

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF NOTHINGNESS

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OF
NOTHINGNESS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to render a comprehensive interpretation of Heidegger's concept of nothingness as it is argued for in *Being and Time*. This thesis has two main objectives: 1) to reinterpret Heidegger's concept of the anxiety in which Dasein experiences nothingness and to argue against the standard interpretation which states that Dasein experiences anxiety or nothingness when it acknowledges its mortality, and 2) to show that section 40 of *Being and Time* should be interpreted independently from later sections. The main emphasis of this thesis is to clarify what Heidegger means by nothingness and to criticize those who misinterpret Heidegger. I attempt to provide a more satisfactory account of nothingness and its relation to anxiety and death.

In chapter I, I merely give an account of Heidegger's concept of inauthenticity, which includes the following concepts: The "they", averageness, distanciality, levelling down, publicness, idle talk, curiosity, ambiguity, and falling and thrownness.

In chapter II, I discuss anxiety and nothingness. I refer to Heidegger's essay entitled "What is Metaphysics?" in order to get a deeper understanding of Heidegger's concept of nothingness. I argue against the standard interpretation and show that nothingness can be experienced without the acknowledgement of one's mortality.

In chapter III, I attempt to answer the following question: What does Heidegger mean by death? I outline the arguments of various interpreters of Heidegger's concept of death. They equate nothingness with one's acknowledgement of mortality, i.e., the possibility of one's own death. Those who argue for this position do not understand what Heidegger means by nothingness and its significance to death. I criticize these interpreters and reveal their oversights and misinterpretations, and then put forth my own interpretation of what Heidegger means by death.

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To my Mother and Father from whom
I Learn what is Vital:

I Learn	To my Uncle from whom	how to Think;
I Learn	To Tom from whom	how to Be;
I Learn	To Susan from whom	how to Love;
I Learn	To Stuart and Chris from whom	what Counts.

I Love you.

Nancy Sullivan

The Death of the First Man

What was it?
How could they know what it was?
It had never happened before.
No one had ever gone out.
Whatever it was was happening.

Something was over.
Curled in a loose shape
the first dead man
drained out of himself
while the others shifted
the dead weight
(because it was dead);
they tried to make him get up.
They kicked and prodded.
Where had he gone?
Dead we now call that place
where he stayed in a heap
for maybe a week
until the stink told them
something was wrong.
Someone thought to bury him.
How could they know
from the animals that fell to their clubs
that they too could go down?
The first grave
mounted over his weight.

What was it,
this going out?
That was what no one knew
even as it happened.
Even as it happens.

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I will explore the significance of nothingness in Heidegger's *Being and Time*. Nothingness, although central to Heidegger's philosophy, does not receive the amount of treatment it deserves in Heideggerian scholarship, and because of this it is either left open for misinterpretation or its significance is overlooked. Consequently, some aspects of Heidegger's philosophy are misunderstood. One aspect which is misunderstood is anxiety.

In chapter I, I explore Heidegger's characterization and description of inauthentic existence. It is necessary, I think, to understand Heidegger's account of inauthentic existence in order to grasp the phenomenological analysis of anxiety. It is anxiety that reveals to Dasein its inauthenticity. So, anxiety can be understood more fully in relation to inauthenticity.

In chapter II, I discuss anxiety and nothingness. In section 40 of *Being and Time* Heidegger introduces the concept of anxiety and argues that Dasein experiences nothingness. This nothingness is not a metaphysical nothingness located in the center of Dasein's Being, as though Dasein were a container for nothingness, but is rather the experience of meaninglessness or insignificance.

I argue against the standard interpretation which states that Dasein experiences anxiety because it becomes aware of its mortality. Several commentators argue that when Dasein knows it is going to die or becomes aware of its mortality, it causes Dasein to experience anxiety. However, this approach is too analytical because, as Heidegger says, moods (such as anxiety) assail us. He is simply trying to describe and understand anxiety, not explain it. The interpretation I give of this section is, I think, more coherent and consistent with the logic of the text. Since Heidegger discusses anxiety in section 40, it is obvious to any reader of the text that it precedes the sections on death in the second division. The mistake most commentators make is to read into section 40 their understanding of later sections of *Being and Time*. I think section 40 should be read independently of later sections because it is preparatory for them. If one were to reverse the order, then the later sections are, paradoxically, preparatory for section 40.

I think section 40 is important to understand independently because it is a transition from inauthenticity to authenticity or, more specifically, the preparatory analysis (division one) to its outcome (division two). One may ask: "What is the import of reading a text in the way I suggest?" The answer will become apparent in chapter III where I discuss death. The significance of nothingness as

it is described in section 40 has far reaching consequences for the rest of *Being and Time*. I will attempt to show some of the consequences of nothingness that pertain to a more consistent understanding of death in division II, Part I of *Being and Time*. It is here that I continue to discuss the significance of nothingness. Contrary to the standard interpretation, which states that death is a possibility for Dasein that can occur at any moment, death is an extension of the concept of nothingness in section 40. The standard interpretation turns death into a possibility which we can by definition never experience. The reading of the sections on death are not fully understandable if section 40 is not fully understood. For example, some commentators argue that death is a possibility for Dasein. But they stress the fact that death can occur at any moment and thus Dasein is individualized and freed for authentic existence. But this, I argue, treats death as an ontic event which Dasein can never experience. Death as a possibility is something which is never actual, according to the standard interpretation. However, the question arises: What is the end towards which Dasein is directed? In other words, what does Heidegger mean by death? I attempt to answer this question in Chapter III. I defend Heidegger against the charge of doing metaphysics. Sartre, for example, states that since Dasein cannot experience its death, it is not part of the ontological constitution of what it means to be human.

However, death, as I understand it, is nothingness, which is an aspect of our experience as Heidegger shows in section 40.

CHAPTER 1

INAUTHENTICITY

PART I

Being-in-the-world as Being-with
and Being-one's-self. The "They"

There are two ways in which Dasein's Being takes on a definite character, "... and they must be seen and understood *a priori* as grounded upon that state of Being which we have called '*Being-in-the-world*'":¹ inauthentic and authentic. In order to understand the latter, one must fully understand the former. Only then will one comprehend the significance and meaning of anxiety (the distinctive state-of-mind which makes the move from inauthenticity to authenticity possible) and nothingness.

Heidegger begins his "Theme of the Analytic of Dasein" by stating: "We are ourselves the entities to be analysed. The Being of any entity is in each case mine" (41). Being is an issue for me. In fact, at the center of the discussion in the existential analytic is the Being of inauthentic Dasein. Heidegger then describes his two propositions concerning the essence of Dasein:

¹Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), H53. All references will be made in the text and correspond to Heidegger's text.

(1) "The 'essence' of this entity lies in its 'to be'" (42). Here Heidegger is stressing the temporality of Dasein, that Dasein's Being is related to its future. Dasein is always future oriented, i.e., Dasein projects itself toward its future possibilities, and Heidegger confirms this when he says, "The 'essence' of Dasein lies in its existence ... [and all] the Being-as-it-is which this entity possesses is primarily Being. So when we designate this entity with the term 'Dasein', we are expressing not its 'what' (as if it were a table, house or tree) but its Being [to be]" (42).

(2) "That Being which is an *issue* for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine. Thus Dasein is never to be taken ontologically as an instance or special case of some genus of entities as things that are present-at-hand" (42). Because I stand related to my possibilities and I am concerned with them and because I choose my possibilities and can determine my Being, my Being is not a thing or an object, but a potentiality-for-being (cf. 86, 144, 167, 232-3).

Heidegger then clarifies his position by adding that

... in each case Dasein is mine to be in one way or another. Dasein has always made some sort of decision as to the way in which it is in each case mine. That entity which in its Being has this very Being as an issue, comports towards its Being as its ownmost possibility. In each case Dasein *is* its possibility, and it 'has' this possibility,

but not just as a property, as something present-at-hand would. And because Dasein is in each case essentially its own possibility, it can, in its very Being, 'choose' itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only 'seem' to do so. But only in so far as it is essentially something which can be *authentic*--that is, something of its own--can it have lost itself and not yet won itself. (42-3)

Dasein can be authentic by choosing its own possibilities, appropriating, and making its own those possibilities. Conversely, just as authenticity is one way for Dasein to exist, inauthenticity is another way for Dasein to exist. In inauthenticity Dasein does not choose its own possibilities.

As modes of Being, *authenticity* and *inauthenticity* (these expressions have been chosen terminologically in a strict sense) are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness. But the inauthenticity of Dasein does not signify any 'less' Being or any 'lower' degree of Being. Rather it is the case that even in its fullest concretion Dasein can be characterized by inauthenticity when busy, when excited, when interested, when ready for enjoyment. (43)

"When Dasein is absorbed in the world of its concern--that is, at the same time in its Being-with towards Others--it is not itself" (125). This statement sets the stage for the investigation into inauthentic existence. According to Heidegger, most people are not aware of their possible authenticity, and have not chosen their own

possibilities. Instead, people are absorbed in the world of their concerns, their work and social world. So, if Dasein is not itself when it is absorbed in the world of its concern, the following question arises: "Who is it, then, who has taken over Being as everyday Being-with-one-another?" (125)

In section 27 of *Being and Time* Heidegger discusses how everyday Dasein interacts with Others in its everyday world of concerns. "In that with which we concern ourselves environmentally the Others are encountered as what they are; they are what they do" (126). Here Heidegger is stressing that we think of other people in terms of what they do, and this is what they are. I may even think this way of myself; I am what I do. Thinking of one's self or Others in this way is what Heidegger means by the "they". Added to this concept of the they-self is a comparison of how one differs from the Others. Heidegger stresses that Dasein may be ahead, behind, or on equal footing with Others, and Dasein will have to keep on going, work harder and catch up in order to better one's social standing and position. Heidegger says that:

In one's concern with what one has taken hold of, whether with, for, or against, the Others, there is constant care as to the way one differs from them, whether that difference is merely one that is to be evened out, whether one's own Dasein has lagged behind the Others and wants to catch up in relationship to them, or

whether one's Dasein already has some priority over them and sets out to keep them suppressed. The care about this distance between them is disturbing to Being-with-one-another, though this disturbance is one that is hidden from it. If we may express this existentially, such Being-with-one-another has the character of *distantiality*. (126)

The distantiality which is in relation to Being-with-one-another keeps Dasein subject to the 'will' of Others. Dasein is dominated, and forced to conform, by the Other. "[Dasein's Being] has been taken away by the Others" (126).

Who is the Other who has taken away Dasein's Being? The point Heidegger is making in answering this question is that the Other is indefinite, "... any other can represent them. What is decisive is just that inconspicuous domination by Others which has already been taken over unawares from Dasein as Being-with" (126). Furthermore, one belongs to Others oneself and enhances their power. "The 'who' is not this one, not that one, not oneself, not some people, and the sum of them all. The 'who' is the neuter, *the 'they'*" (126).

