the concept of self-authenticity undermines the concept of Being, and that the later Heidegger's way out of this impasse is to make the concept of Being more occult, while still holding on to the project of first philosophy, which is to make Being an occult ground of both authentic self-understanding and history.

(ii) Heidegger's Postmodern Power Play

In his unrelenting attempt to place philosophy in a position of power once more, after the critical onslaught of the young Hegelians, and after the project of existential ontology in **Sein und Zeit** was internally undermined by subjectivism, Heidegger, according to Habermas, decouples the concept of Being from history by making it occult. Although Being is decoupled from history, it hovers over the world waiting to intervene at the proper messianic moment to renew and ground history. According to Habermas, Heidegger accounts for this intervention in two ways.

First, Heidegger identifies his occult concept of Being with Dionysos the absent god. "Only Being, ... by way of hypostatization, can take over the role of Dionysos" (PDM.135). Second, Heidegger interprets and subsequently absorbs Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power into his thought as the mechanism which will bring about this postmodern "messianism."[23]

By identifying Being with an archaic god and linking it further with the will to power, Heidegger, according to Habermas, places his thought in an antagonistic relation to the social present, namely, modernity. Heidegger creates a "crisis" situation, where the overcoming of modernity is interpreted messianically as "the "apocalyptic expectation of a catastrophic entry of the new" (PDM.134). The irony is that Heidegger's concept of the "new," the postmodern, is an archaic, pre-Socratic concept of Being. Thus, Heidegger's concept of the postmodern is backward looking, internally constituted by a nostalgia for times less profane. "Heidegger would like to be transported by Nietzsche's metaphysics of the will to power back to the pre-Socratic origins of metaphysics" (PDM.135). On this account, Heidegger's concept of time is mythological. That is, time becomes repeatable through the sheer exercise of will. Through an exercise of will, modernity's concept of time as unilinear and progressive is abolished, and existence is renewed through its relationship with an archaic concept of Being. This is how, according to

Habermas, to fulfil the desire to return to the pre-Socratic origins of philosophy, overcome metaphysics, and break once and for all with modernity, Heidegger "arrives at a temporalized philosophy of origins" (PDM.131). This idealistic and archaic concept of Being and its relationship to history will determine both the style and substance of Heidegger's critique of modernity.

Before I take up other claims Habermas makes about Heidegger's work, I shall take up those made thus far, namely, (i) that Heidegger identifies his concept of Being with Dionysos, (ii) that he makes Nietzsche's concept of the will to power internal to the revelation of Being, and (iii) that he uses this concept of Being to ground the postmodern age. I look at these claims in turn.

It is a foregone conclusion to Habermas that Heidegger is a reactionary metaphysician, and that he wishes to reclaim a pre-Socratic concept of Being that will both negate modernity as well as ground the postmodern age. Heidegger undertakes this project by identifying Being with Dionysos, the absent god. Yet, nowhere does Heidegger identify his concept of Being with God or any god for that matter. He clearly states that what he means by Being is "not God," and that "God and the gods ... come forward into the lighting of Being" (BW.210). What Heidegger means by the latter claim is that the "presence" or the "meaning " of God or the gods is connected to the care we show for beings. In fact, Heidegger

addresses the question of the gods through the concept of the holy. In going this route he means to suggest that a god is not a ground, and it owes its presence to ethical enactment, human action, in the world. Being is neither god nor ground.

Having identified Being with Dionysos, Habermas claims that Heidegger absorbs Nietzsche's concept of the will to power into his concept of Being because he would like to be "transported" back to the pre-Socratic origins of philosophy. Habermas's reading of Heidegger's engagement with Nietzsche's thought fails to convince because it distorts through omission. First, Heidegger emphatically states that "flight into tradition, out of a combination of humility and presumption, can bring about nothing in itself other than self-deception and blindness in relation to the historical moment" (QCT.136). It is not the case that Heidegger countenances flight from the social present by trying to recapture an untarnished pre-Socratic concept of Being. While it is indeed true that Heidegger reclaims something of the pre-Socratic concept of Being as **physis**, he decouples this concept from that of a ground. Heidegger instead talks about authentic self-understanding, meaning by this a kind of resolute openness to one's finitude and beings as they show themselves in light of this understanding of oneself. Second, Heidegger states that his engagement with Nietzsche is merely an attempt "to take Nietzsche seriously as a thinker" (QCT.55). His engagement with Nietzsche's doctrine of the will

to power is his way of critically engaging the metaphysics of late-modernity. Heidegger views Nietzsche's thought not only as a radicalization of the Cartesian concept of Being as self-certitude, but the consummation of two millennia of Western metaphysics. By this Heidegger means that Nietzsche's subjective doctrine of Being as will to power has become actual, it underpins societal rationalization and global technological production. In order to distance his concept of authentic self-understanding from that of Nietzsche's subjectivism, and in order to initiate a style of thinking that has more to do with ethical self-constitution than grounding anything, Heidegger engages but ultimately rejects Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power.

According to Habermas, Heidegger grounds the postmodern age on an irrational concept of Being which he identifies with an absent god. Thus, Heidegger thinks the concept of the postmodern with reference to the radically new. As the previous chapter has shown, Heidegger thinks the concept of the postmodern with reference to an affirmation of those "invisible" sides of Being that remain inscrutable to scientific reason. These sides include our self-understanding as finite, which scientific reason views as nothing. He thinks the postmodern with reference to an affirmation of "differences," differences that pertain to the particularity of things, those differences that escape capture by one-sided scientific or metaphysical accounts of Being.

Further, while it is indeed true that Heidegger claims that "metaphysics grounds an age" (QCT.115), the questions to be asked are these: Is Heidegger himself doing metaphysics? And is he interested in grounding an age? As I have already shown, Heidegger's concept of Being is not a ground. So, I believe that we can safely answer no to both these questions. As to the idea that Heidegger grounds the postmodern age through the messianic appearance of a god, Heidegger states that the overcoming of modernity is not going to "take place by some new god, or the old one renewed, bursting into the world from ambush at some time or another" (PLT.92). In light of my explication above and in the previous chapter of Heidegger's concept of the postmodern, I do not think that Habermas's claim that Heidegger's concept of the postmodern is determined by the idea of the radically new is sustainable. Heidegger's claim that metaphysics grounds an age is not meant to suggest that he himself is doing metaphysics. Instead, it is his way of suggesting that in order to come to terms in a critical way with the present age, we need to understand what is the dominant concept of Being. This form of engagement with the history of metaphysics is a critical practice of self-understanding. If there is some validity to Heidegger's claim that metaphysics thinks with reference to a fundamental ground of reality which determines an epoch, and he wants to overcome this style of thinking, it follows that Heidegger does indeed want to overcome the social present. But the idea of

overcoming the present age is not thought with reference to an irrational ground. Heidegger wants to overcome the philosophical obsession with grounds and principles. He wants to think differently. He wants to articulate what he calls the truth of Being, which is understanding oneself as finite and attempting to care for beings in the world in light of this holistic understanding of oneself.

> [T]he truth of Being, forgotten in and through metaphysics, can come to light only if the question "What is metaphysics?" is posed in the midst of metaphysics' domination (BW.202).

To pose this question is to reject its answer, namely, that Being is a ground. By rejecting the answer, Heidegger instead affirms that we need to affirm Being in the round, and this includes affirming death. This is the postmodern moment in Heidegger's thought.

As we have seen, Heidegger does claim that "metaphysics grounds an age". Habermas interprets this to mean that Heidegger himself grounds postmodernity in light of a messianic concept of Being. On this account, Heidegger seems to be doing basically the same thing with his occult concept of Being that Hegel does with Spirit. The differences between Hegel and Heidegger, however, are enormous. Whereas Hegel's concept of Spirit as freedom finds embodiment in public institutions, Heidegger's occult concept of Being, which functions much like an authoritarian and fickle Sovereign, is available only to those with superior intuition, namely,

Heideggerian "initiates." Whereas Hegel's view of reason is historically progressive, public, and rational, Heidegger's occult concept of Being and its relation to history is his alone, and fosters acceptance, rather than engaged criticism, of the social present. As Adorno, Habermas's former teacher, put it, "However striking and close to experience Heidegger's pronouncements may be, they simply do not connect to the reality of society."[24] Not connecting to the reality of late-modernity, Heidegger, unlike Hegel, can understand the "destruction" of modern metaphysics in only **one** way: negation and abandonment. He has no resources, no ideal of reason with which, Habermas claims, to "understand the destruction of the history of metaphysics as unmasking critique" (PDM.136).[25] In short, Heidegger's occult concept of Being disables him from performing the kind of ideological criticism that members of the Frankfurt school were so good at, namely, the unmasking of the distortions of universal reason generated by class positions, the mass media and so on. In Habermas's eyes, then, Heidegger is bewildering: a radical conservative with a feeble grasp of history in an unrelenting technological age.

Thus far, we have seen that Habermas views Heidegger's later thought, what he describes as Heidegger's "postmodernism," as backward-looking, a nostalgic mystically inspired grasping after a pre-Socratic concept of Being.[26] According to Habermas, this places Heidegger in an antagonistic relation to the social present, in an either-or

situation: Either accept the social present or flee from it. The latter alternative yields acceptance of the first. Thus, Heidegger is a man in-between, a crisis thinker.[27] The present becomes for Heidegger a time to make a decisive break, a time to inaugurate a future which can only be the appearance of the radically new.[28]

Further, Heidegger's temporalized occult concept of Being effaces the distinction between reason and interpretation. As a result, he is unable to distinguish between the **concept** or the **ideal** of reason and its interpretations or **conceptions**. Heidegger's oracular concept of Being does away with the distinction between **universal** reason and the **historical** articulation of this ideal, and, in his haste to make the passage out of modernity, conflates the ideal of reason with its historical interpretations.

> Heidegger can so fundamentally de-struct modern reason that he no longer distinguishes between the universalistic content of humanism, enlightenment, and even positivism, on the one side, and the particularistic, self-assertive representations of racism and nationalism (PDM.133-34).

Therefore, Heidegger has no critical space from which to make a reasoned criticism of the times because he has collapsed the ideal of reason into its modern interpretations. He has no rational alternative, no utopic moment in the form of the Enlightenment ideal of reason with which to dialectically criticise the social present. Heidegger does not want to criticise, only negate, flee into the past.

It is indeed true that Heidegger does not distinguish between the universal ideals of Enlightenment and particularistic articulations of racism and nationalism. But why does he not do this? Heidegger opposes Enlightenment humanism because "every humanism remains metaphysical" (BW.202). Metaphysics thinks of human freedom with reference to a fundamental ground, hence, it makes the ethical relation into an external one, that of conformity to rules, universal laws. This form of ethical self-understanding voids individual development, it voids the constitution of character. On this view of ethical self-understanding, other people are external to the way I understand myself. All that I need do is conform my actions to a determining ground, rules. I can be inauthentic and still be ethical.

In contrast, for Heidegger, the relation I have with the other is internal to how I understand myself. It implies that to understand myself ethically I must engage with others in the world. This entails struggle because to respect the other is to understand myself. He thinks that metaphysical humanism, insofar as it articulates the ethical relation in light of a ground, diminishes this struggle, indeed, it diminishes not only the other but also myself. Instead, Heidegger wants to expand our ways of Being-in-the-world, our ways of being human. His thought intimates towards an alternate solidarity, a form of solidarity which, by acknowledging others, I further self-understanding. On this

abbreviated account of Heidegger's ethical thought, it becomes clear why he rejects Enlightenment humanism, and why his "antihumanism" neither celebrates "the inhumane ... [nor] deprecates the dignity of man" (BW.210).

Philosophy, when it does not abnegate its function as the guardian of reason, can be a source of hope, a kind of redemptive moment in the perilous frame of late-modernity.[29] Habermas claims that in his haste to overcome modernity, Heidegger abdicates the responsible task of philosophy. He claims that Heidegger gives up on scientific reason and drives his thought deeper into irrationality and mysticism. Heidegger claims a "cognitive competence **beyond** self-reflection, beyond discursive thought" (PDM.136). Thus

> Wholesale devaluations befalls scientific thinking and methodically pursued research, because they move within modernity's understanding of Being prescribed by the philosophy of the subject (PDM.136).

"Where is it decided," Heidegger asks, "that nature must always be determined by modern physics?"[30] His critical attitude towards scientific reason does not mean that he is "anti-science." For Heidegger, scientific knowledge is only "compelling within its own sphere." Scientific reason cannot legislate for all of beings because "[s]cience always encounters only what **its** kind of representation has admitted beforehand as an object possible for science" (PLT.170). Scientific reason cannot determine all there is to know about ourselves or about beings. For example, scientific reason,

according to Heidegger, is unable to account for the meaning certain experiences may have in our lives and which cannot be denied, namely, death. This is why he wants to overcome the idea that science is the only way of understanding ourselves.

Heidegger's argument for the rejection, or at least curtailment of scientific reason sounds as if Habermas himself might have made it, because it is central to the theory of communicative action he puts forward in response to what he describes as the "colonization of the life-world" by scientific reason. It seems, however, since Heidegger makes this argument, it is, as Margolis put it, "tainted."
Instead, Habermas views Heidegger's critical account of scientific reason as an affront to reason itself, a reactionary abandonment of modernity's self-image by an archaic thinker. Thus, Heidegger remains in Habermas's eyes the pathetic herald of a philosophical postmodernity that promotes nothing more than dangerous authoritarianism. Heidegger's mystical, deeply exciting, but ultimately empty concept of Being remains for Habermas a bewildering form of philosophical foundationalism. Heideggerian foundationalism is so fabulously deep, one has no idea what or where it is. "Heidegger passes beyond the horizon of the philosophy of consciousness only to stay in the shadows" (PDM.139) as a muttering prophet, a thinker deeply out of step with the times. Therefore, "one may well doubt that Heidegger's later philosophy, which outdoes Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics,

actually leads us out of the discourse of modernity" (PDM.141).

In his haste to deny Heidegger's originality as a philosopher, Habermas is forced to make unsustainable claims about the former's work. He gives an incredibly selective and subsequently distortive reading of Heidegger's texts. Habermas fails to grasp in a critical way just what Heidegger is getting at when he talks about Being and its relation to authentic self-understanding. Habermas's systematically misleading account and baseless criticism of Heidegger's work suggest that his criticism is driven more by ideology than by reason. We get an indication of this when Habermas, seeming to recognize the incredible strawman figure he has created, admits that the passage from **Sein und Zeit** to the later Heidegger, which he constructs, is "bereft of plausibility," and "cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of the internal motifs of Heidegger's thought" (PDM.155). But rather than question whether he has in fact managed to give an honest and plausible account of Heidegger's thought, Habermas instead goes on to claim that the transition from the existentialist Heidegger of **Sein und Zeit** to the authoritarian mystical thinker of the later years is the result of his "historical experience with National Socialism" (PDM.156). I discuss this claim in the next section.

Heidegger and National Socialism

In this section, I discuss Habermas's interpretation of Heidegger's work in light of the latter's involvement with National Socialism. I shall not rehearse Heidegger's speeches in support of the Nazis because they are fairly well known, neither shall I try to explain away or justify his involvement with both the movement and the regime. My discussion of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism serves neither to exonerate nor to overlook Heidegger's political biography. Instead, it is an attempt to think through the ethical question in Heidegger's thought in spite of his political biography and history.

Habermas thinks that there is a sharp theoretical breach between Heidegger's thought in **Sein und Zeit**, where Being is the outcome of individual freedom, and the later Heidegger where Being determines freedom. How to account for this reversal? Habermas hypothesizes that it's not just Heidegger's political involvement with National Socialism that explains the discontinuity in his thought, but also the terms of this political involvement that essentially accounts for the break. "I am interested in the question of how fascism played into the very development of Heidegger's theory" (PDM.156). The "theory" in question is the later Heidegger's occult concept of Being. Before I discuss Habermas's view on the relation of fascism to Heidegger's thought, I shall first look at Rockmore's account of this relationship.

In a recent work, Rockmore argues that Heidegger's effort to reawaken the long-forgotten question of Being "leads seamlessly to Nazism." Therefore, "Heidegger's philosophical thought and his Nazism are inseparable."[31] This claim is as contentious as it is indefensible. It implies that whoever finds anything of value in Heidegger's thought is either morally and politically suspect or they are hopelessly naive. It implies that Heidegger's thought is the philosophy of Nazism, or that Nazism is the practice of Heidegger's thought. It implies further that to find anything of value in Heidegger's thought is to find something of value in Nazism. I don't agree.

Like Habermas, Rockmore views Heidegger as someone who ascribes to a mystico-phenomenological method, the capacity to see "beyond appearance into the essence of things."[32] Heidegger's auratic powers enable him to discern not only the essence of Being, but also the "essence of National Socialism."[33]

Rockmore ascribes also to Heidegger an archaic concept of Being. Seeing beyond history, profane time, Heidegger is able to discern an untarnished concept of Being.

Rockmore links Heidegger's concept of authenticity to this archaic concept of Being. "To be authentic is to embrace or to repeat the past in one's own life through a reinstantiation of the tradition."[34] This concept of

authenticity as repetition is something Habermas claims Heidegger borrows from Nietzsche, namely, the will to power.

The idea that through a sheer exertion of will one can abolish history is what Rockmore views as Heidegger's concept of "historicality" or historicity.[35] The will to become authentic enables one to dissolve the ontological burden of time, namely, its irreversibility. On Rockmore's view, Heidegger's concept of historicality implies a mythological concept of time as cyclical.

Being is repeatable, but only through an exertion of will. Repetition of Being makes one authentic. Rockmore claims further that Heidegger views this archaic concept of Being as peculiar to the Germans. For the Germans to be authentically German, they must reinstate, through a tremendous exertion of public will, this primordial concept of Being. Politics is the most concrete manner whereby a nation exerts its will. Heidegger, according to Rockmore, came to view the political movement of National Socialism as an expression of the German will, as a means for them to become authentically German by reinstating a primordial concept of Being. Thus, to embrace National Socialism is to wipe away profane history through repetition of the archaic. National Socialism is a politics of forgetting, it erases from memory the utter social confusion and political humiliation imposed externally on the German nation by the treaty of Versailles after the defeat of the first World War, as well as the lack of political stability

and uncertain leadership imposed internally by Weimar liberal politics.[36]

Rockmore accuses Heidegger also of "metaphysical 'racism'."[37] Heidegger is a metaphysical racist because Being is something that can be reenacted only by the Germans. This is why when National Socialism degenerated into the barbarism that it was, Heidegger, according to Rockmore, can still maintain stubbornly that only he saw the inner greatness of this movement, its "**essence**." National Socialism failed because the movement failed "to provide an adequate theory of Being."[38] In other words, if the Nazis had listened to Heidegger, indeed, if they had only paid careful attention to his plans for rejuvenating the German nation, and fallen under his intellectual guidance which he spelled out in his rectorial address of May 27, 1933, things might have been different. As Edler put it, Heidegger "wanted to guide the revolution."[39]

Rockmore's claim that Heidegger's thought is inseparable from his Nazism is unsustainable. First of all, he interprets Heidegger's concept of Being as an archaic ground. This is clearly false. Heidegger stresses incessantly that Being is neither a ground, nor is it even God or a god. Moreover, Being is not archaic. What Heidegger means by Being, as I have already stressed in my discussion above, is the "meaning" of Being, how Being is understood by you and I. On this account, to exist in the world is to already have a

concept of Being because it allows us to makes sense of things in the world as well as ourselves.

Secondly, because Heidegger's concept of Being is not a ground, the concept of authenticity has nothing to do with repeating an archaic ground. Authenticity is actually authentic self-understanding. What Heidegger means by this is understanding oneself as a whole, understanding oneself as finite. Being is linked to the project of authentic self-understanding because Heidegger wants to articulate the way we live in the world, the relations we have with others, things, in light of this holistic understanding of ourselves.

Thirdly, Heidegger's concept of historicity does not mean that time can be abolished. Historicity means that the understanding of Being as finite is to be articulated in the world. Being is not a universal essence that remains decoupled from history. The historical understanding of Being is, therefore, linked to the ways we understand ourselves, authentically or inauthentically, and the way we live in the world.

In light of my explication of what Heidegger means by Being, authenticity and historicity, Rockmore's charge of "metaphysical racism" is one that does not make sense. In fact, this charge is an instance of distortion by omission. In his discussion of Holderlin's poem "Germania," Heidegger speaks for himself when he stresses that this work has nothing to do with "an egoism of his nation," or the idea that the

"world might be reformed through the German essence" (BW.218). It is one thing to argue that Heidegger's philosophy is inseparable from his Nazism, it is quite another to support this argument by misinterpretations and omissions.[40]

In contrast to Rockmore's dismissive account of Heidegger's thought as internal to Nazism, Habermas wants to clarify how Heidegger's thought gets "modified" by his historical involvement with this form of politics. To be clear, Habermas is neither reducing Heidegger's work to a secret fascist imperative in Heidegger himself, nor is he claiming that Heidegger's work is inseparable from his involvement with National Socialism as Rockmore contends.[41] "No short circuit can be set up between work and person. Heidegger's philosophical work owes its autonomy, as does every other such work, to the strength of its arguments."[42] He adds, however,

> [J]ust as little should the legitimate distinction between person and work cut off the question of whether ... that work itself may be affected, in its philosophical substance, by the intrusion of elements from ... an ideologically tinged worldview.[43]

This "ideologically tinged worldview" is what allows Heidegger to interpret concrete historical developments in light of his philosophical categories, namely, his involvement with National Socialism. Moreover, this political involvement subsequently plays into the development of Heidegger's later occult theory of Being. In Habermas's views, Heidegger's historical involvement with the politics of National Socialism

is the link that accounts for the apparent breach between his early work in **Sein und Zeit**, and his later lapse into irrationalism.

Placing Heidegger's thought in the ideological context of the German mandarins, thinkers such as Ernst Jünger, Oswald Spengler, Walter Rathenau, Ludwig Klages, and Carl Schmitt, Habermas contends that

> from around 1929 on, Heidegger's thought exhibits a **conflation** of philosophical theory with ideological motifs. From then on themes of an unclear, Young-Conservative diagnosis of the time enter into the heart of Heidegger's philosophy itself.[44]

By 1933, this conflation between ideology and Heideggerian fundamental ontology is complete. According to Habermas, Heidegger conflates the concept of individual Dasein with that of the **Geist** of the German **Volk**, and the individual concept of Being with a socially determined one, specifically, that of National Socialism.[45]

> Whereas earlier the ontology was rooted ontically in the existence of the individual in the lifeworld, now Heidegger singles out the historical existence of a nation yoked together by the Führer into a collective will as the locale in which Dasein's authentic capacity to be whole is to be decided (PDM.157).

Having identified the philosophical categories of **Sein und Zeit** with the social ontology of National Socialism, once Heidegger arrived at the point where he "could no longer be deluded about the true character of the National Socialist regime," he found himself, Habermas observes, in "a difficult

situation" (PDM.158). The difficult situation that Heidegger found himself in is this: How was he going to explain his identification of National Socialism with the philosophical categories of **Sein und Zeit**? To criticise National Socialism would be to criticise his own fundamental ontology. As Habermas put it,

> A plain, political-moral revaluation of National Socialism would have attacked the foundations of the renewed ontology and called into question the entire theoretical approach (PDM.159).