Heidegger elucidates his conception of the "they" by referring back to his analysis of the shared, public environment in which Dasein dissolves into one of the "they" and becomes the Other merely by utilizing public means of transportation or technology. Dasein dissolves into one of

the "they" because public instrumentalities can be used by any Other. Dasein becomes like any Other, indistinguishable and anonymous, simply by using these public instrumentalities. As Heidegger states it:

In utilizing public means of transport and in making use of information services such as the newspaper, every Other is like the next. This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into the kind of Being of 'the Others', in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the "they" is unfolded. (126)

Heidegger's analysis of how Dasein is dominated by the "they" is expanded to include not only public means of transport and information services but also every way in which Dasein exists.

We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as *they* take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as *they* see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the 'great mass' as *they* shrink back; we find 'shocking' what *they* find shocking. The "they", which is nothing definite, and which we all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness. (126-7)²

Hence, we can see that the inauthentic person does not choose to exist and find enjoyable or pleasurable for

²Heidegger, it must be kept in mind, is making an ontological, and not an ontic, assessment of certain structures of everyday experience, and is not positing some ontic entity we encounter in the world.

himself, but merely conforms to become indistinguishable from the "they".

This way of becoming indistinguishable from the "they" is a consequence of the domination of the "they", and Heidegger calls this *averageness*, which is an existential characteristic of the "they". The "they" ensures this averageness by maintaining what it regards as valid and that which it does not, and it suppresses any attempt Dasein may make at something exceptional. When everyday Dasein is under the domination of the "they", it will live an average life while its own possibilities are "levelled down", and the "they" will make sure of this.

To recapitulate his point, Heidegger states that

Distantiality, averageness, and
levelling, as ways of Being for the
"they", constitute what we know as
'publicness'. Publicness proximally
controls every way in which the world
and Dasein get interpreted (127)

This means that Dasein's Being-in-the-world is controlled by the "they" and everything Dasein thinks, does, hopes for, and so on is interpreted in terms of the "they"'s way of understanding. Heidegger stresses that:

If Dasein is familiar with itself as
they-self, this means at the same time
that the "they" itself prescribes that
way of interpreting the world and Being-
in-the-world which lies closest. (129)

The "they" also controls Dasein's judgements and decisions, so much that whenever everyday Dasein is

confronted with the situation of having to answer and take responsibility for its actions, everyday Dasein can appeal to the "they" for justification invoking the defence that "It 'was' always the 'they' who did it, and yet it can be said that it has been 'no one'" (127). In this way, the particular Dasein is *disburdened* of the answerability, and therefore responsibility, for its actions. Hence, the "they" accommodates Dasein if Dasein wants to take it easy, i.e., if Dasein does not want to be "burdened" with having to make decisions or answering and taking responsibility for its actions, *they* will suggest you take it easy, and in doing so deprive you of your possibilities of thought and action. "And because the 'they' constantly accommodates the particular Dasein by disburdening it of its Being, the 'they' retains and enhances its stubborn dominion" (128).

Therefore:

Everyone is the other, and no one is himself. The "*they*", which supplies the answer to the question of the "*who*" of everyday Dasein, is the "*nobody*" to whom every Dasein has already surrendered itself in Being-among-one-other. (128)

To sum up, the "who" of everyday Dasein is the "they". But it must be emphasized that the "they" is not an entity in the world like a chair, tree, another person, or a group of people. Instead, the "they" is the phenomenon one experiences when one surrenders one's own choices of how to act, what to talk about, how to dress, and so on over to

what is publicly accepted. It should not be interpreted as merely the public self *vis-à-vis* the private self, because the private self can be inauthentic as well. If, for example, Dasein is attending a formal dinner party (the public self), it will behave, talk, and dress as *they* would; further, if, for example, Dasein is sitting at home alone one afternoon (the private self), it will entertain itself as *they* would and watch television.

PART II
The everyday Being of the "there",
and the falling of Dasein

Hitherto, I have shown generally how Dasein is inauthentic as Being-with. In this section, I would like to explicate Heidegger's analysis of inauthentic ways of Being more specifically. The topics to be covered in this section are the following: Idle Talk, curiosity, ambiguity, and falling. Heidegger asks the following question: "what are the existential characteristics of the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, so far as the latter, as something which is everyday, maintains itself in the kind of Being of the 'they'" (167). These topics are important because inauthentic Dasein is absorbed in, and mastered by, the "they". We shall see that inauthentic Dasein is not only absorbed and dispersed into everyday tasks and dealings, work, uses of public conveniences, and social roles (as was discussed above) but also falls into inauthentic ways of Being such as talking, understanding, interpreting, and seeing.

1. Idle Talk

Idle talk is the first existential characteristic Heidegger describes, and he claims it "... is not to be used here in a 'disparaging' signification" (167). Rather, it is a positive phenomenon which constitutes the kind of Being of everyday Dasein's understanding and interpreting. What

Heidegger is specifying here is the manner in which Dasein, in its inauthentic everyday mode, understands and interprets its world.

For the most part, discourse is expressed by being spoken out, and has always been so expressed; it is language. But in that case understanding and interpretation already lie in what has thus been expressed. In language, as a way things have been expressed or spoken out, there is hidden a way in which the understanding of Dasein has been interpreted. (167)

Heidegger's analysis implies that the "they"'s way of talking is based on an inauthentic understanding, which Dasein is constantly delivered over to, alienating Dasein from its own authentic possibilities. "Dasein is constantly delivered over to this interpretedness, which controls and distributes the possibilities of average understanding and of the state-of-mind belonging to it" (167-8). The way things (the world, entities, and Being) get spoken of, is contingent upon Dasein's interpretation and understanding. And, if Dasein's interpretation and understanding is inauthentic, then the way in which Dasein speaks of things will be inauthentic.

The way things have been expressed or spoken out is such that in the totality of contexts of signification into which it has been articulated, it preserves an understanding of the disclosed world and therewith, equiprimordially, an understanding of the Dasein-with of Others and of one's own Being-in. The understanding which has thus already

been "deposited" in the way things have been expressed, pertains just as much to any traditional discoveredness of entities which may have been reached, as it does to one's current understanding of Being and to whatever possibilities and horizons for fresh interpretation and conceptual Articulation may be available. (168)

Heidegger's point here is that language contains an interpretation constituted by the "they"'s average understanding, that is, the everyday world is interpreted and articulated according to the "deposits" of tradition. Thus, everyday Dasein does not discriminate between what is primordial and what is gossip. So, when everyday Dasein is communicating with Others, there is no understanding of the entities talked about, but rather "... listening only to what is said-in-the-talk as such" (168).

Listening only to what is said in the talk leads to a superficial understanding. The "they" level down understanding to the averageness of what is talked about and passes along what is talked about as fact. Idle talk obstructs one from having a primordial understanding of phenomena appropriated from a direct experience of the things themselves, which idle talk never refers to. "... [Idle talk] does not communicate in such a way as to let [the entity talked about] be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping and passing the word along*" (168).

This process of gossiping and passing the word along constitutes idle talk: "A process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness" (168). The fact that idle talk is groundless facilitates and encourages it to become public because:

Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without making the thing one's own. If this were done, idle talk would founder; and it already guards against such a danger. Idle talk is something which anyone can rake up; it not only releases one from the task of genuinely understanding, but develops an undifferentiated kind of intelligibility, for which nothing is closed off any longer. (169)

Discourse has the possibility of becoming idle talk, and when it does it closes off and covers up the entities within-the-world, closes off any possibility of achieving an authentic understanding through covering up the things themselves with the groundlessness of what is said in the talk, and is therefore a perversion of a genuine act of disclosing which enables one to directly appropriate what is being disclosed and thus gain a primordial understanding.

Dasein is discouraged from any further inquiry into what is talked about, in hopes of achieving a primordial understanding, because Dasein believes that it understands what is passed along in the talk. Heidegger forcefully elucidates the effect of idle talk by stating that:

This way in which things have been interpreted in idle talk has already established itself in Dasein. There are many things with which we first become acquainted in this way, and there is not a little which never gets beyond such an average understanding. This everyday way in which things have been interpreted is one into which Dasein has grown in the first instance, with never a possibility of extrication. In it, out of it, and against it, all genuine understanding, interpreting, and communicating, all re-discovering and appropriating anew, are performed. In no case is a Dasein, untouched and unseduced by this way in which things have been interpreted, set before the open country of a 'world-in-itself' so that it just beholds what it encounters. The dominance of the public way in which things have been interpreted has already been decisive even for the possibilities of having a mood--that is, for the basic way in which Dasein lets the world 'matter' to it. The "they" prescribes one's state-of-mind, and determines what and how one 'sees'. (169-70)

2. Curiosity

A fundamental mistake made in western philosophy is the notion that the apprehension of Being is achieved by a kind of seeing which belongs to everyday disclosedness which lets the world be encountered in a peculiar way of perception. This kind of seeing is what Heidegger calls "curiosity", and it has its root in Greek Philosophy: "Being is that which shows itself in the pure perception which belongs to beholding, and only by such seeing does Being get discovered. Primordial and genuine truth lies in pure beholding. This thesis has remained the foundation of

western philosophy ever since" (171).

Dasein is absorbed in the world of its concern, which is guided by circumspection, and everything becomes ready-to-hand. Seeing everything as something ready-to-hand takes place most forcefully when Dasein has finished with its ordinary work activity and starts to "look around" while it takes a rest. Circumspection is thus set free and there is no longer anything ready-to-hand which we must concern ourselves with. Circumspection drifts into a alien world in which it sees the 'world' as it looks.

Dasein seeks what is far away simply in order to bring it close to itself in the way it looks. Dasein lets itself be carried along solely by the looks of the world; in this kind of Being it concerns itself with becoming rid of itself as Being-in-the-world and rid of its Being-alongside that which, in its closest everyday manner, is ready-to-hand. (172)

Curiosity, when it has been set free, does not concern itself with understanding what is seen but just in order to see. Curiosity seeks to perceive only so that Dasein can move on to something new. Dasein's curiosity does not tarry alongside beings within-the-world, but moves rapidly and constantly along, soaking up new distractions. Curiosity is to be distinguished from genuine thinking and pondering in which the observing and marvelling at Being occurs, for such wonder does not provide "distractions" for curiosity.

What Dasein will be curious about is determined by idle talk: the "hottest" movies, the bestsellers, the "in" places, new trends, and the "latest thing". This is the way Dasein entertains itself for the most part. Idle talk uproots Dasein and makes it groundless, and, similarly, curiosity carries Dasein along and causes it to be "everywhere and nowhere" (173).

Curiosity, for which nothing is closed off, and idle talk, for which there is nothing that is not understood, provide themselves (that is, the Dasein which is in this manner) with the guarantee of a 'life' which, supposedly, is genuinely 'lively'. (173)

The supposition that one is living a lively, fulfilling, and genuinely entertaining life is grounded in the phenomenon of ambiguity.

3. Ambiguity

Ambiguity, Dasein's inauthentic, everyday disclosedness, lies in the fact that it becomes impossible to decide whether something is disclosed in genuine understanding or just passed along in the easiest and most obvious way. Inauthentic disclosedness, then, is ambiguous with regard to the world, Being-with-one-another, and Dasein's Being. These things look as though they are genuinely understood, but they are not.

Ambiguity not only affects the way we avail ourselves of what is accessible for use and enjoyment, and the way we manage it; ambiguity has already

established itself in the understanding as a potentiality-for-Being, and in the way Dasein projects itself and presents itself with possibilities. (173)

Dasein exists ambiguously insofar as it has already scented out what Others have surmised, i.e., everyday Dasein exists such that it is in vogue and on top of things. Heidegger states that if one is genuinely on the scent of anything, he will not speak about it. I think the point Heidegger is making here is that if someone is genuinely on the scent of anything, he will not speak about it because he is either still trying to figure out and understand it through language and thus cannot yet speak about it or it does not fit into the language of idle chatter, i.e., *they* would not understand or do not care what he was talking about. As Heidegger puts it: "... this is the most entangling way in which ambiguity presents Dasein's possibilities so that they will already be stifled in their power" (173).

What Dasein genuinely understands or Realizes¹ quickly fades away. If Dasein keeps quiet and avoids talking about what it is genuinely on the scent of, idle talk will soon have gone on to the very newest thing. What Dasein has genuinely understood comes too late if Dasein looks at that which is newest. Idle talk moves at a faster rate. In this way idle talk and curiosity work together to

¹Heidegger capitalizes this word. See *Being and Time*, 174.

make sure that what is genuinely understood is out of date as soon as one goes public.

When Dasein is ambiguously surmising and is ahead of the game, what it comes up with is passed off as what is really going on. Taking action and doing something is considered unimportant. Any genuine possibility of Being is constantly stamped by the "they" as going in the wrong direction. Dasein is only willing to chat about possibilities in such matters. Idle talk and curiosity quickly leave the scene if Dasein is motivated towards action. "Dasein is ambiguously 'there'--that is to say, in that public disclosedness of Being-with-one-another where the loudest idle talk and the most ingenious curiosity keep 'things moving', where, in an everyday manner, everything (and at bottom nothing) is happening" (174). Ambiguity names the characteristic of Dasein's uprooted disclosedness, whereby what is primordial is neglected and whereby the idle talk and gossip about possibilities takes precedence over the difficult realization of possibilities. The ambiguity lies in the fact that the "they" claims that it is discovering and doing what is really important. Heidegger's analysis of ambiguity show the enormous difficulty involved in any kind of genuine discovery. It is Dasein who discovers, but Dasein is constantly tempted to let itself be dominated by the "they". In order to keep things "in

order," the "they" tries immediately to dismiss a new discovery as unimportant.

Ambiguity is also prevalent in Being-with-one-another in the sense of what *they* have heard, say, and know about the Other. "Into primordial Being-with-one-another, idle talk first slips itself in between. Everyone keeps his eye on the Other first and next, watching how he will comport himself and what he will say in reply" (175).

4. Falling and Thrownness

Idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity characterize the way in which, in an everyday manner, Dasein is its 'there'--the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world. As definite existential characteristics, these are not present-at-hand in Dasein, but help to make up its Being. In these, and in the way they are interconnected in their Being, there is revealed a basic kind of Being which belongs to everydayness; we call this the '*falling*' of Dasein. (175)

Heidegger begins his discussion of falling by stating that "This term does not express any negative evaluation, but is used to signify that Dasein is proximally and for the most part *alongside* the 'world' of its concern" (175). This means that Dasein is absorbed into the inauthentic, everyday world of the "they" and is concerned more with the mundane activities of everydayness--that is, getting to work on time, paying the bills, pleasing the boss, and so on--than with its own authentic potentiality for Being itself, which Dasein has fallen away from.

Dasein's fallenness means that Dasein is absorbed in Being-with-one-another, which is characterized by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. Inauthentic Dasein is fascinated by the "they", and is thus induced into public roles and everyday ways of Being. In doing so, Dasein forfeits its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, losing its authentic possibilities of understanding, seeing, interpreting, and experiencing.

Through the Interpretation of falling, what we have called the 'inauthenticity' of Dasein may now be defined more precisely. On no account, however, do the terms 'inauthentic' and 'non-authentic' signify 'really not', as if in this mode of Being, Dasein were altogether to lose its Being. 'Inauthenticity' does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world, but amounts rather to a quite distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world--the kind which is completely fascinated by the 'world' and by the Dasein-with of Others in the "they". Not-Being-its-self functions as a *positive* possibility of that entity which, in its essential concern, is absorbed in a world. This kind of *not-Being* has to be conceived as that kind of Being which is closest to Dasein and in which Dasein maintains itself for the most part. (175-6)

This does not mean that Dasein has fallen from a higher status, authenticity, to a lower status, inauthenticity, because higher and lower are value-loaded terms, and Heidegger's analysis claims to be value free. All Heidegger is doing is revealing ontologically experiences Dasein has in the world of concern and that

existing inauthentically is one mode of Being for Dasein, not the higher or lower way of existing. Instead, "Falling reveals an *essential* ontological structure of Dasein itself. Far from determining its nocturnal side, it constitutes all Dasein's days in their everydayness" (179).

Dasein falls away from its ownmost Self into the domination of the "they". The who, then, of inauthentic Dasein is the they-self.

Idle talk discloses to Dasein a Being towards its world, towards Others, and towards itself--a Being in which these are understood, but in a mode of groundless floating. Curiosity discloses everything and anything, yet in such a way that Being-in is everywhere and nowhere. Ambiguity hides nothing from Dasein's understanding, but only in order that Being-in-the-world should be suppressed in this uprooted "everywhere and nowhere". (177)

The above quotation reveals that Dasein usually neglects itself and flees into the "they". The first aspect of falling is that Being-in-the-world as falling is tempted. The way things have been publicly interpreted becomes a temptation to Dasein and holds Dasein in its fallenness. Idle talk and ambiguity work together in such a way that the "they" make Dasein feel that there is nothing more to understand or to see, and they "... develop the supposition that Dasein's disclosedness, which is so available and so prevalent, can guarantee to Dasein that all the possibilities of its Being will be secure, genuine, and

full" (177). Therefore, once Dasein is convinced that it has seen and understood everything and that it is living a full and genuine life, Dasein will become *tranquillized* in the world of the "they". To be tranquillized means that inauthentic Dasein assumes it has "made it", and believes that it is living a comfortable, successful, and respectable life. There is nothing else to see, think, experience, and so on.

Once Dasein is tranquillized in inauthentic Being, it does not mean that Dasein lies down and becomes stagnate for the rest of its life. Rather, one is driven "... into uninhibited 'hustle'" (177) because this tranquillizing aggravates falling. Since inauthentic Dasein has closed off any primordial understanding of itself, it compares itself with everything. This means that when Dasein compares itself with everything it understands itself as a thing. Inauthentic Dasein thus alienates itself from itself, and this alienation shuts off from Dasein an authentic understanding of itself. Heidegger stresses this when he says:

When Dasein, tranquillized, and 'understanding' everything, thus compares itself with everything, it drifts along towards an alienation in which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is hidden from it. Falling Being-in-the-world is not only tempting and tranquillizing; it is at the same time *alienating*. (178)

This alienation closes off from Dasein its authenticity. Dasein, however, in alienation does not become something other than Dasein, but forces it into inauthenticity--"... into a kind of Being of itself" (178). Finally, this alienation of falling causes Dasein to get "entangled" in itself. In other words, Dasein loses sight of its authentic potentiality-for-Being because the understanding is torn away from the projecting of authentic possibilities.

The phenomena we have pointed out--temptation, tranquillizing, alienation and self-entangling (entanglement)--characterize the specific kind of Being which belongs to falling. This 'movement' of Dasein in its own Being, we call its 'downward plunge'. Dasein plunges out of itself into itself, into the groundlessness and nullity of inauthentic everydayness. But this plunge remains hidden from Dasein by the way things have been publicly interpreted, so much so, indeed, that it gets interpreted as a way of 'ascending' and 'living concretely'. (178)

This downward plunge of falling is also characterized by a *whirlpool-effect* (*Wirbel*).¹ "At the

¹Macquarrie and Robinson translate 'Wirbel' as 'turbulence', but I think this misses the significance and metaphorical imagery of the term 'Wirbel'. 'Wirbel' means 'whirlpool', and I think Heidegger was creating an image that the movement of Dasein's falling is whirling around, going faster, as it gets sucked down deeper into the world of the "they". It is just like being trapped in a whirlpool. Therefore, I think the word 'whirlpool-effect' captures more precisely Heidegger's intentions. Furthermore, in the next paragraph the words 'hineingewirbelt wird' are translated as 'is sucked', and the reader should note the significance of 'wirbel' in the word 'hineingewirbelt'. Also, the German phrase 'mir

same time this whirlpool-effect makes manifest that the thrownness which can obtrude itself upon Dasein in its state-of-mind, has the character of throwing and of movement" (179). This whirlpool-effect refers to Dasein's facticity--"[which] implies that an entity 'within-the-world' has Being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its 'destiny' with the Being of those entities which it encounters within its own world" (56). This factual involvement and absorption includes a closing-off of Dasein from itself and turning away from itself to its world. The thrownness of Dasein is neither "... a fact that is finished nor a fact that is settled" (179). "This characteristic of Dasein's Being--this 'that it is'--is veiled in its 'whence' and 'wither', yet disclosed in itself all the more unveiledly; we call it the 'thrownness' of this entity into its 'there'" (135). As long as Dasein is what it is, it remains thrown and sucked into the whirlpool of inauthenticity.

Can Dasein ever, in its Being, have its potentiality-for-Being as an issue if Dasein is trapped in everydayness falling away from itself?

wirbelt der Kopf' means 'my head is spinning'.

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed Dasein's inauthentic Being-in, its disclosedness, which is constituted by state-of-mind, understanding, and discourse. This inauthentic, everyday kind of Being is characterized by idle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity. These led to a discussion of the movement of falling, Dasein's tendency toward concealment, which is characterized by temptation, tranquillizing, alienation, and entanglement.

The aspect of falling consists of two things: 1) a concealment of the primordial ways and authentic possibilities of Dasein's understanding, seeing, interpreting, and experiencing; and 2) a concealment of Dasein's authentic potentiality-for-Being.

I would like the reader to become more concretely aware of inauthentic existence because it is, I think, a necessary requirement if we are going to understand precisely what Heidegger means by anxiety and nothingness.