So rather than cast doubt on the project of fundamental ontology in **Sein und Zeit**, Habermas hypothesizes that

> Heidegger works up his historical experience with National Socialism in a manner that does not call into question the elitist claim to a privileged access to the truth on the part of philosophers (PDM.159).

That is, Heidegger explains away his philosophical identification with National Socialism "as an objective withholding of truth" (PDM.159). He, Heidegger, is not responsible for the fall into barbarism, the fall into the Nazi social ontology of **das Man**; Being itself determined his fall. "[A] sublimated history promoted to the lofty heights of ontology" is responsible for Heidegger's lapse into the politics of National Socialism (PDM.159). Don't blame me; blame Being.

I find this explanation interesting but implausible for a number of reasons. First of all, in light of Habermas's reconstruction of Heidegger's thought in **Sein und Zeit** as

ending in a form of ontological solipsism, to interpret Heidegger's political involvement as a way out of the philosophy of the subject would make sense. But as I have shown in my discussion, Habermas's reconstruction of the project in **Sein und Zeit** is not convincing.

Secondly, I find it remarkable that Habermas accepts Heidegger's scripting of his political involvement in light of the philosophical categories in **Sein und Zeit**. The link Heidegger makes between the philosophical categories in **Sein und Zeit** and those of National Socialism are tenuous at best.[46] Heidegger never once explained just how the concept of individual freedom gets modulated into a socio-cultural category such as the German **Volk**; nor does he explain how authentic self-understanding, which is understanding oneself as a whole, entails politically subordinating one's freedom to the **Führer**. Just because Heidegger says so does not make it so.

In my view, there exists a breach between Heidegger's thought in **Sein und Zeit** and his political involvement with National Socialism because nothing in his thought forces one to embrace any form of fascism. Had Heidegger criticized openly the Nazi regime, this would not have called into question his theoretical work in **Sein und Zeit**. It would have exposed, however, his political naiveté, along with his feeble grasp of the modern state, something Weber grasped in a penetrating manner. By failing to grasp the totalizing

tendency of the modern state, where culture and the very concept of national identity function only to increase state power., Heidegger thought that his philosophy could somehow guide and shape Nazi state policies.[47] Perhaps at a deeper level, had Heidegger criticised the Nazis, it would have raised the broader question of not only his support for the regime, but also that of many other German intellectuals at the time[48].

This does not, of course, let Heidegger off the hook. In light of the evidence published thus far, Heidegger appears like a petty man, someone who wanted, it seems, to be something of a world-historical figure. In my view, if Heidegger embraced, National Socialism, the basis of that decision stands in a very tenuous relation to his philosophical work. Leslie Thiele puts this point well:

> Heidegger, one must acknowledge, failed or simply refused to rally his philosophy for antifacistic purposes. Nevertheless, ... one ought not attempt to shackle Heidegger's philosophy to his Nazi past. No truly philosophic corpus is reducible to a singular politics. There are no necessary or straightforward political ramifications of writings as rich and deep as those of Heidegger.[49]

Thus far, I have shown that Habermas's account of Heidegger's work is systematically misleading. His blunt criticism does not come close to meeting the challenge that Heidegger's thought poses.

In the next section I sketch a profile of Heidegger as a postmodern thinker in response to Habermas's view of the "project of modernity."

Heidegger's Postmodernism and the Project of Modernity

Although Heidegger's thought is an extensive engagement with the tradition of Western metaphysics, the **immediate** philosophical context of his thought can be described as that of philosophical modernity. This is the reflexive space opened up by Descartes, developed extensively by Kant and Hegel, and radically consummated, according to Heidegger, by Nietzsche. What all of these thinkers share is the specific idea that the human subject is to be understood as **cogito**, no matter how broadly or narrowly conceived.

The concept of the human subject is also central to Heidegger's ethical thought, but it is not conceived as **cogito**. What we find in his thought is a view of the human subject as finite. Moreover, this subject understands itself as Being-in-the-world. Heidegger's concept of the subject is not thought with reference to a ground, it is instead an ethical subject, a subject whose self-understanding is articulated through the care for beings. Heidegger's thought is radically opposed to the idea of self-certitude as the ground of individual freedom. For him, Being as self-certitude is a way of Being-in-the-world; it entails that the subject understand itself as radically opposed to others, to objects;

in short, the view of the subject as **cogito** is ethically limited.

Heidegger's concept of the subject as finite and as Being-in-the-world is what I describe as a postmodern concept of freedom, and it implies a view of ethical life that is radically at odds with the Enlightenment project of ethics as rational self-legislation.

"The thread that may connect us with the Enlightenment," writes Foucault, "is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude ... a philosophical ethos that could be described as ... permanent critique of our historical era."[50] The task of critically understanding oneself as a philosophical ethos, a way of Being-in-the-world, attempts to elaborate an individual ethical identity by caring for others, and showing concern for things. This is a practice that does not float above the prosaic world of the day-to-day grind. Instead, it is an impassioned, patient, and thorough attempt to understand oneself in the world. Foucault describes this practice as a "critical ontology" because the resolute and critical way we care for others is the basis of individual self-constitution.[51]

It is this critical practice of problematizing freedom in the world, which Foucault identifies with Enlightenment and which Heidegger wants, it seems to me, to keep going. The idea of being authentic by caring for beings, showing

solicitude for others beyond modernity's concept of the **cogito** is Heidegger's attempt to keep the Enlightenment project going without metaphysical support. Heidegger's ethical thought is an attempt to shake off the very metaphysical thinking Habermas accuses him of.

Heidegger believes that after Nietzsche's radical consummation of metaphysics, there is only one thing left to do: to think the forgotten of metaphysics, what I described in previous chapter as an attempt to affirm Being in the round, to affirm those differences that metaphysics, scientific reason, denies. He describes this as the care for beings, and it is his way of intimating what, in positive terms, a postmodern view of ethical life might look like. The task of understanding oneself critically, authentically, is to challenge our accepted ways of thought and action, to challenge the hegemony, the false necessity any paradigm of thought might lay on our freedom.

Because Heidegger makes authentic self-understanding central to his thought, he is attempting to develop, it seems to me, the project of modernity in a radical way, while Habermas, ironically, becomes something of a conservative thinker, something of a countermodern. Habermas becomes a conservative thinker because he is so acutely aware of the irrational side that freedom can take, and has taken. But he concludes wrongly that we need to renounce this troubled, anguished and untempered side of ourselves. To understand

ourselves fully, he suggests, individual freedom needs to be curtailed by a rational context with intersubjective consensus, lest we fall into darkness and irrationality.

Habermas, thus, eliminates the irreconcilable space between freedom and its ground by collapsing freedom into his reconstructed concept of the subject. In this way, the space between the subject and freedom is erased. His concept of the subject is the only possibility of freedom. Moreover, experiences that may potentially open up the space between freedom and his reconstructed concept of the subject are relegated to the realm of aesthetics (PDM.321). It is, therefore, ironic that although Habermas claims that his theory of communicative action is fallible, he, nonetheless, does not consider his reconstructed concept of the subject as being just **that**, namely, a reconstructed concept of the subject that purports to ground freedom. Habermas allows for fallibility within his theory of communicative action, but the theory itself is not.

From Heidegger's point of view, Habermas is insufficiently modern, which is to say critical, self-questioning, in regards to the historicity of the reconstructive sciences that he uses, as well as to his own theory of communicative action. What Habermas seems unwilling to entertain is the possibility that freedom does not have to be articulated as something irrational, but neither does it need to be ineluctably constrained by a theory of reason such

as his. Habermas's attempt to construct a critical social theory that continues the project of modernity is, in effect, an attempt to do away with the radical view of freedom which, Heidegger, along with Foucault, view as central to this project.

For Heidegger, it is not a question of establishing rational "conditions" for understanding ourselves. He does not think that freedom can be grasped or "represented" by a universal concept of the subject. The subject is what it does, that is, the way one understands freedom is to practice it in the world.

> Freedom is not an object of theoretical apprehending but is instead an object of philosophizing, this can mean nothing other than the fact that freedom only is and can only be in the setting-free. The sole, adequate relation to freedom in man is the self-freeing of freedom in man.[52]

If philosophy, however, is about the practice of freedom, this raises a series of questions: What shall I do? How shall I understand myself? How shall I relate to others, the world? These questions bring with them what Nietzsche describes as a "dreadful resolve."[53] By this he means that understanding oneself fully, authentically by burrowing into the obscure depths and untrodden paths of your life entails a certain fortitude and ruthless honesty. Understanding oneself fully implies a constant beginning, a constant self-questioning regarding individual identity in its relation to social and theoretical contexts. Freedom is to be elaborated

as a form of existence that is self-questioning, what Heidegger in his lyrical language describes as the "piety of thinking."

On my account of Heidegger's work, there is no ground of freedom. There are no conceptual guarantees in his thought, in terms of principles or directives and so on. In Heidegger's thought our relationship with ourselves as well as others is not comprehended in any singular determining concept. Freedom breaks these constraints, and will always do so. For Heidegger, philosophy devolves into the critical practice of understanding oneself in the world. This is the postmodern ethical challenge that his work poses.

In the next chapter I discuss Heidegger's work as a postmetaphysical contribution to ethical life.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Albrecht Wellmer, **The Persistence of Modernity**, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), vii.

2. Heidegger, **Introduction to Metaphysics**, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 11.

3. See, for example, Richard Wolin, **The Politics of Being** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, **Heidegger and Modernity**, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Richard Bernstein, "Heidegger's Silence?: **Ethos** and Technology," in **The New Constellation** (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

4. Joseph Margolis, "Comrade Heidegger," in **Martin Heidegger and the Holocaust**, ed. Alan Milchan and Alan Rosenberg (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1996), 183.

5. See Peter Gay, **Weimar Culture** (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 70f.

6. See Theodor Adorno, **Negative Dialectics**, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), 38.

7. Immanuel Kant, **Critique of Practical Reason**, trans. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 6.

8. See Hegel's critique of subject-centered reason in **The Phenomenology of Mind**, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 272-80.

9. According to Habermas, the entire philosophical discourse of modernity is structured, either positively or negatively, around this concept of the subject. Indeed, the entire philosophical discourse of modernity can be viewed as so many attempts to either radically develop and deepen the concept of subject-centered reason, or to negate it altogether.

10. G.W.F. Hegel, **Philosophy of Right**, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), 4.

11. **Ibid.**, 30.

12. See John Dewey, **The Quest for Certainty** (New York: Capricorn, 1960), 62-64.

13. See Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's **Philosophy of Right**," in **Early Writings**, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

14. Karl Marx, **Selected Writings in Sociology and Philosophy**, ed. Tom Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1963), 67.

15. **Ibid.**, 68, 69.

16. **Ibid.**, 83.

17. Jürgen Habermas, **Knowledge and Human Interests**, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 308.

18. Wilhelm Dilthey, "Inaugural Lecture," quoted in Geoffrey Hawthorn, **Enlightenment and Despair: A History of Social Theory**, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 143.

19. I borrow this heading from John Rajchman, **Philosophical Events** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 24.

20. It is not surprising, Connolly observes, that "in a world driven by the desire for mastery, any absence of control is experienced as unfreedom." See William Connolly, **Political Theory and Modernity** (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988,), 2.

21. Derrida makes a similar argument against Heidegger in his essay, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." See Jacques Derrida, **Writing and Difference**, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280. See also Peter Dews, **Logics of Disintegration** (London: Verso, 1987), for a Habermasian response to Derrida's response to Heidegger.

22. For a detailed analysis of Heidegger's non-subjective view of freedom, see Henri Birault, **Heidegger et L'Experience de la Pensée** (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).

23. Dreyfus agrees with Habermas on this point. "Heidegger's **personal** mistake," Dreyfus writes, "comes from having thought that Hitler or National Socialism was such a god; his **philosophy** is dangerous because it seeks to convince us that only a charismatic figure or some other culturally renewing event can save us from a final fall into contented nihilism." See Hubert Dreyfus, "Mixing Interpretation, Religion, and Politics," in Hans Sluga, **The Break: Habermas, Heidegger, and the Nazis**, ed. Christopher Ocker (San Anselmo, CA: Center for Hermeneutical Studies, 1992), 21. Similarly,

Voegelin views Heidegger's thought as countenancing some form of messianic or charismatic authority, what he describes disparagingly as the "parousia of being." See Eric Voegelin, **Science, Politics, and Gnosticism** (Chicago: Gateway, 1968), 48.

24. Theodor W. Adorno, **Against Epistemology**, trans. Willis Domingo (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983), 187f.

25. Yet, according to Dreyfus and Rabinow, Heidegger is a master at unmasking critique. He is a practitioner, like Freud, of the hermeneutics of suspicion. "Heidegger claims to find ... the deep truth **hidden** by ... everyday practices." See Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, **Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics**, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), xxii.

26. The view of Heidegger as a postmodern thinker who is in effect premodern is one shared not only by Caputo but also by Derrida and Megill. According to Megill, Heidegger turns "toward an ideal past that remains hidden in the dark mists of pre-Socratic time ... Heidegger's ideal past presents itself to us as a future." Heidegger's nostalgic attachment to an ideal past entails, according to Megill, "an immense hostility to the present order." See Allan Megill, **Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida** (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 185. Derrida's view of Heidegger as a nostalgic thinker comes out in his famous conclusion about Heidegger's work: "There will be no unique name, even if it were the name of Being. And we must think this without **nostalgia**, that is, outside of the myth of a purely maternal or paternal language, a lost native country of thought." See Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in **Margins of Philosophy**, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 27.

27. See Megill, **Prophets of Extremity**, 105-41.

28. The irony here in Habermas' use of the term "crisis" is that the very same Enlightenment thinkers whom he admires, and whose project he wishes to continue, considered themselves in a crisis situation, morally and politically. See Reinhart Koselleck, **Critique and Crisis** (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 158-86.

29. See Albrecht Wellmer's exemplary essay on Adorno, "Truth, Semblance, Reconciliation: Adorno's Aesthetic Redemption of Modernity," in **The Persistence of Modernity**.

30. Heidegger, **Identiät und Differenz** (Pfullingen: Neske, 1957), 105.

31. Tom Rockmore, **On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy** (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 287, 283. In contrast to Rockmore, Caputo basically agrees with Habermas by claiming that Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism was the external impetus that led him to the idea of a "pure" concept of Being. See John D. Caputo, **Demythologizing Heidegger** (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), 4.

32. Rockmore, **On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy**, 72, 287.

33. **Ibid.**, 240.

34. **Ibid.**, 47.

35. Rockmore is not alone here in connecting the concept of historicity to Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism. Heidegger himself apparently justified his political engagement on the basis of his concept of historicity. See Karl Löwith, "My Last Meeting with Heidegger," **New German Critique** 45 (1988), 115. Pöggeler claims also that any "decision" concerning the meaning of Being has to be resolved in a political context. See Otto Pöggeler, **Martin Heidegger's Path of Thinking**, trans. Daniel Magurshak (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1987), 278.

36. See Peter Gay, **Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider** (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

37. Rockmore, **On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy**, 296. On the concept of the **Volk** in Heidegger and other German intellectuals of the time, see François Fedier, "A propos de Heidegger," **Critique** 24 (1967), 681.

38. Rockmore, **On Heidegger's Nazism and Philosophy**, 200.

39. See Frank Edler, "Philosophy, Language, and Politics: Heidegger's Attempt to Steal the Language of the Revolution in 1933-34," **Social Research** 57 (1990), 228. Edler in effect concurs with what Rorty writes in an early review of Farias's book. On Rorty's account, what "Heidegger had in mind in his constantly repeated invocation of 'the leaders and protectors of the destiny of the German people' was not Hitler, but himself. The rectorial address puts forward, in entire seriousness, the claim that only Heideggerian philosophy can bring the Universities into the service of this destiny." And in a concluding assessment, Rorty writes: "One cannot exaggerate the degree to which Heidegger took philosophy, and himself, seriously." See Richard Rorty,

"Taking Philosophy Seriously," **New Republic**, April 11, 1988, 31. And in an even earlier assessment of Heidegger's political activities, Harries contends that it is Heidegger's earlier view that philosophy had a political function which led him to embrace the Nazis, his subsequent disappointment with them led him to disconnect philosophy from politics. "Heidegger's subsequent recognition that, instead of leading, he permitted himself to be used, issued in a despairing denial of a social mission to his thought. The present world is now judged to be such that authenticity is possible only to the outsider." See Karsten Harries, "Heidegger as a Political Thinker," in **Heidegger and Modern Philosophy**, ed. Michael Murray (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 327. Harries's attribution to an apolitical stance in the later Heidegger is certainly borne out by Heidegger himself when he states that "philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct change of the present state of the world." See Martin Heidegger, "The Spiegel Interview," trans. Lisa Harries, in **Martin Heidegger and National Socialism**, ed. Gunther Neske and Emile Kettering (New York: Paragon, 1990), 56-57.

40. On the other hand, there is some basis for Heidegger's actual rather than metaphysical racism. See Hugo Ott, **Martin Heidegger: A Political Life**, trans. Allan Blunden (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 190; and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, **Heidegger, Art, and Politics: The Fiction of the Political** (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 33.

41. Habermas's treatment of Heidegger's work stands opposed to Adorno's, who views Heidegger's thought as "fascist in its most intimate aspects." See Theodor Adorno, **Musikalische Schriften** (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), 638. Thus, "Heidegger's falling in with the **Führerstaat**, Hitler's leader state, was no act of opportunism but rather a consequence of a philosophy that equated Being and **Führer**." See Adorno, "Why still Philosophy," in **Critical Models**, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 10. Bourdieu, in contrast, interprets Heidegger's thought in light of his social-anthropological categories of "habitus" and "structure." He interprets Heidegger's thought in **Sein und Zeit** as the "structural equivalent" of the conservative ideological habitus, what he also describes as the "social unconscious," of the German intelligentsia. See Pierre Bourdieu, **Outline of a Theory of Practice**, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 78ff; see also his **The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger**, trans. Peter Collier (Oxford: Polity Press, 1991), 104f. On a deeper, perhaps religious level, Levinas raises the possibility of a kind of essential demonic element present in Heidegger's early work. "It is impossible to be stinting in our admiration for the intellectual vigor of **Sein und Zeit**.... Can we be assured, however, that there was never any echo of Evil in it." See

Emmanuel Levinas, "As if Consenting to Horror," trans. Paula Wissing, **Critical Inquiry** 15 (1989), 487-88.

42. Habermas, "Work and Weltanschauung: The Heidegger Controversy from a German Perspective," **Critical Inquiry** 15 (1989), 455.

43. **Ibid.**, 431.

44. **Ibid.**, 439. In contrast to Habermas's reading of Heidegger's work, where the accent is on the penetration of Heidegger's thought by external ideological motifs, Gay contends that Heidegger's thought is thoroughly ideological, and his political intervention and involvement with the Nazis an outgrowth of his thought: "The notorious address of May 27, 1933, with which Heidegger inaugurated his rectorate at the University of Freiburg, was not simply servility; it was a logical outgrowth of his philosophy." See Peter Gay, **Weimar Culture**, 83.

45. In his very subtle textual analysis of Heidegger's involvement with National Socialism, Derrida observes that in Heidegger's work before the "turn" the term **Geist** is always used in quotation marks, as if to indicate that it has to be viewed critically from the point of view of the radical project of the destruction of ontology. During the period of his involvement with National Socialism, however, the term **Geist** is used without quotation marks, suggesting that **Geist** had found its temporal equivalent in the politically determined present of the Nazi state. See Jacques Derrida, **De L'Espirit: Heidegger et la Question** (Paris: Galilée, 1987).

46. Here I am agreeing with Foucault when he points out that "there is a very tenuous 'analytic' link between a philosophical conception and the concrete political attitude of someone who is appealing to it; the very 'best' theories do not constitute a very effective protection against disastrous political choices." See Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics," in **The Foucault Reader**, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 374.

47. Forty years prior, Nietzsche astutely grasped the nature of the modern state when he described it as a cold and monstrous liar. "Coldly it lies ...; and this lie creeps from its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people'." See Friedrich Nietzsche, **Thus Spoke Zarathustra**, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 75. Burckhardt, Nietzsche's contemporary, wrote these words in 1871 to a German friend: "What must logically come is a fixed and supervised stint of misery, glorified by promotions and uniforms, daily begun and ended to the sound of drums.... Long voluntary subjection under individual **Führers** and usurpers is in prospect. People

no longer believe in principles but will, periodically, probably believe in saviors.... For this reason authority will again raise its head in the pleasant twentieth century, and a terrible head." See Karl Löwith, **Meaning in History** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 24.

48. For this broader approach to the question of Heidegger's Nazism, see Hans Sluga, **Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany** (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

49. Leslie Paul Thiele, **Timely Meditations: Martin Heidegger and Postmodern Politics** (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 140.

50. Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in **The Foucault Reader**, 42.

51. **The Foucault Reader**, 47.

52. Heidegger, "Davos Lectures," in **Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics**, trans. Richard Taft, 4th ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 178.

53. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator," in **Untimely Meditations**, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 154.

Chapter 4

Self-Understanding and Metaphysics: Figures and Themes

In this chapter, I examine Heidegger's view of ethical life with reference to the tradition of metaphysics. I examine his view of ethical life with reference to Plato, Kant and Nietzsche, as well as the themes of truth, identity, humanism, and language. Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is an attempt to reclaim what is forgotten by the tradition, namely, Being and human identity as finite. Heidegger's critique of metaphysics is not, however, an attempt to reinstate a deeper concept of Being, instead, he shows that the meaning or the truth of Being is deeply linked to self-understanding. Moreover, he thinks that Being has to be thought with reference to self-understanding as finite, what he describes as self-authenticity. In short, he wants to articulate a view of Being that is broader and more multifaceted than is to be found in the tradition of Western metaphysics. This examination of authentic self-understanding with reference to the tradition of metaphysics shows just how foreign Heidegger's view of ethical life is from the idea of external directives, principles and grounds.

The concept of Being in metaphysics functions as the ground of beings. Being is the **archê**, the power that shapes and orders not only the world but also how we understand ourselves. For Heidegger, this concept of Being is derived from a single aspect of a thing. This aspect of a thing, say its form, is subsequently projected over things, this aspect of a thing functions as a ground. This is the manoeuvre Plato executed when he disavowed the multifarious properties of a thing and focused solely on its form and called **that** real. Heidegger describes this as the forgetfulness of Being. On this account, philosophy in the form of metaphysics is the instituting of a kind of ethical amnesia. Metaphysics is about the forgetting of differences, what Heidegger describes as the "multidimensionality" of beings. And insofar as philosophy as metaphysics thinks Being with reference to a ground, it remains inadequate to the ethical task of affirming Being in the round.

In order to show the ethical concern in his attempt to think the truth of Being and its relation to authentic self-understanding, Heidegger believes he has to show that the tradition of metaphysics thinks Being in light of grounds, and neglects human finitude. He places his thought in opposition to the tradition of metaphysics in order to demonstrate this claim.