Inauthentic Dasein is what it does, i.e., I am a doctor, I am a lawyer, I am a salesperson, I am a nurse. I think of myself and others as things. (This clarifies further what Heidegger means by Dasein comparing itself with everything.) Coupled with this are the material possessions I have, my tastes (in music, art, literature, clothing, and so on), my patriotism, my friends, my family, my

accomplishments, my failures, and so on. All of these constitute who I am and what I think of myself. I am all of these things, and this is the inauthentic way of thinking about myself. Inherent in this conception of myself is my concern with my 'world', i.e., I must get to work on time, do good work, get more possessions (distantiality), pay the bills, maintain a good relationship with my spouse, my family, relatives, and friends, support my family (perhaps not solely), and so on. Further, the "they" consider someone who does not have these things to be "going nowhere in life". Perhaps we all feel or at least felt this at some point in our lives. If not, we certainly understand how a person feels or can empathize with a person who has to share with a group of "successful" people that he is "only" or "just" a waiter in a bar. He feels inferior in some way and the "they" make him feel that way. Here the "they" does not necessarily refer to the particular group of "successful" people, but rather the inconspicuous "they". Sometimes, the "successful" people may even pretend to be genuinely interested or impressed, but this makes him even more uncomfortable.

So, the "they" considers someone to be "going nowhere in life" and sometimes a particular person may think this of himself. If I have the house, the spouse, the job, the car, good taste in music and art, and so on, I am

comfortable and can take life easy, just as *they* want me to. I may even think I am "happy" and living a genuinely fulfilling life. There is, however, a mood, a state-of-mind, which reveals to me my inauthenticity. It forces me to confront my Being with honesty and directness; so, one day, for no reason in particular, from nowhere, and without any warning I experience anxiety. Everything I thought about myself, everything which gave my life meaning and significance (my 'world') recedes away from me and I experience nothingness. It is not the case that the objects in the world disappear; they remain only to enforce their insignificance. The house, the spouse, the job, the material possessions, the friends, and everything else are revealed as insignificant because anxiety has revealed to me that my life up to that moment was not what I thought it was or was not of my own choosing; my 'world' has collapsed. This is the significance of anxiety and nothingness.

According to Heidegger, Dasein tends to turn away from its ownmost (authentic) potentiality-for-Being to seek security in the "they". As Flynn puts it:

This backward movement is ontic and can be observed quite readily as, for example, the constant accommodation of oneself to what "they" think. The literature of popular sociology and psychology is replete with examples of this kind of existentialist inauthenticity. But the very turning away of Dasein from itself reveals Dasein's ontological-existential

structure.¹

Anxiety is the state-of-mind which makes possible the realization of the insignificance of the world in which Dasein finds itself. Further, anxiety discloses Dasein as Being-possible for the choosing of itself and the taking hold of itself (authenticity).

We are now ready to understand what Heidegger means by anxiety and nothingness.

¹Thomas R. Flynn, "Angst and Care in The Early Heidegger: The Ontic/Ontological Aporia," *International Studies in Philosophy* 12 (1980), p. 64.

CHAPTER 2

ANXIETY AND NOTHINGNESS

Introduction

In Part I of this chapter I will show that most commentators and interpreters of Heidegger's *Being and Time* misunderstand the significance of anxiety and especially nothingness. The standard interpretation--that anxiety is experienced when Dasein acknowledges its mortality, i.e., that it is going to die--is fundamentally and profoundly misleading because it precludes the possibility of experiencing anxiety even though Dasein may not acknowledge its mortality. This is not to say that anxiety does not occur when one does come face to face with the finitude of one's Being-in-the-world. As Heidegger notes in *History of the Concept of Time*:

Anxiety is nothing other than the pure and simple experience of being in the sense of being-in-the-world. This experience can, though it does not have to ... assume a distinctive sense in *death* or, more precisely, in *dying*.¹

I think the words "though it does not have to" suggest that Heidegger means more by anxiety than solely an awareness of mortality. To limit anxiety to this

¹Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 291.

acknowledgement of mortality renders an inconsistent and incomplete account of *Being and Time*, primarily in relation to section 40. It is interesting to note that Heidegger never mentions the word death in section 40. So, why do most commentators discuss anxiety in connection to an awareness of mortality? Mainly because they do not understand what Heidegger means by nothingness and consequently death.

In Part II of this chapter I will (re)interpret Heidegger's notion of nothingness as it is described in section 40 of *Being and Time*. I will be arguing against the standard interpretation, and I want to get at the meaning of the above words "though it does not have to". What else does anxiety entail if it is not limited to an awareness of mortality? I maintain that anxiety can be independent of an awareness of one's mortality; however, the interpretations by many commentators, such as Demske², Gelven³, and Zimmerman⁴, to mention only a few, preclude this possibility. Heidegger does indeed discuss anxiety in connection with death; however, this occurs in the second

²James M. Demske, *Being, Man, & Death* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1970).

³M. Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time Revised Edition* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989).

⁴M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self* (London: Ohio University Press, 1981).

division of *Being and Time*. The mistake most commentators make, I think, is to reinterpret section 40 after they read Chapter 1 of Division II (Being-towards-death) and then transpose the significance and meaning of the latter onto the former. But this defies the preparatory significance of section 40 and renders a misleading, incomplete, and incoherent interpretation of *Being and Time*, because what Heidegger means by death can be understood only in connection with nothingness.⁵

In Part III of this chapter I will discuss the care structure of Dasein's Being. How exactly does Heidegger arrive at the conclusion that Dasein's Being is care? Zimmerman suggests that the conclusion is reached because Dasein acknowledges its mortality; but this cannot be true since death has not been discussed at this point in *Being and Time*. A good hermeneutical account of a text must follow the logic of the text. As such, I think the interpretations of many commentators are neither hermeneutically circumspect nor follow the logic of the text

⁵ I am not suggesting that I am the only person to correctly interpret Heidegger's *Being and Time* because there is no such thing as the one correct interpretation of a text. There are, however, some interpretations which are more hermeneutically circumspect than others, but none that are precisely right. In order to be hermeneutically circumspect and 'correct' I will consider Madison's ten "rules for interpretation" which Madison suggests is the practice followed by most interpreters. See Gary Madison, *The Hermeneutics of Postmodernity* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 22-30.

since they transpose the significance and meaning of later sections of *Being and Time* onto earlier sections. But, then, why is Division I of *Being and Time* considered preparatory? In my interpretation, I will follow the preparatory nature of Division I; thus, I am following the logic of the text, and my interpretation will shed new light on both the preparatory section and its outcome in *Being and Time*.

To see this more explicitly, let us examine what I call the standard interpretation.

PART I

The Standard Interpretation of Anxiety

Michael Gelven

In his book, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time (Revised Edition)*, Gelven states that most human beings have experienced the phenomenon of being plucked out of the stream of their daily concerns while reflecting upon their mortality. Gelven then discusses the phenomenological description of Heidegger's account of anxiety. He contrasts anxiety with fear and states that:

... [in the case of anxiety,] I cannot say what it is that bothers me In fact, if one were to ask me what bothers me, I would probably say 'Nothing'.¹

Gelven then asks: "What is this 'nothingness' about which one has such dreading anxiety? What is the existential meaning of 'Nothingness'?"² His answer:

The existential meaning of 'nothingness' is really quite a simple matter. A human being, through the reflection of his own possibilities, becomes aware of his finitude--i.e., he knows he is going to die, to cease to be.³

I disagree with this meaning of nothingness because Heidegger never equates nothingness with an awareness of

¹ M. Gelven, *A Commentary*, 116.

² Gelven, *A Commentary*, 116.

³ Gelven, *A Commentary*, 116.

one's finitude in section 40. (I will argue for this claim in the second part of this chapter). Second, it is not the case that through the reflection of one's own possibilities one becomes aware of one's finitude and, therefore, experiences anxiety. Rather, it is the reverse of this process: One experiences anxiety and nothingness in which the world recedes away into insignificance. At that moment, the moment of anxiety, Dasein becomes aware of its potentialities-for-Being, one of which is death, through the projection of possibilities. Dasein only becomes authentically aware of its death while already in the midst of anxiety, and not the other way around. Listen to what Heidegger says in *Being and Time*:

Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities. Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as *Being-possible*, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization. (187-8)

I take Heidegger to be saying that anxiety individualizes Dasein and makes it free to project itself upon possibilities. Death is one's ownmost possibility, and I think it is through anxiety that one becomes authentically aware of this possibility, and not the other way around, i.e., Dasein does not become aware of its possibility of

death (mortality) and then experiences anxiety.

To sum up, the mistake is to miss the significance of nothingness. It is not the case that Dasein through the reflection of its possibilities becomes aware of its finitude (mortality) and then experiences anxiety, but rather through the uncanny experience of anxiety, in which Dasein experiences nothingness and consequently acknowledges itself as Being-possible, as Being free for the possibility of choosing itself and taking hold of itself, as Being-ahead-of-itself, does Dasein become authentically aware of its ownmost possibility, i.e., that it is going to die. "Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities" (187). "Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being--that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself" (188).

Michael Zimmerman

In his book *Eclipse of the Self*, Zimmerman provides an account of Heidegger's concept of authenticity. I shall outline only the early concept of authenticity (as he describes it) that Zimmerman limits to *Being and Time*.

Zimmerman discusses the hermeneutical situation of the analysis of Dasein. He points out that Division One of *Being and Time* explains that Dasein opens up a world in

which things, Others, and Dasein itself can be experienced, interpreted, and revealed as beings with which Dasein can be concerned. In keeping with the theme of Division One, the hermeneutical situation of Dasein is inauthentic, i.e., Dasein's interpretation of things, Others, and itself is average interpretation. Zimmerman then states that:

In Division Two we learn that the account of inauthentic everydayness does not reveal Dasein in its unity and wholeness; that is, in its authenticity. We are then told that Dasein can become authentic only by accepting its finitude, only by resolutely accepting its Being-towards death.⁴

Further, Zimmerman states that the move from inauthenticity to authenticity announces itself in the mood anxiety. In order for Dasein to choose authentically it must confront its mortality.

Angst discloses my mortality and nothingness; *Angst* reveals the uselessness of anything in the world for overcoming my own death.⁵

Zimmerman then states that in anxiety we are restless because the activities which keep our minds distracted from our mortality are suddenly no longer able to do so. "As the revelation of our finitude presses closer, we have the

⁴ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self* (London: Ohio University Press, 1981), 40.