Being and some Philosophers

In **Republic** Bk.VI (509B), Plato discusses the identity of beings with reference to the concept of the good. He views the good as the fundamental ground of reality. Plato's concept of the good can be described as a transcendental ground of reality insofar as it lies beyond everything that exists (**epekeina tes ousias**), yet somehow determines worldly existence. The good in Plato's thought gives existence to the **ideas**, which are eternal and unchanging. The **ideas** in turn give existence to worldly objects. The commerce between the ideas and worldly existence takes place through a process Plato describes as **methexis** or participation. The rational soul apprehends the forms embedded in worldly objects. Accordingly, Plato defines human nature ultimately with reference to the good.[1] "It is better for everyone to be ruled by divine reason."[2] The assimilation of "divine reason," the good, by the soul is what frees one from desire, silences "all barking dogs," - the Stoics' picturesque way of referring to bodily desires - and enables, according to Plato, the achievement of real freedom, knowledge, and power.[3]

Heidegger is sceptical towards the idea of understanding oneself with reference to a transcendental ground, namely, good. He asks whether the good can "be interpreted as the transcendence of Dasein?" (ER.93). That is, can Plato's concept of good as the fundamental ground of beings be taken as the only way of understanding oneself

authentically? In Plato's language, is the good necessarily that toward which the soul transcends? The neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus writes: "Therefore must we ascend ... towards the Good, towards there where tend all souls."[4] This is in fact Plato's answer to the question. But the soul's movement towards the good only happens unwillingly and through struggle. This struggle entails disavowing everyday Being-in-the-world, disavowing what your senses tell you about the fleeting nature of earthly existence, its ephemeral delights and disappointments, in order to better achieve a more divine and unchanging bliss.[5]

The connection Plato makes in **Republic** Bk.VII between the good and self-understanding turns, therefore, on the pragmatic question of the proper education of the soul. In Plato's vivid imagery of the cave, education, which is a turning of the soul from appearances towards the good, happens only reluctantly. The soul has to unlearn its ignorance. "The essence of the **agathon** lies in its mastery of itself as **hou heneka**; as the 'for sake of ...'" (ER.95). The practice of self-mastery which the struggle to achieve the good forces on us is a worldly struggle. Heidegger views this practice of self-mastery as a way of Being-in-the-world. It entails understanding oneself in a certain way and caring for beings in particular way, namely, through their formal aspects. In short, Being as the good, as an otherworldly determination of self-understanding, is ethically enacted in the world.[6]

"From where," Heidegger asks, "do we know of ... eternity?"[7] His answer is that whatever understanding we may have of eternity or any other-worldly concept is relative to our Being-in-the-world. The meaning of eternity is **shown** in the here and now by what one says and does. Accordingly, Heidegger takes a rather deflationary stance towards Plato's concept of the good. He views it as "merely the culminating point of the central, very concrete question about the basic possibility of the **existence of Dasein** in the polis" (ER.93). By relativizing Plato's concept of the good to the everyday context of the Greek polis, Heidegger effectively disconnects the concept of the good as transcendental ground from any necessary relation to individual self-understanding. On his account, the relationship between self-understanding and the good remains contingent, in spite of Plato's claim to the contrary.

In contrast to the transcendental grounding of self-understanding we find in Plato's middle and later dialogues, the view of self-understanding in the earlier "Socratic" dialogues is somewhat different. For Socrates, authentic self-understanding does not entail assimilating Being-in-the-world to a larger objective truth. Instead, it is a question of being your idiosyncratic self, of trying to understand yourself in light of your **daemon**. In a certain sense, Socrates is like Nietzsche's madman. A man deranged [**verrückt**], caught between the older Homeric world of gods and heroic mortals and

the new world of philosophical reason. What is crucial for him is that he be true to himself, rather than some larger eternal truth. According to Jaeger,

> It was Socrates' summon to men 'to care for their souls' that really turned the mind of Greece towards a new way of life. From that time onwards, a dominant part in philosophy and ethics was played by the concept of life, **bios** - human existence regarded not as the mere lapse of time but as a clear and comprehensible unity, a deliberately shaped life-pattern. This innovation was caused by the way Socrates lived; he played the part of a model for the new **bios**.... [T]he greatest strength of his **paideia** came from the change he ... introduced into the old educational concept of the heroic Example which is a pattern for other lives to follow. He made himself the embodiment of the ideal life which he preached.[8]

In Plato's later works, however, the Socratic daemonic conception of ethical self-development is repressed.[9] Self-understanding ceases to be finite and idiosyncratic and less broadly conceived. Yet Heidegger praises Socrates and rejects Plato's attempt to ground self-understanding on a transcendental concept of the good. For Heidegger, like Socrates, the question of authentic self-understanding is internal to understanding our finitude, our Being-towards-death, which reveals itself in our passionate and resolute attempt to care for others - even in those moments when we fall away from this worldly ideal.

In **Critique of Pure Reason**, Kant, like Plato, also thinks Being with reference to a fundamental ground. Kant describes this ground as the "Supreme Principle of All

Synthetic Judgments." In his discussion of this principle, Heidegger claims that Kant completely transforms the concept of world. First of all, Kant disconnects the finite objects that constitute the world of experience from the will of God. This is the conceptual disenchantment of the world from its supposedly supernatural ground that begins with Descartes and culminates in Nietzsche's claim that "God is dead." By decoupling the providential will of God from the world, the former ceases to play a constitutive role in Kant's thought. The concept of God becomes a postulate of the system of rational ethics. Secondly, Kant inserts his concept of transcendental subjectivity into the space once occupied by the providential will of God. Objects in the world "are" only through a relation to the **a priori** concepts of transcendental subjectivity. Accordingly, self-understanding in Kant's thought is also thought with reference to transcendental subjectivity.

For Kant, synthetic judgments are judgments made about the world of possible experience. "The highest principle of all synthetic judgments," Kant writes, "is that every object is grounded in the necessary conditions of the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in a possible experience."[10] The "necessary conditions" Kant refers to here are the **a priori** concepts of transcendental subjectivity. The "pure" application of these concepts form analytic judgments. "In an analytic judgment I remain with the given concept in order to

make a claim about it." In contrast, when these **a priori** concepts are applied to the world of experience they form synthetic judgments.

> In synthetic judgments I have to go beyond the given concept [and] relate it to something quite other than itself - which is not only a relation of identity or contradiction - in order to discern the truth or falsity of the judgment.[11]

Without these concepts we cannot have an understanding of beings, hence, we cannot have an understanding of ourselves in the world.

Kant claims further that synthetic **a priori** judgments are "necessary." He views the laws of Newtonian physics as exemplary candidates of synthetic **a priori** judgments. Synthetic judgments have, as "a matter of **a priori** necessity ... **transcendental** as well as transcendent **reality**" (ER.65). These judgments have what can be described as worldly necessity. Accordingly, the worldly elaboration of self-understanding in Kant's thought, insofar as it is grounded in the **a priori** concepts of transcendental subjectivity, also has "**a priori** necessity." From Heidegger's point of view, what is intriguing about this is that Kant is attributing **a priori** necessity to "the existence of man within his historical community" (ER.77). Moreover, Kant insists that the attribution of necessity to social existence is not "arbitrarily devised and follows from the nature of reason itself."[12] Heidegger, however, takes a different view.

For Heidegger, no concept of Being has the kind of necessity which Kant claims. Even Newtonian physics, on Heidegger's radical view, is simply a way of disclosing beings, a way of Being-in-the-world. In Heidegger's view, Kant's attribution of "transcendental and transcendent" necessity to a historical way of Being-in-the-world amounts to an attempt by a conservative philosopher of culture to imbibe the forms of life in his society with a false universality, something Hegel did later, according to Marx, for Prussian institutions. Kant's view of self-understanding is a denial of the irreconcilable breach which exists between social forms of understanding and our finite freedom, a breach which our emotional and imaginal life opens up. Heidegger thinks that Kant might have arrived at a different view of self-understanding if he had not "thrust aside the power of the transcendental imagination" in favour of transcendental subjectivity.[13] The power of the imagination to generate conflicting and alternative images of the world, indeed, of who we are, suggests to Heidegger that it is futile to try and fully understand ourselves with reference to a unitary view of Being.

On Heidegger's account, to give a unitary account of the world, to subsume beings under laws, is to reduce the play of the world, its "instability." The world is a place of constant agitation and unending strife. In direct opposition to Kant, the world in Heidegger's thought does not come under

"laws." The only "law" in Heidegger is the law of finitude: "death is the laying-down, the Law" (PLT.126). This law, however, does not bring order or stability. Death introduces an exemplary and anguished instability in the way we understand ourselves. From the perspective of "reason," death darkens and hides nature even more, but to Heidegger it illuminates by making Being more expansive.

In contrast to Kant, the world in Heidegger's thought is what it is, how it appears when it reveals and conceals itself. When we think the world with reference to a unitary concept, the commotion of beings in and amongst themselves, their play of differences gets effaced. Heidegger wants to keep the commotion going by affirming these differences. He thinks we stand a good chance of keeping it going if we think Being or world in the round, beyond fundamental principles and grounds. This we do by resolutely caring for Being. In this manner, we care for ourselves more fully. This form of authentic self-understanding gives due weight to our imaginal life, which Kant extinguishes. This does not entail, however, that Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding becomes radically subjective as we find in Nietzsche's thought.

If the general philosophical context of Nietzsche's proclamation "God is dead" lies in Kant's decoupling of the will of God from the affairs of the world, then Leibniz's grounding of self-understanding in subjective appetite is the

direct precursor of Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power. Nietzsche's deduction of the will to power from the claim "God is dead" can be viewed as a reclamation of the Hobbes-Leibniz concept of the subjective appetitive will as the fundament of reality against the Kantian concept of transcendental subjectivity. From Nietzsche's perspective, Kant's grounding of the world in transcendental subjectivity is a reactionary attempt to theoretically repress what was fast becoming a worldly reality, namely, the radical freedom of subjectivity.

Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of God has far reaching implications. From a historical point of view, the proclamation "God is dead," consummates, according to Heidegger, "two millennia of Western history" (QCT.58), and inaugurates the late-modern age of mass technological production with Being as the will to power as its radical ground. From a philosophical point of view, Nietzsche's claim means that "the suprasensory world is without effective power," hence, "Western metaphysics understood as Platonism, is at an end" (QCT.61). Nietzsche's claim implies not only the demise of God, but also the dissolution of the very concept of a transcendental world, what he describes disdainfully as the "afterworld." Further, the dissolution of the transcendental world implies that metaphysics as a style of thought which thinks with reference to transcendental grounds is no longer tenable. God is dead because He, along with the whole suprasensory realm, is "unreal," hence, powerless (QCT.99).[14]

Nietzsche, however, was not the first to hold forth about the death of God. Hegel in **Faith and Knowledge** voiced "the feeling that God himself is dead" (QCT.58-59). Hegel may have gotten this feeling after reading Kant's first two **Critiques**. After all, it was Kant who first decoupled God as an active rational agent from the world and transfigured Him into a postulate of reason. Before Kant, the general belief was that God's will as divine Providence was actively at work in the world and kept things moving along a preordained and progressive path. After Kant's "Copernican revolution," the concept of divine Providence became less credible. Hegel, however, took the pre-Kantian concept of worldly Providence and transfigured it into the idea of historical Reason. Hegel suggested that reason rules the affairs of the world. On Hegel's view, to discern the dialectical pattern of world history, indeed, to read the morning papers, was to glimpse Reason at work in the world, it was to catch traces of an overarching **telos** working itself out in the affairs of both humankind and nature.[15] So, even if Hegel might have voiced the sentiment that "God himself is dead," he didn't assign to it the same sweeping meaning that Nietzsche did. If God felt dead for Hegel, at least Reason was waiting in the wings ready to take centre-stage. Hegel still had and clung to suprasensory back-up.

In Nietzsche's thought no such back-up exists. If God is dead, so too is Reason because the suprasensory world is

what is dead. From Nietzsche's point of view, Hegel's concept of Reason is just another dishonest fable. He makes fun of people like Kant and Hegel and dismisses them because they are still trying to keep the suprasensory project going. Even when they radically decouple God from the world, they preserve the "authoritative place" that He once occupied.[16]

To replace the waning power of the older suprasensory metaphysics, Nietzsche develops his doctrine of the will to power as the ground of reality. Instead of God or transcendental values exercising power over the world, power now passes to the new worldly principle of the human will. The self-assertive will becomes the new sovereign ground, the new **"principium grande,"** as Leibniz calls it. Accordingly, if the will to power is the essence of reality, then everything gets determined by that reality. Nietzsche's grounding of self-understanding in the will to power finds its existential embodiment in the figure of **Übermensch**. The concept of **Übermensch** as exemplar of humanity "is man who **is** man from out of the reality determined through the will to power, and for that reality" (QCT.96). The **Übermensch** is not merely one type of human being in late-modernity. To understand oneself as **Übermensch** entails a way of Being-in- the-world that coincides with Being as the will to power, namely, mass technological production.

For Heidegger, however, although Nietzsche turns his back on the world beyond this world, he still shares the same

premise as his nemesis Plato. Nietzsche still maintains the belief that the world **itself** is without value. The world is still in need of a fundamental ground, which he thinks his concept of the will to power supplies. In other words, Nietzsche still thinks metaphysically. This is how Nietzsche, the loudest, the funniest, and the most learned of anti-metaphysicians, paradoxically, perpetuates the tradition of Western metaphysics. "As a mere countermovement," Heidegger writes, Nietzsche's thought "remains ... held fast in the essence of that over against which it moves." (QCT.61). Nietzsche is merely the mirror image of Plato. Nietzsche remains stuck in metaphysics because he thinks reality with reference to a fundamental ground, namely, the subjective will to power. So, however antithetical he might appear to be in relation to his philosophical predecessors, he shares with them the assumption that Being has to be thought with reference to a fundamental concept. The metaphysics of the will to power still fails to think adequately about the relationship between authentic self-understanding and Being, which is thought with reference to care in Heidegger's work.

Thus far, I have discussed Heidegger's concept of authentic self-understanding with reference to three key figures in the history of philosophy. This discussion reveals just how far Heidegger's thought is from this tradition of philosophy. In the next section, I discuss the concept of

self-understanding with reference to identity, truth, humanism and language.

Identity

The principle of identity is considered a fundamental law of thought. This principle is usually formulated as "A=A." Heidegger claims that this statement is not saying anything about identity, but speaks instead about equality. The statement "A = A" "expresses the equality of A and A" (ID.23). Heidegger interprets this further to mean that the statement is making a claim about equality as the Being of beings. "The principle of identity speaks of the Being of beings." (ID.26). The statement does not say that "A is A." If it did, it would be tautological. If the statement is saying something about identity, it should assert simply "A." It does not do this. Therefore, the statement "conceals precisely what the principle is trying to say," namely, that "[t]o every being as such there belongs identity, the unity with itself" (ID.26). This means that a thing has its own specific identity, and it is not to be articulated with reference to an external concept of Being. Heidegger suggests that identity has to be rethought from the experience of finitude, what he describes as **das Ereignis**. The identity of a thing is to be rethought from the ethical concept of authentic self-understanding, because this entails an affirmation of differences, namely, that which is peculiar to beings.

The concept of identity as equality effaces ambiguity of meaning by effacing differences. These differences, which Heidegger wants to affirm beyond a unifying concept, impart to a thing its peculiarity; for example, its religious, aesthetic, pragmatic, mythical and plain everyday senses. To affirm these differences in everyday Being-in-the-world makes it all the more interesting. The aim of the principle of identity, however, is to remove the ambiguity of meaning. The question of identity is, therefore, directly related to what is described as the "problem" of meaning and reference.

The problem is this: How can two statements differ in meaning yet refer to the same thing? The classic examples are "the evening star" and "the morning star." Both locutions mean different things, yet they refer to the planet Venus. How can we resolve this problem? That is, how can we make words connect to the world in one and only one way? Frege's solution is to define meaning in terms of reference. This entails that in every instance where we use the locutions "the morning star" and "the evening star" we ought to substitute "the planet venus." From Heidegger's point of view, the problem of meaning and reference is not real. This problem emerges from two conflicting ontologies: the loose ontology of everyday life and the scientific. Frege is essentially trying to eliminate the ambiguity of meaning that is internal to everyday discourse and replace it with the univocal discourse of science. In doing so, he fails to recognize that science is

but a way of Being-in-the-world, a way of disclosing beings, and that "the planet venus" is internal to this particular form of world disclosure. At times, however, the everyday and the scientific overlap, as in astrology, but this relative ambiguity is not sufficient cause, from Heidegger's point of view, to eliminate certain discourses. Science is a way of Being-in-the-world, and if one remains resolutely within its discursive limits there is no problem of meaning and reference as such. The problem only emerges when science starts getting metaphysical, when it tries to be more than a limited way of Being-in-the-world; that is, when it purports to ground the mythical and the everyday within its discourse.

Even if one were to accept Frege's solution to the "problem" of meaning and reference, this still does not eliminate the problem of identity. Assume that instead of talking about "the evening star" and "the morning star" we use only the locution "the planet venus." Who is to say that the same enchanted resonances are not going to accrue to this reformulated way of speaking? Who is to say that we are not going to ask: "When you use the locution 'the planet venus', do you mean 'the morning star' or 'the evening star'?" The ambiguity of meaning is not eliminated because Being is too multifaceted, and our Being-in-the-world reflects this.[17]

Heidegger welcomes ambiguity, what he describes as an "excess" (**Übermass**) of meaning. He welcomes ambiguity because he wants to think Being, the identity of beings in the

"plentitude" of their facets. He wants to think the meaning of a thing not with reference to a singular ground, but with reference to its identity within differences. The various views of a thing as a combination of matter and form, or a complex of sensuous properties and so on, all share the assumption that the identity of a thing is determined by a unitary concept, but they differ in terms of what they take that concept to be. Heidegger rejects this style of thinking. He suggests that by caring for beings in light of their differences is perhaps the best way of disclosing identity.

How does it come about that we are able to think identity beyond a ground, in light of differences? Heidegger counsels that we move "away from the attitude of representational thinking" (ID.32). He claims that "this shifting (**Verückung**) of the attitude of thought can be accomplished only after a jolt (**Ruck**)."[18] The movement away from this style of thinking has its basis in our emotional life, art, pain, and so on. These experiences help us to break the habit of thinking the identity of things, indeed, the way we understand ourselves, with reference to grounds. Heidegger describes this experience as **das Ereignis**. And he characterizes it further as a "leap," a "spring." With such a leap, we move away from understanding ourselves as "rational animal," and instead understand ourselves as mortal. This experience of our finitude becomes the ethical condition of a style of thought, a style of existence that cares for beings

by affirming their differences, what metaphysics evades. In light of this experience of finitude, identity becomes "a property of the event of appropriation **[das Ereignis]**" (ID.39).

The experience of **das Ereignis** functions as what Heidegger describes as the "saving power." It is the saving power because, as Heidegger put it, "our nature's safety demands" this shift in thinking (PLT.130). Our nature's safety demands it because to understand ourselves fully as mortal, capable of death forces us all the more to acknowledge and learn from the world. Thus,

> What is given to thinking is not some deeply hidden underlying meaning, but rather something lying near, that which lies nearest, which, because it is only this, we have therefore continually passed over (QCT.111).

By trying to think, care for that which lies nearest, we progress towards a fuller elaboration of beings and, at the same time, a deeper understanding of ourselves.

In this section I showed that Heidegger's examination and subsequent reformulation of the principle of identity underscores further his attempt to not only give up metaphysics, but to articulate a style of thought that does not think the identity of things with reference to a fundamental ground. Instead, the care for Being is affirmed as the care for differences, what is peculiar to things. This goes some way in supporting the larger claim that Heidegger's work is primarily ethical.

The next section examines the concept of truth.

Truth

What is truth? To say that a statement is "true" implies that it stands in a certain relationship with what it asserts. A statement "represents" facts. An accurate or truthful representation of the facts implies that what is represented "corresponds" with the facts. Heidegger believes that the concepts of representation and correspondence are not perspicuous. Left unclarified, the view of truth as correspondence assumes a kind of invisible yet ineluctable relationship between a statement and what it corresponds to. This style of thinking, Heidegger maintains, is metaphysical. "An essential relationship to something like 'grounds' dwells at the very heart of **truth**" (ER.18). To clarify the concept of correspondence is to clarify the concept of truth. But this clarification also serves to dissolve thinking truth with reference to a ground. The dissolution of this style of thinking serves to highlight the view that any concept whatsoever is internally linked to Being-in-the-world, hence, to self-understanding.

The metaphysical style of thinking about truth with reference to a ground amounts to what Heidegger describes as an "oppression of the mystery" (BW.136). What is this mystery? The mystery is that "**the essence of truth is freedom**," (BW.125). This is a far cry from truth as correspondence.

Someone who adheres to the correspondence theory of truth maintains usually at least three theses: (i) that there exists an external world composed of objects, (ii) that there is one and only one correct view of the world, and (iii), truth is a correspondence between the mind or language and the world. Heidegger views (i) as naive, (ii) as metaphysical, which he rejects, and (iii) as needing clarification. The first thesis is naive because the concept of world is not an external concept. World is shown in the way we disclose beings, in human action. The concept of world, on this account, is not idealistic, but ethical. The second thesis is unduly metaphysical because the idea that the world can be reduced to a fundamental concept is something that Heidegger rejects outright. He thinks that any all-embracing view of the world is going to reveal as well as conceal certain things. Instead, he wants to think the world as an open space where beings are revealed without restriction. The third thesis needs clarification because what correspondence means is far from clear.

When Heidegger claims that the essence of truth is freedom, what he means is that truth is a possible way of Being-in-the-world. That is, freedom is the condition of Being-in-the-world, in this instance being truthful. Thus, "'truth' means the same as 'Being-disclosive', ... a way in which Dasein 'behaves'" (SZ.256). Statements do not correspond to the world all by themselves, they correspond only in light

of the things we do with them, by placing them in relation to facts. This is why freedom, which enables us to be disclosive in various ways, and not correspondence, is the essence of truth.

> If the correctness (truth) of statements becomes possible only through ... [the] openness of comportment, then what first makes correctness possible must with more original right be taken as the essence of truth (BW.124-25).

If we define philosophy as the theoretical practice of thinking about reality with reference to a fundamental ground, then Heidegger's claim that the essence of truth is freedom is not what one might describe as philosophical. I view it as ethical because even authentic self-understanding bears on the question of truth. Without the various ways of disclosing beings, caring for them, there is no truth as such. But if any view of truth is conditional upon what we say and do why, Heidegger asks, "insist" on any view of truth? Why not try and think beings in the round, in the open? This is in fact his project. He describes this truthful, disclosive way of Being-in-the-world ethically, namely, as "the resolutely open bearing that does not close up in itself" (BW.133).

To sum up, the essence of truth is freedom. Truth is the resolute practice of caring for Being as a whole. This is how, according to Heidegger, one tries to remain true to oneself.

Humanism

In this section, I give a critical account of humanism in light of Heidegger's concept of ethical life as the care for Being.