⁵ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 54.

choice of facing it or fleeing from it."⁶ Hence, if we flee, we are inauthentic. To alleviate the restlessness of anxiety, he says, we distract ourselves with the routines which in themselves conceal the truth. And finally, he says that in the face of death our distractions in the world are useless. The truth is that we will die. "If we accept [this truth], however, our lives undergo a significant change."⁷ We become open to our possibilities. "If we let the mood of *Angst* disclose our mortality, we discover that we are really not egos but care. The Being of Dasein is care: in being open for things, we care for them."⁸ Zimmerman states that "As long as I conceal my mortality, I can go along with the 'they' because, supposedly, there is plenty of time to be 'myself' later. *Angst*, however, reveals that I will die, and no one can remove this fate from me."⁹

My criticisms of Gelven's interpretation of anxiety are the same as for Zimmerman; therefore, I will not repeat myself. However, I disagree with Zimmerman's conclusion as to how Heidegger arrived at the Being of Dasein as care. What is interesting is that section 41 (Dasein's Being as

⁶ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 56.

⁷ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 64.

⁸ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 65.

⁹ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 72.

Care) immediately follows section 40, but, as noted above, Heidegger has not yet mentioned the word death in relation to anxiety. So, how exactly does Heidegger arrive at the conclusion that Dasein's Being is care? I will answer this question in part III of this chapter.

Now, let us compare the standard interpretation to what Heidegger says about anxiety and nothingness:

That which anxiety is anxious about is Being-in-the-world itself. In anxiety what is environmentally ready-to-hand sinks away, and so, in general, do entities within-the-world. The 'world' can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others. Anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publicly interpreted. Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about--its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities. Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as *Being-possible*, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization. (187-8)

I think that what Heidegger describes as anxiety has a different message than what we read in the standard interpretation. I am not arguing that what the authors above say is not true and accurate, because in some sense it is true and accurate. However, it is misleading. How can this be the case, i.e., how can something be true and

accurate, and yet misleading? First, it is true that Heidegger's description of anxiety in section 40 of *Being and Time* is in anticipation of or preparatory for his discussion of Being-towards-death in Part II.

Second, these commentators, however, make anxiety into anxiety solely about death. This precludes the possibility of experiencing anxiety even though death may be the furthest thing from one's mind. The mistake that is typically made by most interpreters is that they discuss anxiety in its relationship to death, which they assume is the meaning of nothingness in section 40. However, the procedure should be the following: First, a discussion of Dasein's experience of anxiety and nothingness in which the world becomes meaningless and insignificant and Dasein becomes aware of itself as Being-possible; second, a discussion of anxiety of the possibility of death, in which case death is nothingness. It will be shown in chapter 3 of this thesis that death is an extension of nothingness as it is described in section 40.

Finally, the most typical mistake is confusing one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being (Dasein's possibilities in terms of ways to live) with one's ownmost possibility which is non-relational, and not to be outstripped. In fact, Heidegger says "Death is Dasein's *ownmost* possibility [not potentiality-for-Being]. Being towards this

possibility [death] discloses to Dasein its *ownmost* potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue" (263). If the phrase "ownmost potentiality-for-Being" is what Heidegger means by death, then the above sentence would read this way: Death is Dasein's ownmost possibility. Being towards this possibility (death) discloses to Dasein its death, in which its very Being is the issue.

The aim of this chapter is to reveal the state-of-mind that belongs essentially to Dasein. This state-of-mind brings Dasein back to itself and reveals Dasein's thrownness.

Because Dasein essentially has a state-of-mind belonging to it, Dasein has a kind of Being in which it is brought before itself and becomes disclosed to itself in its thrownness. But thrownness, as a kind of Being, belongs to an entity which in each case *is* its possibilities, and *is* them in such a way that it understands itself in these possibilities and in terms of them, projecting itself upon them. (181)

The Self, according to Heidegger, is proximally and for the most part inauthentic, the they-self. As Being-in-the-world Dasein is always fallen.

Accordingly *Dasein's* 'average everydayness' can be defined as "*Being-in-the-world which is falling and disclosed, thrown and projecting, and for which its ownmost potentiality-for-Being is an issue, both in its Being-alongside the 'world' and in its Being-with Others*". (181)

Heidegger uses anxiety as the state-of-mind which is able to grasp the structural whole of Dasein's everydayness.

Part II

Anxiety as a Distinctive Way in
which Dasein is Disclosed

Anxiety is a distinctive way in which Dasein is disclosed to itself. It is "... one of the *most far-reaching* and *most primordial* possibilities of disclosure" (182). Anxiety is an experience that individuates inauthentic Dasein and is necessary for authenticity. Heidegger claims that anxiety "... brings it [Dasein] back from its absorption in the 'world'" (189), and it "... individualizes Dasein and thus discloses it as '*solus ipse*'" (188). The aim of remainder of this chapter will be to clarify what Heidegger means by these two functions of anxiety.

First, I would like to clarify what Heidegger means by the disclosive significance of a "state-of-mind". Heidegger states that we are always in some mood (angry, happy, bored, and so on) and that these moods disclose to us how we are doing. "A mood makes manifest 'how one is, and how one is faring'" (134). What does anxiety reveal to us in terms of how we are doing?

Heidegger begins section 40 of *Being and Time* this way:

How far is anxiety a state-of-mind which is distinctive? How is it that in anxiety Dasein gets brought before itself through its own Being, so that we can define phenomenologically the

character of the entity disclosed in anxiety, and define it as such in its Being, or make adequate preparations for doing so? (184)

Dasein, as falling Being-in-the-world, is fleeing in the face of itself as an authentic potentiality-for-being-its-Self, thus turning away from itself and getting absorbed in the "they" and in the 'world' of its concern. In order for Dasein to be brought face to face with itself it must experience anxiety.

The possibility of proceeding towards Dasein's Being by going along with it and following it up Interpretatively with an understanding and the state-of-mind that goes with it, is the greater, the more primordial is that phenomenon which functions methodologically as a disclosive state-of-mind. It might be contended that anxiety performs some such function. (185)

In order to understand anxiety more thoroughly, it will be necessary to recapitulate the significance of Dasein as falling and to distinguish anxiety from fear.

"Dasein's falling into the 'they' and the 'world' of its concern, is what we have called a 'fleeing' in the face of itself" (185). Heidegger then states that "one is not necessarily fleeing whenever one shrinks back in the face of something" (185). Fear is of a definite, detrimental entity within the world which comes from a specific region. In falling, however, Dasein turns away from itself, and therefore this turning away from itself cannot be considered

as fear because fear is always encountered as an entity within the world. Conversely, Dasein's fleeing in the face of itself causes Dasein to get absorbed in entities within the world. *"The turning-away of falling is grounded rather in anxiety, which in turn is what first makes fear possible"* (186).

If we are to understand what Dasein flees in the face of, we must remember that Being-in-the-world is a basic state of Dasein. *"That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world as such"* (186).¹ The difference between that in the face of which anxiety is anxious and that in the face of which one is afraid is that anxiety is not of an entity within the world, but rather something completely indefinite. Entities within the world are not relevant at all. *"Nothing which is ready-to-hand or present-at-hand within the world functions as that in the face of which anxiety is anxious"* (186). In anxiety the world collapses and lacks any significance.

Accordingly, when something threatening brings itself close, anxiety does not 'see' any definite 'here' or 'yonder' from which it comes. That in the face of which one has anxiety is characterized by the fact that what

¹It is interesting to note here that Heidegger specifies that anxiety is of Being-in-the-world. This seems to suggest that anxiety is not something that is solely related to one's death, because anxiety would then be of not-being-in-the-world as such. I will emphasize this point in chapter 3.

threatens is *nowhere*. Anxiety does not know what that in the face of which it is anxious is. (186)

That which threatens cannot bring itself close from a definite direction, as in the case of fear, but "it is already 'there', and yet nowhere; it is so close that it is oppressive and stifles one's breath, and yet it is nowhere" (186).

When one is in anxiety, the "'It is nothing and nowhere' becomes manifest" (186); the world is that about which one has anxiety because in anxiety the entities within the world recede into insignificance; it is not the case that the entities within the world physically disappear, but rather they remain to confirm their insignificance.

The utter insignificance which makes itself known in the "nothing and nowhere", does not signify that the world is absent, but tells us that entities within-the-world are of so little importance in themselves that on the basis of this *insignificance* of what is within-the-world (187)

One is not anxious in the face of anything ready-to-hand within-the-world. "Being-anxious discloses, primordially and directly, the world as world" (187). Heidegger argues against the position that the world gets thought of by deliberating about it by itself while considering the entities within-the-world, "and that, in the face of this world, anxiety then arises ..." (187). Rather, through anxiety the world as world is disclosed.

In anxiety, nothing definite threatens, and one is anxious because the 'world' has lost all significance and importance. The insignificance of the daily routine and everyday concern causes the things in the world to intrude themselves on inauthentic Dasein whose absorption in the "they" becomes oppressive. The 'world' in which Dasein concerns itself and the 'world' of Being-with-others cannot offer any relief.

We are now ready to understand what anxiety is of.

Heidegger says:

That which anxiety is profoundly anxious about is not a *definite* kind of Being for Dasein or a *definite* possibility for it. Indeed the threat itself is indefinite, and therefore cannot penetrate threateningly to this or that factually concrete potentiality-for-Being. (187)

What Heidegger is doing here is distinguishing between fear and anxiety, the former being ontic and the latter being ontological. In the case of fear, I can point to a definite entity within-the-world, but:

That which anxiety is anxious about is Being-in-the-world itself. In anxiety what is environmentally ready-to-hand sinks away, and so, in general, do entities within-the world. The 'world' can offer nothing more, and neither can the Dasein-with of Others. Anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been publicly interpreted. (187)

Heidegger reinforces this in his article "What is

Metaphysics?", and I think it might help to shed some light on the meaning of the term nothingness.

In "What is Metaphysics?" we read that "In [anxiety], as we say, 'one feels something uncanny.'" ² It is important to note that Heidegger talks about "one", and distinguishes this from "you" or "I", having the uncanny feeling of anxiety. The reason "you" or "I" cannot have the experience of anxiety is because we tend to think of ourselves as what we do. "In [anxiety] we are 'in suspense'. Or, to put it more precisely, [anxiety] holds us in suspense because it makes what-is-in-totality slip away from us. Hence we too, as existents in the midst of what-is, slip away from ourselves along with it. For this reason it is not 'you' or 'I' that has the uncanny feeling, but 'one'. As Heidegger phrases it in *Being and Time*:

The great multiplicity of ways of Being-in-the-world in which one person can be represented by another, not only extends to the more refined modes of publicly being with one another, but is likewise germane to those possibilities of concern which are restricted within definite ranges, and which are cut to the measure of one's occupation, one's social status, or one's age. But the very meaning of such representation is such that it is always a representation 'in' something--that is to say, in concerning oneself with something. But proximally and for the most part

²M. Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?" Trans. R.F.C. Hull and Alan Crick in *Existence and Being*, edited by Werner Brock (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), 336.

everyday Dasein understands itself in terms of that with which it is customarily concerned. 'One is what one does. (239)

Therefore, I am what I do, and what I do is what I concern myself with. When I am experiencing anxiety, my 'world' collapses. Therefore, what I am, or how I understand myself, also collapses; so much so that it cannot be said that "I" am having the experience of anxiety, but rather "one" is. So, anxiety individualizes Dasein in the sense that Dasein's 'world' collapses and Dasein is no longer a dominated by the "they". Dasein is individualized.

All things, and we with them, sink into a sort of indifference. But not in the sense that everything simply disappears; rather, in the very act of drawing away from us everything turns towards us. This withdrawal of what-is-in-totality, which then crowds round us in [anxiety], this is what oppresses us. There is nothing to hold on to. The only thing that remains and overwhelms us whilst what-is slips away, is this 'nothing'.³

I will now provide a metaphor in order to help the reader understand my understanding of anxiety. Man is an onion. At the center there is nothing. There are layers of 'skin' emanating from the center. Now, what are these layers of skin? To complete the metaphor, for human beings, these layers of skin are analogous to one's thoughts, religious beliefs, tastes, spouse, family, friends, material

³M. Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics?", 336.

possessions, patriotism, and so on. All these constitute who one is and give one's life meaning; this is one's 'world'. Zimmerman states that "In everyday existence, I understand myself as an object or thing (ego)." ⁴ So, I can think of and describe myself as though I were something present-at-hand, something to be used, or, as Sartre would express it, "a Being-in-itself", an object. Further, one's thoughts, one's being-with, and one's possessions can constitute a 'world' only if they are significant for Dasein. In anxiety, however, Dasein's 'world' collapses, all the above mentioned 'things' recede away into insignificance, and Dasein experiences nothingness.

The nothingness here is not a metaphysical nothingness, as though Dasein were a container for Nothing. It is rather the phenomenon of one's 'world' lacking any significance, even though after Dasein has recovered from its anxiety it may reply, "... it was really nothing" (187). Dasein can talk about the experience of nothingness in this way because the ontic way of talking does, to some extent, reach the experience. However, this everyday discourse "tends towards concerning itself with the ready-to-hand and talking about it" (187). In anxiety everything in the familiar everyday world has become insignificant. There is nothing that can be said, discussed, or done about it. But

⁴ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 47.

what our everyday discourse understands "is not totally nothing" (187). The nothing of the readiness-to-hand is grounded in Dasein's Being as Being-in-the-world. The world is revealed as meaningless, stripped of its significance. And, since Dasein's Being is Being-in-the-world, Dasein is anxious of its own Being-in-the-world that has now become meaningless and insignificant. "So if the 'nothing'--that is, the world as such--exhibits itself as that in the face of which one has anxiety, this means that *Being-in-the-world itself is that in the face of which anxiety is anxious*" (187).

In other words, Dasein, as falling Being-in-the-world, tends to absorb itself in the world of everyday concern, engaging in idle chatter, ambiguity, curiosity, and thus has an inauthentic understanding of itself. Anxiety sheds Dasein of its inauthentic skin and shatters the domination of the "they". When all these things withdraw into insignificance or when Dasein can see itself as inauthentic, then Dasein is experiencing nothingness. Nothingness is what one experiences when one's 'world' collapses, i.e., in anxiety the significance placed upon activities, entities, and other people as a constitution of who one is become insignificant. For example, for no reason and from nowhere in particular, a person may come home from work and the things which constituted who they are and the

things with which this person is customarily concerned, recede away into insignificance. The person may realize that their life up to that moment was not of their own choosing, or that they are not happy, or that the things which previously gave his or her life meaning or significance are now meaningless or insignificant. This is the significance of nothingness. It would be quite a different matter if this particular person became aware of his mortality or had a near death experience and realized the insignificance and meaninglessness of entities and other people within-the-world. In fact, I think that this person could adequately express what he experienced: a near death experience or an awareness of his mortality. However, could the other person above who experienced nothingness say that he had a near death experience or became painfully and frightfully aware of his mortality?

Since Dasein has lost meaning and the significance of the world is also gone, Dasein becomes concerned and disturbed. However, as Heidegger states:

Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about--its authentic potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something that understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities. Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as *Being-possible*, and indeed as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in

individualization. (187-8)

When one is experiencing anxiety, one becomes aware of one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being, i.e., "... its *Being-free* for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself" (188). Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with the fact that it is free to choose its authentic potentiality-for-Being.

Therefore, anxiety functions as the state-of-mind that shatters the "they"'s domination over Dasein. Anxiety deprives Dasein of the tranquillity, justification and assurance with which everyday Dasein builds up its protective shelter, and the security of the "they"'s conventions and distractions collapses. This means that the "they"'s authority and domination collapses, and results in the disintegration of the they-self. Thus, Dasein is extricated from its dispersion and absorption in average-everydayness.

So, to answer the question "what does anxiety reveal to Dasein in terms of how it is doing?", Heidegger says that one feels uncanny, and uncanny means not being at home. Heidegger reminds us that earlier he specified what he meant by the phrase Being-in and it was defined as residing alongside and Being-familiar with. "This character of Being-in was then brought to view more concretely through the everyday publicness of the "they", which brings

tranquillized self-assurance--'Being-at-home', with all its obviousness--into the average everydayness of Dasein" (188-9). In anxiety, however, Dasein is not at home in the sense that it is brought back from the absorption in the world of concern, and the familiarity of the world collapses. "Dasein has been individualized, but individualized as Being-in-the-world" (189). However, the Being-in is now in the existential mode of the not-at-home and because one feels not at home, one feels uncanny.

When Dasein is falling, it flees into the at-home of publicness, and flees away from the not-at-home. The uncanniness is a constant threat to Dasein since it can, in the most innocuous situations, shatter Dasein's lostness in the "they".

I think I have shown that the interpretation of anxiety as related to one's mortality is mistaken and misleading, though not completely incorrect, as we shall see in the next chapter. It is misleading because it precludes the possibility of experiencing anxiety even though death may not be a concern or consideration for Dasein.

Part III

Dasein's Being as Care

How, exactly, does Heidegger arrive at the conclusion that Dasein's Being is care? Zimmerman says that: "If we let the mood of *Angst* disclose our mortality, we discover that we are really no egos but care. The Being of Dasein is care: in being open for things, we care for them."¹ This has to be mistaken because Heidegger has not yet discussed mortality or Being-towards-death. This, I think, substantiates my claim that commentators superimpose the meaning of Division II onto Division I thereby misinterpreting Heidegger's entire *magnum opus*.

In section 39 Heidegger states that "The kind of Being which belongs to this disclosedness is constituted by state-of-mind and understanding. Is there in Dasein an understanding state-of-mind in which Dasein has been disclosed to itself in some distinctive way?" (182). Heidegger answers affirmatively and posits that anxiety is such a state-of-mind. But, contrary to the standard interpretation, anxiety cannot (yet) be about death since Heidegger has not yet discussed death. Anxiety reveals the insignificance of the world, not because Dasein has acknowledged its mortality, but rather because anxiety assails us.

¹M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 65.

States-of-mind are so far from being reflected upon, that precisely what they do is to assail Dasein in its unreflecting devotion to the 'world' with which it is concerned and on which it expends itself. A mood assails us. It comes neither from 'outside' nor from 'inside', but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being. (136)

As Heidegger states at the beginning of section 41:

Since our aim is to grasp the totality of this structural whole ontologically, we must first ask whether the phenomenon of anxiety and that which is disclosed in it, can give us the whole of Dasein in a way which is phenomenally equiprimordial, and whether they can do so in such a manner that if we look searchingly at this totality, our view of it will be filled in by what has thus been given us. (191)

Now, what is disclosed in anxiety? As shown above: Nothingness. Heidegger arrives, I think, at the conclusion that care is the Being of Dasein because in anxiety Dasein's 'world' has collapsed, everything has receded into meaninglessness and insignificance, except for one thing: Dasein's own Being-in-the-world. Dasein cannot not care for its own Being-in-the-world. "As one of Dasein's possibilities of Being, anxiety ... provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping Dasein's primordial totality of Being. Dasein's Being reveals itself as *care*" (182). And, as I have shown above, anxiety is hitherto separate from an awareness of death.

Anxiety reveals Dasein as a Being who cares "[not

about itself as though care were some isolated attitude of the 'I' towards itself" (193) but rather about its own Being-in-the-world as authentic or inauthentic.

Being-free for one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and therewith for the possibility of authenticity and inauthenticity, is shown ... in anxiety. (191)

Heidegger discusses anxiety in order to illuminate the structure of Dasein essential for an understanding of Being: Care. "Thus the entire phenomenon of anxiety shows Dasein as factually existing Being-in-the-world. The fundamental ontological characteristics of this entity are existentiality, facticity, and Being-fallen" (191) These constitute the structural whole of Dasein's Being.

Ontologically, Being towards one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being means that Dasein is already ahead of itself in its Being. "Dasein is always 'beyond itself' not as a way of behaving towards other entities which it is *not*, but as Being towards the potentiality-for-Being which it is itself" (192). This is what Heidegger means by Dasein's "Being-ahead-of-itself".

Conclusion

In this chapter I have summarized the standard interpretation of anxiety and have shown it to be fundamentally incorrect and misleading. I believe that section 40 is an important section to understand independently from later sections of *Being and Time*, because, as I will show in chapter 3, section 40 prepares the reader for the rest of *Being and Time*. When this section is properly interpreted, the rest of *Being and Time*, especially Being-towards-death, has a different meaning.

CHAPTER 3

DEATH

Introduction

In this chapter I will further illuminate Dasein's nothingness (or its structural nullity) by providing an interpretation of Division II Part I of *Being and Time* which I think is more coherent and consistent with the entirety of *Being and Time*. I want to get at the meaning of the word death. I grant that death is a possibility for Dasein; Heidegger states exactly that in sections 50 and 52 of *Being and Time*: "*Death, as the end of Dasein, is Dasein's ownmost possibility--non-relational, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped*" (258-9). But what does Heidegger mean by death? What is Dasein comporting itself towards? Is it the passing away of a human being, a transition to no longer being alive? Is it simply a possibility which Dasein can never experience? Is it some ontic event, such as getting hit by a car, shot, or stabbed?

In Part I of this chapter I will provide an outline of the views of some commentators on Heidegger's concept of death, what I call the standard interpretation. I will point out some of the difficulties with this interpretation and suggest another way of interpreting death.

In Part II I will give my interpretation of Dasein's possibility of Being-A-Whole and Being-towards-death (Division II Part I).