Heidegger's rejects humanism because he views it as metaphysical. "Every humanism remains metaphysical" (BW.202). But Heidegger's fight is not with humanism as such, but with its style of thinking. Humanism thinks human identity with reference to Being as a ground. Heidegger wants instead to think Being as a whole, and not with reference to a ground. He wants instead to think Being as ethical enactment. His rejection of metaphysics leads him to reject the traditional concept of humanism.

Metaphysical thinking takes the distinction between **essence** and **existence** to be fundamental. This distinction, Heidegger claims, "completely dominates the destiny of Western history and of all history determined by Europe" (BW.208). Accordingly, the differentiation between essence and existence, the cleavage between a universal ground and its particular manifestation, internally constitutes the various kinds of Western humanisms. The distinction between essence and existence constitutes the discursive limits of humanistic discourse.

> However different these forms of humanism may be in purpose and in principle, in the mode and means of their respective realizations, and in the form of their teaching, they

> nonetheless all agree in this, that the **humanitas of homo humanus** is determined with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole (BW.202).[19]

In Heidegger's view, "The essence of man consists in his being more than merely human" (BW.221). And he means by this that there is more to humanness than being a rational animal, or a species being, or a member of a **Sittlichkeit**. In contrast to the traditional way of thinking about human identity, Heidegger defines human nature as "essentially ... [the] relationship of responding to Being, and ... only this" (ID.31). He describes this as an "extreme" view of humanism. It is extreme because it "is **humanitas** in the service of the truth of Being" (BW.231). By defending this view of humanism, Heidegger is not forfeiting the insights won in **Sein und Zeit**, by seeming to place Being first and human beings second. If anything, Heidegger's concept of humanism is a deepening of the concept of authenticity which he outlined in this early work. His attempt to develop further the concept of authentic self-understanding that is truly "self-transparent" and thorough is what leads him to affirm this "extreme" concept of humanism. The idea is that self-understanding becomes more profound when one cares for the world, when one cares for others. This caring is done without any kind of metaphysical guarantee. This form of caring is, in a sense, an extreme practice of freedom.

Some of Heidegger's French critics see this development as a denial of human freedom. Michel Haar claims that Heidegger's later thought is an impoverishment of human nature.[20] Ferry and Renaut claim that Heidegger's antihumanism "founders in inauthenticity," because he makes "the destiny of Being the destiny of man."[21] Because these critics interpret Heidegger's concept of Being as a metaphysical ground, and they believe that Heidegger articulates self-understanding with reference to this ground, the outcome of his thought is "inauthenticity," that is, he diminishes human freedom.

These claims are based on a misunderstanding of the relationship between Being and authentic self-understanding. Heidegger's concept of Being is not a ground of any kind because it is embedded in human actions. The way we care for beings reveals our understanding of Being. Heidegger describes this also as the "accomplishment" of Being. But it is not as if he places Being first and human beings second. Heidegger is saying that to be a human being you have to live in a world of some sort, however rudimentary. To live in a world entails relating to others as well as things. To have meaningful relations, however, one must understand oneself in some way. Being is what enables self-understanding. He points out, however, that we can also understand ourselves authentically. This means that we can understand ourselves as a whole. To do this, however, we need a wider, less restricted view of Being. Therefore, when he defends a view of humanism

as "**humanitas** in the service of the truth of Being," this claim has to be placed in the context of the ethical practice of authentic self-understanding. Placed in this context, Heidegger's extreme humanism suggests that one only fully understands oneself when one understands, cares for others as deeply as possible, when one affirms Being as widely as possible.

Heidegger's radical style of thinking, which is to extirpate the very idea of a ground from the practice of critical thought, can be viewed sympathetically as an updated version of Socratic impiety, but Heidegger is no Socrates. What is undeniable, however, is that Heidegger's extreme view of humanism goes against a settled way of thinking about human nature.

Heidegger's concept of ethical life as the care for beings bespeaks the death of humanism. If we classify Heidegger as an "inhuman" thinker, this means simply that his view of ethical life is not enclosed within the discursive parameters of essence and existence. Heidegger rethinks the concept of humanism, but from the finite practice of the resolute care for Being.

For Heidegger, to care for Being beyond a ground and in light of our finitude is how one achieves self-authenticity. This form of caring preserves all that which shows itself, namely, appearances, which philosophers from Plato onwards have tended to denigrate. Thus, from Heidegger's

extreme point of view, the various forms of humanism are nothing but so many attempts to evade not only Being itself, but human finitude.

Heidegger's extreme form of humanism opens us up toward a different kind of thinking. This style of thinking may "shock" and "disorient."[22] By radically decoupling his thought from metaphysical humanism, Heidegger wants to think that "inhuman" view of human identity which he associates with Holderlin and Heraclitus. This is a worldly and finite view of self-understanding, a view of self-understanding which expends itself by caring for beings, which seeks a heightened solidarity with others in order to realize its utmost authenticity.

Heidegger's radical account of humanism as authentic self-understanding is not to be interpreted as a liberal subject, a subject of rights, a subject caught up in an inextricable legality, a subject of a certain psychological make-up, who affirms a particular social ethic of possessive individualism.[23] Rather, in the same way that Socrates exhorted his fellow Athenians to be concerned with the care for their souls rather than money-making, to be concerned with ethical life rather than being or non-being, Heidegger's concept of humanism as solidarity with others and concern for things, is an attempt to deepen self-understanding by deepening our involvement in the world. On this account, Heidegger's concept of humanism remains intimately attached to

what is "nearest" to us, like our dreams, visions, the deep sense of who we are outside of social contexts. It is to understand oneself in spite of the social and theoretical traditions that are brought to bear on us.

To sum up, Heidegger rejects metaphysical humanism because it thinks Being with reference to a fundamental ground. He affirms instead an extreme concept of humanism, which achieves authenticity by caring for Being. In the next section I look at the relationship between language and self-understanding.

Language and Self-Transformation

What does Heidegger mean by language? How is language related to ethical life? In this section I develop answers to these questions. I show that the ethical practice of caring for beings as letting be entails a fundamental engagement with language. Language helps to affirm and bear witness to the multifarious identity of things.

What is language? When philosophers ask this question they assume usually that language possesses a unitary essence. "Reflection tries to obtain an idea of what language is universally" (PLT.189). Heidegger describes this manner of thinking about language as technical or metaphysical, and which he urges that we abandon. This manner of thinking is implicit in the various views of language as expression, human activity, or representation and so on. Heidegger does not

argue against these views of language because he has no interest in perpetuating the style of thinking that they embody. He shrugs them off merely as "correct." What he does, instead, is to attack the assumption which they all share. The assumption is that language is determined by a unitary **essence**, which language usage **realizes**. In Heidegger's view, universal claims about the essence of langauge "never bring us to language as language" (PLT.193). From these remarks it is clear that he does "not wish to ground language in something else that is not language itself" (PLT.191).

The practice of thinking language with reference to a fundamental ground goes back to Hellenistic times. Language in this context is thought with reference to "designation". Designation refers to the process whereby the "mind is reset and directed from one object to another." Language as designation derives from a specific understanding of Being. This is Being as **eidos**. This concept of Being is what grounds beings, determines their identity.

Whereas "the Greeks of the Classical Age," think Being as **physis**, as a kind of undetermined and groundless world-play, hence, they think language with reference to the "showing" of this world-play, in Hellenistic times this changes. That is, since Hellenistic times, Being is thought with reference to a unitary concept, namely, **eidos**. Language is thereby viewed as a medium for representing the form of a thing. Although this particular view of language is no longer

predominant, Heidegger claims that this **style** of viewing language "has in many variant forms remained basic and predominant through all the centuries of Western-European thinking" (OWL.115-16).

Heidegger reclaims the view of Being as **physis** as well the view of language as showing. "**The essential Being of language is Saying as Showing**" (OWL.123). This does not mean, however, that his thinking about language is determined by an archaic idealizing, a desire to return to the pre-Socratic "origins" of philosophy as Habermas and other critics claim. Heidegger reclaims the view of language as showing because he wants to think Being in the round, in the open. He reclaims a holistic concept of Being because what drives his thought is the ethical ideal of authentic self-understanding.

Like Wittgenstein, Heidegger's ideal of ethical self-understanding entails worldly engagement, going back to "rough ground." This means engaging beings beyond any particular ground. This means striving to connect language to our ethical life. Unlike Wittgenstein, however, Heidegger's concept of language is not wholly constrained by forms of social life, by only what human beings do and say in particular social contexts. What is important for Heidegger is not language itself, but what language makes possible, namely, authentic self-understanding. And authentic self-understanding cannot be fully constrained by any set of social practices or norms. This does not mean that Heidegger's view of language floats

above social life. On the contrary, self-understanding is elaborated within social contexts, but as human beings we have the capacity to transcend our contexts, we have the capacity to find and articulate new ways of Being-in-the-world. This means that, insofar as language is internally linked to the ethical practice of authentic self-understanding, social practices cannot determine fully the nature of language. To think otherwise would be to make language subservient to what Heidegger describes as "collective subjectivism."

"Language is concerned exclusively with itself," writes Novalis the Romantic poet (OWL.111). Heidegger gives his qualified approval to this Romantic disassociation of language from the claims of metaphysical representation. Heidegger's approval is qualified because language is decoupled from the requirement of representing reality only to be suspended in a void. This is the same void in which Kant left ethical life. This is the phantom world of pure reason decoupled from the world of possible experience. The Romantic view of language disengages language from the world, it does not transform our relation to language. Moreover, the Romantic view of language derives from a false dilemma: either language is constrained by a ground or it is concerned only with itself. Heidegger views the dilemma as bogus. Instead, he makes language internal to the ethical practice of caring for beings in the world. On this account, language still reveals beings but not with reference to a ground. This view of

language is more poetic than philosophical. By poetic I mean a form of language usage which tries to invoke or intimate in its utterances the inarticulable magma of significations that accrue to things.

"The dissolution of a work in madness," Foucault writes, is the "void to which poetic speech is drawn as to its self-destruction."[24] On Foucault's account, poetic language is language decoupled from the aims of "discourse," "representation." The outcome of this modernist denouement is that language "has no other law than that of affirming ... its own precipitous existence."[25] In a famous sentence Foucault asks, "[I]s this not the sign ... that man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon?"[26] In other words, if language in the modern epoch is no longer constrained by the requirement of representing its ground, namely, the **cogito**, does this not portent the death of "man"? Heidegger shares Foucault's scepticism: "It remains to consider what it is to be called - man" (PLT.189). What Heidegger does not share, however, is Foucault's conclusion about the return of language to itself as entailing a kind of modernist sublime, namely, that language is in the service of saying itself, the "unthinkable."[27] From Heidegger's point of view, Foucault's concept of language in **The Order of Things** is nothing but a modernist refinement of the Romantic view of language, which he rejects.[28] In contrast, for Heidegger, the decoupling of

language from the requirement of representation entails a return of language to the self-revealing of beings. Instead of suspending language in a void, Heidegger connects language to the ethical project of self-understanding, the care for beings in the world.

For Heidegger, language is neither constrained by a ground, nor does it subsist in a void. Language is part of Being-in-the-world. Language is fundamental to ethical self-understanding because it reveals through words this understanding, language is the site of the ethical struggle to fully understand oneself as finite.

To make language part of this ethical struggle, however, Heidegger claims we have to "submit" to a "displacement." We have to "transform our accustomed ties to [the] world" (PLT.66). We have to transform our ways of Being-in-the-world by trying to understand ourselves differently. We have to understand ourselves as mortals.