In Part III I will attempt to show that section 40, when understood independently from the later section of *Being and Time*, illuminates a much different interpretation of death. So, not only do I argue that anxiety is about nothingness and nothingness can be (or should be) understood independently from an awareness or acknowledgement of mortality, but also that death is an extension of and a further elaboration of nothingness. My thesis is that Dasein is essentially nothingness. This is why its death, its uttermost 'not-yet', is not something still outstanding; it is what Dasein already is, a nothingness. Dasein is not simply the possibility of its death, which is the understanding we get from the standard interpretation of death.

PART I

The Standard Interpretation of Death

What does Heidegger mean by the word death? What is Dasein comporting itself towards? The standard interpretation of death constitutes Dasein as simply the possibility of its death. Dreyfus puts the point this way:

... the usual interpretation seems hard to avoid. When Heidegger speaks of existential death as the 'ultimate possibility,' and the 'possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all' (307) [262], what can this mean but the possibility of just plain dying? The answer, however, must do justice to Heidegger's assertion that death is an existential structure that defines what Dasein is; it cannot be some event that is possible but not yet actual, or even the possibility of that event. The event of death when it comes manifests what Dasein *has been all along*, which is not the same as saying that all along Dasein had been nothing more than the possibility of the event of death.¹

Zimmerman suggests that Dasein is just the possibility of the event of death when he states that "The *third* criterion [that the interpretation must exhibit the *unity* of the phenomenon] is satisfied by the idea of resoluteness, which verifies the possibility of anticipating one's own death. The resolute individual gains unity by trying to become who he is fated to be."² Zimmerman goes on to say that "*Angst*

¹H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 311.

²M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the self*, 71.

... reveals that I will die, and no one can remove this fate from me."³ So, if the resolute individual gains unity by trying to become who he is fated to be and he is fated to die, the resolute individual is one who tries to die. Is Heidegger really an advocate of suicide? Heidegger suggests the opposite of Zimmerman's assertion when he states: "So to concern oneself with actualizing what is thus possible would have to signify, 'bringing about one's demise'. But if this were done, Dasein would deprive itself of the very ground for an existing Being-towards-death" (261).

Hallman notes that:

Heidegger's task in *Being and Time* is fundamental ontology, and his analysis of death is an attempt to disclose 'the full existential-ontological conception of death'--a conception that goes beyond our everyday views of death, and reveals their basis in the structures of what it is to be human. The method that Heidegger finds appropriate for this task is the method of phenomenology, the method of describing that which shows itself.⁴

Even though this is Heidegger's task, and although most commentators know and admit this, they cannot seem to get beyond the everyday, banal conception of death. This is why there is so much talk about mortality and statements such as

³ M. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, 72.

⁴ M. Hallman, "Edwards and Heidegger on the Significance of Death," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, 301.

"I am going to die".

Sartre, for instance, states that

... the fact remains that death such that I can discover it as *mine* necessarily engages something other than myself. In fact in so far as it is the always possible nihilation of my possibilities, it is outside my possibilities and therefore I can not wait for it; that is, I can not thrust myself toward it as toward one of my possibilities. Death can not therefore belong to the ontological structure of the for-itself.⁵

In other words death lies outside the ontological structures of what it is to be human. Now, Sartre's criticism would, I think, be a valid one if it were an adequate interpretation or understanding of Heidegger's notion of death. I will show that Sartre's interpretation completely misses the ontological basis of Heidegger's notion of death.

Hallman states that:

We can ... [ask] whether Heidegger's description of death accords with the phenomenon described. This question is especially meaningful in light of Heidegger's rejection of our everyday views of death as 'a constant *fleeing in the face of death.*' According to Heidegger, everyday Dasein attempts to cover up the existential significance of death, and thus to evade an authentic Being-towards-death by falling into the world. Heidegger's analysis of death, on the other hand, is supposed to have escaped this everyday fleeing in the

⁵ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, translated by Hazel E. Barnes, (Toronto: Washington Square Press, 1956), 697.

face of death, and therefore to have disclosed the phenomenon of death openly and resolutely. But is Heidegger's description of death wholly accurate? Has Heidegger escaped the everyday interpretation of death only to fall prey to a philosophical illusion?⁶

Although Hallman never answers these questions, we can infer possible answers to them based on the fact that he bothers to raise them in the first place. However, I will argue that Hallman does not understand Heidegger's notion of death.

Demske states that

Death is thus a possibility of the being of Dasein, a potentiality always before and with him, right from the very beginning.⁷

But why is this not a 'not-yet' which is still outstanding? Demske's answer is the following: "In the existential-ontological sense, this means that death belongs to the very constitution of man; it is an essential element of the being of Dasein."⁸ But, then, how can Dasein be constituted by the possibility of its death? How can Dasein be simply the possibility of its own death?

I think this sums up the standard interpretation of Heidegger's notion of death, and it seems to me that these

⁶ M. Hallman, 304.

⁷ J. Demske, *Being, Man, & Death* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 24-5.

⁸ J. Demske, *Being, Man, & Death*, 25.

commentators have everyday conceptions of death in their minds when they discuss or criticize Heidegger. I also want to emphasize that Heidegger's method is phenomenology, the method of describing that which shows itself. If we understand death according to the standard interpretation, how can death be something which shows itself, something we experience? My own death is an event which I cannot experience. Therefore, Heidegger must not be using the word death in its usual sense but rather as an analogy to something we do experience: Nothingness. Nothingness is what Dasein is as long as it is (I will argue for this position throughout this chapter).

PART II

Section 45

The Outcome of the Preparatory Fundamental
Analysis of Dasein, and the Task of a Primordial
Existential Interpretation of this Entity

We have found that the totality of Being-in-the-world as a structural whole has revealed itself as care.

When we came to analyse this Being, we took as our clue existence, which, in anticipation, we had designated as the essence of Dasein. This term 'existence' formally indicates that Dasein *is* as an understanding potentiality-for-Being, which, in its Being, makes an issue of that Being itself. In every case, I myself am the entity which is in such a manner. By working out the phenomena of care, we have given ourselves an insight into its equiprimordial connection with Dasein's facticity and its falling. (231)

In other words, the essence of Dasein is existence as a potentiality-for-Being, which is in each case mine, is free for either authenticity or inauthenticity. Hitherto, the analysis of Dasein's Being pertained to inauthentic existence. A potentiality-for-being can also be authentic. Heidegger states that bringing Dasein into view as a whole seems impossible given the fore-having of the hermeneutical Situation because "Everydayness is precisely that Being which is 'between' birth and death" (233).

The fore-having has only included the inauthentic Being of Dasein. If the Interpretation of Dasein's Being is to be primordial, it must be illuminated existentially. The

first question that arises and to deal with is Dasein's potentiality-for-Being-a-whole. "As long as Dasein is, there is in every case something still outstanding, which Dasein can be and will be. But to that which is thus outstanding, the 'end' itself belongs. The 'end' of Being-in-the-world is death" (233-4). The notion of the fore-having means that Dasein must always have some understanding in advance of whatever it tries to interpret. Therefore, Dasein has some preunderstanding of the kind of Being it is. We must, Heidegger stresses, first obtain an ontologically adequate conception of death, an existential conception of it.

Section 46

The Seeming Impossibility of Getting Dasein's Being-a-whole into our Grasp Ontologically and Determining its character

Heidegger states that the possibility of Dasein's Being-a-whole is inconsistent with the ontological meaning of care, which forms the totality of Dasein's structural whole. "Yet the primary intem in care is the 'ahead-of-itself', and this means that in every case Dasein exists for the sake of itself" (236). Dasein will always have something still to be settled, something still outstanding. There is always a potentiality-for-Being which has not yet become 'actual'. How, then, is it possible to discern in Dasein its ontological totality of Being? We cannot delete the ahead-of-itself from the care structure. Heidegger then

asks the following questions:

Has not the impossibility of getting the whole of Dasein into our grasp been inferred by an argument which is merely formal? Or have we not at bottom inadvertently posited that Dasein is something present-at-hand, ahead of which something that is not yet present-at-hand is constantly shoving itself? Have we, in our argument, taken 'Being-not-yet' and the 'ahead' in a sense that is genuinely *existential*? Has our talk of the 'end' and the 'totality' been phenomenally appropriate to Dasein? Has the expression 'death' had a biological signification or one that is existential-ontological, or indeed any signification that has been adequately and surely delimited? Have we exhausted all the possibilities for making Dasein accessible in its wholeness? (236-7)

We will take these suggestions as clues for uncovering the mystery of the existential meaning of the word death. It must be understood ontologically and not ontically in, say, a biological manner.

Section 47

The Possibility of Experiencing the Death of Others, and the Possibility of Getting a Whole Dasein into our Grasp

Heidegger begins his investigation into the ontological meaning of the word death by discussing the possibility of experiencing the death of Others. He states that Dasein when it reaches its wholeness in death is no longer capable of experiencing and understanding this transition to no-longer-Dasein. Therefore, the existential meaning of the word death cannot be the transition to no-

longer-Dasein, and

... this makes the death of Others more impressive. In this way a termination of Dasein becomes 'Objectively' accessible. Dasein can thus gain an experience of death, all the more so because Dasein is essentially Being with Others. In that case, the fact that death has been thus 'Objectively' given must make possible an ontological delimitation of Dasein's totality. (237)

Heidegger questions whether the substitution of the end of a particular Dasein with the end of Others will lead to his appointed conclusion. The transition of an entity from Dasein's kind of Being to no-longer-Dasein is the end of the entity qua Dasein and the beginning of the same entity as something present-at-hand. But this interpretation misses the phenomenal content of such a transition, "inasmuch as in the entity which still remains we are not presented with a mere corporeal Thing" (238). In other words, unlike the encounter with a lifeless material thing, in the case of an entity which is no-longer-Dasein "we encounter something *unalive*, which has lost its life" (238). Further, this entity can be an object of 'concern' in terms of funeral rights and other rituals.

We do not experience the Being-come-to-an-end of the deceased. Death is a loss but only to those who remain. "We are asking about the ontological meaning of the dying of the person who dies, as a possibility of Being which belongs

to *his* Being" (239). The attempt to Interpret the transition from Dasein to no-longer-Dasein in the above ways cannot give us what it presumes to give.

But above all, the suggestion that the dying of Others is a substitute theme for the ontological analysis of Dasein's totality and the settling of its account, rests on a presupposition which demonstrably fails altogether to recognize Dasein's kind of Being. This is what one presupposes when one is of the opinion that any Dasein may be substituted for another at random, so that what cannot be experienced in one's own Dasein is accessible in that of a stranger. (239)

The way in which Dasein inauthentically understands itself belongs to its possibilities of Being in Being-with-one-another in the world. As such, one Dasein can be represented by and, within certain limits, be another Dasein.¹ However, "*No one can take the Other's dying away from him*" (240). In regard to this, the possibility for one Dasein to be or to represent another breaks down because the possibility-of-Being is in this case death. "In dying, it is shown that mineness and existence are ontologically constitutive for death" (240). 'Ending', as dying, Heidegger states, is constitutive for Dasein's totality (Being-a-whole) and must be conceived as an existential phenomenon of a Dasein which is in each case one's own.