Heidegger views **das Ereignis** as the experience which transforms our accustomed ties to the world, which reveals our finitude in an unrelenting manner. **Das Ereignis** "gathers mortals into the appropriateness of their nature and there holds them" (OWL.128-29). This experience of our finitude "cannot be represented either as an occurrence or a happening - it can only be experienced" (OWL.127). One does not represent one's capacity for death. Death presences as an experience, and it has the capacity of transforming the way we

understand ourselves, as well as the way we relate to the world. Death reveals the possibility of understanding ourselves as a whole, authentically. It does this, however, by situating us even deeper in the world. The experience of our finitude cripples the belief that we can see things from a higher ground, that "we can ... step out of [the world] and look at it from somewhere else" (OWL.134), what Thomas Nagel describes as "the view from nowhere."

These transformative experiences which reveal our finitude happen in a number of ways. They happen even through what Heidegger describes as "insight." To experience insight is to experience a new way of seeing a familiar thing - like a brillo box or a pair of peasant shoes. Heidegger describes insight as

> the plain, sudden, unforgettable and hence forever new look into something which we - even though it is familiar to us - do not even try to know, let alone understand in a fitting manner (OWL.127).

This dissociative experience may come upon us like a "lightening flash" (**lichtender Blitz**). This happens when things show themselves in ways that are external to our habitual ways of seeing or thinking about them. In a sense, insight happens when things forcefully "own" themselves. "**The moving force in Showing ... is Owning**" (OWL.127). The strength of this experience has the capacity to disassociate us from our habitual routines of thought and action.

The experience of our finitude transforms our view of the world. By situating us ever deeper and more resolutely in the world, the latter takes on the appearance of an open space of beings filled with "strife" and unending "agitation" (PLT.50). The world appears unstable, contingent, and ever-changing. This view of world, or Being, "offers," Heidegger suggests, "a hold for all conduct" (BW.239).

The dissociative experience of **das Ereignis** helps us to renounce what Nietzsche describes as "the will to Truth." The fact that we cannot firmly grasp the world in a way that reduces its play helps to deepen the understanding we have of ourselves as finite. The more we affirm the play of the world beyond a determining ground, the more penetrating our self-understanding.

The experience of **das Ereignis** in Heidegger's work can also be described as anarchistic because it decouples the way we understand ourselves from ground or principle.[29] Ethical life after the experience of finitude cannot resort to reinstating a code, a principle, as the ground of individual self-understanding. Ethical life is the instituting of finitude through the accomplishing of the truth of beings.

Heidegger's ethical thought as authentic self-understanding does not portent a return to the public sphere of communicative action, nor interpretative praxis within a communal horizon of shared meanings, but neither does it glorify or elevate private life, what Rorty describes as

"private perfection." Authentic self-understanding as the outcome of showing solicitude for others and concern for things is an exemplary, iconoclastic style of ethical existence. This form of ethical life surpasses the political distinction between public and private because it follows no directives, theoretical or practical.

Heidegger's concept of ethical life is not, however, an unrelenting subjectivism, an unleashing of private desires in the name of authenticity. To understand oneself fully entails examining oneself critically, it means practising what Foucault describes as a "critical ontology" on oneself, which is to interrogate at all times what one is saying or doing, and how it affects others.

We discern the radical nature of Heidegger's view of authentic self-understanding in the lives of certain figures who stand at the margins of the philosophical tradition. We see it in Diogenes when he made his daily rounds in the Agora: antiauthoritarian, ruthlessly honest, ascetic, funny. We see it also in Socrates when he listened to his spirit voice which admonished him to care for his soul. This practice of self-understanding as a form of ethical self-constitution is what philosophy forgot when it became a form of **techné**, a self-conscious practice of explaining beings from higher causes and principles. This leads Heidegger frustratingly to proclaim that "what is needed ... is less philosophy" (BW.242). Philosophy thinks beings with reference to a larger

determining ground. Thus, philosophy as metaphysics, the discourse on Truth itself, cannot address Heidegger's radical account of freedom except by displacing it, that is, either by making freedom subjective or objective.[30] Therefore, one of the challenges of Heidegger's thought is to be a philosopher and not be pulled in by the concern for "Truth," but rather the truth of Being itself.

Heidegger's account of ethical life as authentic self-understanding in the world entails fighting with, and struggling against the claims others might make about who you are, and perhaps more importantly, the contrived views of self-authenticity one might make about oneself. As Heidegger put it, "The hard thing is to accomplish existence" (PLT.138).

The autonomous practice of self-understanding in Heidegger's thought does not retreat from, but rather engages beings. Such engagement shows respect for things so "that they might reveal themselves with respect to what and how they are" (BW.128). To let beings be means that we think about them beyond an antecedent ground. This form of caring enables a deeper understanding of oneself. Solidarity with others through the practice of critical self-understanding helps to develop a personal style of Being-in-the-world. This style allows us, as Unger put it, to be "both great and sweet."[31]

The renunciation of metaphysics is simultaneous with the return to the awareness of human nature as mortal, as capable of death. It is also simultaneous with a return to a

contingent sense of the world as a space where divinities shadow the presencing of things. This return of human existence to a lyrical, multifaceted sense of experience is Heidegger's contribution to a postmetaphysical view of ethical life.

It is our task to "stand" finitude, and to make something of it by caring for and respecting the freedom of others. To understand oneself fully in the world is to struggle with oneself, to struggle and learn the truth of beings, without ground, and without compromise. This is the learning of wisdom, the prize of existence.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. Gilson claims that Plato had no idea about existence, although he liked using the term. See Etienne Gilson, **Being and some Philosophers** (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1952), 49.

2. Plato, **Republic**, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 590d.

3. See **Republic**, 477-479, for Plato's account of the relationship between the subject, knowledge and power.

4. Plotinus, **The Essential Writings**, 2nd ed. trans. Elmer O'Brien (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1981), 40.

5. We might say of Plato what Stevens says of his "floribund ascetic": "He received what he denied. But as truth to be accepted, he supposed/A truth beyond all truths." See Wallace Stevens, "Landscape with Boat," in **The Collected Poems** (New York: Vintage, 1982), 242.

6. See Iris Murdoch's remarkable reappropriation of Plato's concept of the good in **The Sovereignty of Good** (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970).

7. Heidegger, **Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics**, trans. Richard Taft, 4th ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 176.

8. Werner Jaeger, **Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture**, trans. Hugh Gilbert (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1943), 46. Although Socrates certainly made an innovation in ethical thought by substituting the image of the exemplary hero for that of the philosophical **bios**, he still adheres to what Vernant describes as a "mythological" style of thinking. According "to [Greek] mythological thought, daily experience was illumined ... by exemplary deeds performed by gods 'in the beginning'." See Jean-Pierre Vernant, **The Origins of Greek Thought** (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 103.

9. See E.R. Dodds, **The Greeks and the Irrational** (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1951), 207-69.

10. Kant, **Kritik der Reinen Vernunft**, ed. Raymond Schmidt (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1930), A158, B197.

11. **Ibid.**, A154-55, B193-94.

12. **Ibid.**, A327, B384.

13. See **Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics**, 110ff.

14. Even Baudelaire, who gave the concept of **modernité** its distinctive characterization as a preoccupation with **la nouveauté** simply for its sake, was still stuck in the unquestioning problematic of philosophical modernity. For Baudelaire, the world was still split between appearance and reality, the changing and the immutable. The only difference between Baudelaire and his predecessors is that he emphasizes the ever changing, what is new in modern life. But he still holds on to the view that there exists an eternal suprasensory backdrop to all this newness. See Charles Baudelaire, **The Painter of Modern Life**, trans. & ed. J. Magne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 13.

15. See Karl Löwith, **Meaning in History** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 52-103.

16. In a discussion of political power, this leads Foucault to exclaim that we still have to cut off the king's head. Meaning here of course that we need to stop thinking of power as emanating from a centralized source. See Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in **Power/Knowledge**, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 121.

17. I can think of no two finer poems that illustrate this point than Williams's "El Hombre," and Stevens's response to it in his "Nuances on a Theme by Williams." See William Carlos Williams, **The Collected Earlier Poems** (New York: New Directions, 1966), 140; and Wallace Stevens, **The Collected Poems**, 18.

18. Heidegger, **What is a Thing?** trans. W.B. Barton and Vera Deutsch (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1967), 2.

19. As Foucault put it, the articulation of human freedom in light of an antecedent essence, is supposed "to humanize nature, to naturalize man, and to recover on earth the treasures that had been spent in heaven." See Michel Foucault, "Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside," in **Foucault/Blanchot**, trans. Brian Massumi and Jeffrey Mehlman (New York: Zone Books, 1987), 17f.

20. See Michel Haar, **Heidegger and the Essence of Man**, trans. William McNeill (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1993), 57-69.

21. Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, **Heidegger and Modernity**, trans. Franklin Philip (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 108.

22. See Gianni Vattimo's discussion of the concept of "shock" in his discussion of postmodern aesthetic theory - a discussion heavily indebted to Heidegger - in his essay "Art and Oscillation," in **The Transparent Society**, trans. David Webb (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

23. See Roberto Mangabeira Unger, **Knowledge and Politics** (New York: Free Press, 1975), 29-144.

24. Michel Foucault, "The Father's 'No'," in **Language, Counter-Memory, Practice**, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), 85.

25. Michel Foucault, **The Order of Things** (New York: Vintage, 1973), 300.

26. **Ibid.**, 386.

27. See John Rajchman, **Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy** (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 17.

28. Unger shares the view that modernism is indeed a refinement of romanticism. See Roberto Mangabeira Unger, **Passion: An Essay on Personality** (New York: Free Press, 1984).

29. For an interpretation of Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as entailing a form of philosophical anarchism, see Reiner Schürmann, **Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy**, trans. Christine-Marie Gros (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987).

30. See Pierre Bourdieu, "Censorship and the Imposition of Form," in **Language and Symbolic Power**, trans. Gino Raymond & Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 142-44; see also his reductive reading of Heidegger's work in **The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger**, trans. Peter Collier (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 70-76.

31. Roberto Mangabeira Unger, **False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 595.

Conclusion

In this work I advanced an ethical reading of Heidegger's thought as an ethic of authentic self-understanding. This concept of ethical self-identity is achieved through what Heidegger describes as the care for Being, which includes solidarity with others as well as concern for things. It is an inclusive view of ethical life which maintains that self-understanding is most profound when we affirm in a positive manner the particular nature of things, including our finitude.

In my view, what makes Heidegger important is the unrelenting way he attempts to think what Foucault describes as the "history of the present" from the unthought, the "forgotten" of metaphysics, namely, our nature as mortals together with those aspects of experience that metaphysics and science evade. Heidegger, like Foucault, believes that we can overcome the historical present only by coming to grips with its history, the history of metaphysics, together with what that history evades. Having said this, however, I am not suggesting that Heidegger's thought represents a kind of Lycurgian moment for the postmodern age. Whether the view of ethical life as authentic self-understanding can be elaborated

as something other than an individual ethos, can be placed in a larger social and political setting, remains an open question.

What is admirable in Heidegger's work is that he has managed to articulate a concept of the subject which has very little to with the modern liberal subject, the marxist subject of revolutionary praxis or the neocommunitarian subject which has its roots in Hegel and Aristotle. For Heidegger, the concept of ethical autonomy has more to do with the idea of being true to oneself, but this concept of autonomy necessitates solidarity with others. It is not a postmodern sublime of self-romance. I learn what it is to care for my freedom by caring for the liberty of others. This concept of authentic self-understanding life implies further a kind of critical ethos, a critical way of Being-in-the-world. Ethical life after the demise of metaphysics, cannot resort to reinscribing self-understanding within a code, a principle. What must be affirmed, continuously, is our finitude and all which it implies.

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