Heidegger concludes that the attempt to make

¹See *Being and Time*, 239-40.

Dasein's Being-a-whole accessible in the above way is inappropriate to the phenomenon. Death is an existential phenomenon. This can only mean that death is 'something' we experience (an existential phenomenon) qua Dasein. But how can we experience our own death in the sense of making the transition to no-longer-Dasein? Heidegger has already dismissed this interpretation. Perhaps the above investigation into the death of others as an attempt to get at the existential meaning of death, which proved to be inappropriate, suggests that Heidegger does not intend the word death to mean what we think it means when we talk about someone's death. Take note of the following passage:

When we characterized the transition for Dasein to no-longer-Dasein as Being-no-longer-in-the-world, we showed further that *Dasein's* going-out-of-the-world in the sense of dying must be distinguished from the going-out-of-the-world of that which merely has life. In our terminology the ending of anything that is alive, is denoted as "perishing". We can see the difference only if the kind of ending which Dasein can have is distinguished from the end of a life. Of course "dying" may also be taken physiologically and biologically. (240-1)

In relation to the discussion above Heidegger states that entities present-at-hand bring confusion to the Interpretation of this phenomenon.

We can encounter this phenomenon only by seeking ... an ontologically adequate way of defining the phenomena which are constitutive for it, such as "end" and

"totality". (241)

Section 48

That which is Still Outstanding; the End; Totality

Keeping constantly in view the existential constitution of Dasein already set forth, we must try to decide how inappropriate to Dasein ontologically are those conceptions of end and totality which first thrust themselves to the fore, no matter how categorically indefinite they may remain. The rejection of such concepts must be developed into a positive *assignment* of them to their specific realms. In this way our understanding of end and totality in their variant forms as *existentialia* will be strengthened, and this will guarantee the possibility of an ontological Interpretation of death. (242-3)

Heidegger is telling us that in order to have an ontological Interpretation of death, we must first see how inappropriate the conceptions of end and totality as they pertain to other entities with another kind of Being (presence-at-hand or life) are for Dasein.

Heidegger says that belonging to Dasein is a "not-yet" but questions whether or not this is to be Interpreted as still outstanding. What do we mean by outstanding? "With relation to what entities do we talk about that which is still outstanding? When we use this expression we have in view that which indeed 'belongs' to an entity, but is still missing. Outstanding, as a way of being missing, is grounded upon a belonging-to" (242). Heidegger uses the example of a debt that is outstanding and gets filled up or

liquidated when the money comes in. "By this procedure the 'not-yet' gets filled up, as it were, until the sum that is owed is 'all together'. Therefore, to be still outstanding means that what belongs together is not yet all together" (242). Those portions which have yet to be contributed are un-ready-to-hand and are the same kind of Being as those which are ready-to-hand already. The latter do not have their kind of Being modified by having the remainder come in.

Whatever "lack-of-togetherness" remains gets "paid off" by a cumulative piecing-together. *Entities for which anything is still outstanding have the kind of Being of something ready-to-hand.* The togetherness is characterized as a "sum", and so is that lack-of-togetherness which is founded upon it. (242)

Heidegger then states that this lack-of-togetherness cannot define ontologically that "not-yet" which belongs to Dasein as its possible death. Dasein's kind of Being is not something ready-to-hand-within-the-world.

Heidegger states that "... Dasein always exists in just such a manner that its 'not-yet' *belongs* to it. But are there not entities which are as they are and to which a 'not-yet' can belong, but which do not necessarily have Dasein's kind of Being?" (243).

For example, until the moon gets full, the last quarter is still outstanding. The moon is always present-

at-hand as a whole. The "not-yet" here pertains to the way we get it in our grasp perceptually.

The "not-yet" which belongs to Dasein, however, is not just something which is provisionally and occasionally inaccessible to one's own experience or even to that of a stranger; it 'is' not yet 'actual' at all. Our problem does not pertain to *getting into our grasp* the "not-yet" which is of the character of Dasein; it pertains to the possible *Being* or *not-Being* of this "not-yet". Dasein must, as itself, *become*--that is to say, *be*-- what it is not yet. Thus if we are to be able, by comparison, to define that *Being of the "not-yet" which is of the character of Dasein*, we must take into consideration entities to whose kind of Being becoming belongs. (243)

In other words, the kind of "not-yet" that belongs to Dasein is not some possibility which will become actual; for example, my death is possible and will someday become actual. This is not what Heidegger means by the 'not-yet' of Dasein. To make more explicit what Heidegger means by death and the "not-yet" which is of the character of Dasein, he considers entities whose kind of Being "becoming" belongs.

Heidegger uses the example of an unripe fruit. He says the fruit goes towards its ripeness. "In the process of ripening, that which the fruit is not yet, is by no means pieced on as something not yet present-at-hand" (243). The "not-yet" here is not something else which stands outside the fruit and might become present-at-hand in and with the

fruit. "The 'not-yet' has already been included in the very Being of the fruit, not as some random characteristic, but as something constitutive. Correspondingly, as long as any Dasein is, it too *is already its "not-yet"* (244).

Heidegger continues his investigation into the ontological interpretation of death by considering the difference between the 'not-yet' of the fruit and the 'not-yet' of Dasein. "... Dasein ... *is in every case already its 'not-yet' in a sense still to be defined*" (244). The ripeness as an end and death as an end are not identical in regard to their ontological structures as ends. The difference between the ending of a fruit and the ending of Dasein is that the former is fulfilled and has exhausted its specific possibilities whereas the latter does not necessarily fulfil itself. "It thus becomes more urgent to ask *in what sense, if any, death must be conceived as the ending of Dasein*" (244).

Heidegger states that ending signifies stopping, but the two have different ontological significance. For example, the rain stops and a road stops. The former is no longer present-at-hand, but the latter does not disappear. "Hence ending, as stopping, can signify either 'passing over into non-presence-at-hand' or else 'Being-present-at-hand' only when the end comes.

The former type of ending has its modifications:

"The rain is at an end--that is to say it has disappeared. The bread is at an end--that is to say, it has been used up and is not longer available as something ready to hand" (245). This latter type of ending also has two modifications: First, one that is "determinative for something which is present-at-hand *in an unfinished way*, as a road breaks off when one finds it under construction;" or second, one that "constitute[s] the 'finishedness' of something present-at-hand, as the painting is finished with the last stroke of the brush" (245).

According to Heidegger, "*By none of these modes of ending can death be suitably characterized as the 'end' of Dasein.* If dying, as Being-at-an-end, were understood in the sense of an ending of the kind we have discussed, then Dasein would thereby be treated as something present-at-hand or ready-to-hand" (245).

In concluding this section Heidegger states:

Ending, as Being-towards-the-end, must be clarified ontologically in terms of Dasein's kind of Being. And presumably the possibility of an existent Being of that "not-yet" which lies 'before' the 'end', will become intelligible only if the character of ending has been determined existentially. The existential clarification of Being-towards-the-end will also give us for the first time an adequate basis for defining what can possibly be the meaning of our talk about a totality of Dasein, if indeed this totality is to be constituted by death as the 'end'. (245)

So, our attempt to understand Dasein's totality by clarifying the "not-yet" and the "ending" in the above way will not get us where we want to be. The "not-yet" is not something still outstanding, and the end towards which Dasein is as existing is not a Being-at-an-end.

Section 49
How the Existential Analysis of Death
is Distinguished from Other Possible
Interpretations of this Phenomenon

In this section of *Being and Time* Heidegger defines some terms which are essential for us to understand if we are to understand the ontological interpretation or the existential meaning of the word death. First, "The ending of that which lives we have called 'perishing'" (247). All living things perish. But Dasein does not simply perish. Second, "... 'dying' stand[s] for that way of Being in which Dasein is towards its death" (247). So, Dasein can end without authentically dying. "We designate this intermediate phenomenon as its 'demise'" (247). Heidegger does not explain the distinction between perishing and demise, but Dreyfus suggests that:

... it is surely another example of the difference between factuality and facticity. It is a fact about all organisms that they perish, but each culture gives that fact a different meaning, and this always already interpreted facticity is what Heidegger calls demise.²

²H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 309.

However, I am not convinced that this is what Heidegger is getting at. If dying stands for that way of Being (inauthentically or authentically) which Dasein is towards its death and Dasein can end without authentically dying and this intermediate phenomenon is what Heidegger calls its demise, I take demise to mean inauthentically dying, which is to die without acknowledging your freedom to choose and projecting authentic potentialities-for-Being. It is to die living a life dominated by the "they". According to Dreyfus, however, perishing is the final event in a living organism's life, and if the meaning a culture gives this fact is what Heidegger means by demise, it too has a sense of a final event in a living organism's life. But then Heidegger says "Dasein, however, can demise only as long as it is dying" (247). In other words, it is possible for Dasein to demise because the two ways of Being towards death are either inauthentic or authentic. Dasein cannot, therefore, simply perish; it either demises or ends authentically. I also think that Heidegger uses the word demise to stand for the ontic event which terminates life.

To sum up, Dasein never perishes, only living organisms perish. Dying is the way of Being (inauthentically or authentically) towards death. Demise is inauthentically dying. We now see that there is one way of dying (or Being towards death) which has not been defined:

Authentically dying or authentic Being-towards-death. The meaning of this way of Being-towards-death will be clarified later in this chapter.

Section 50
Preliminary Sketch of the
Existential-ontological Structure of Death

Hitherto, we have not gained an understanding of the ontological interpretation of the word death.

As Heidegger says:

From our considerations of totality, end, and that which is still outstanding, there has emerged the necessity of interpreting the phenomenon of death as Being-towards-the-end, and of doing so in terms of Dasein's basic state. (249)

And Dasein's basic state is care. The ontological signification of care has been defined this way: "ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-(the-world) as Being-alongside (entities encountered within-the-world)" (192). As stated in the previous chapter, the fundamental characteristics of Dasein's Being expressed in this definition of care are the following: "existence in the 'ahead of itself'; facticity, in the 'Being-already-in'; falling, in the 'Being-alongside'" (250). Death must be defined in terms of the characteristics of care and must be interpreted as Being-towards-the-end (death).

"We must, in the first instance, make plain in a preliminary sketch how Dasein's existence, facticity, and

falling reveal themselves *in the phenomenon of death* (250, my emphasis). If death is taken in the sense that it is commonly understood by most human beings and the interpretation by Heidegger scholars, i.e., the ending of a life or mortality, then what sense can we make of the phenomenon of death, where phenomenon, as Heidegger defines it, is something which shows itself, something we experience. According to the standard interpretation of Heidegger's notion of death, we can never experience it, so how can it be a phenomenon?

"The interpretation in which the 'not-yet'--and with it even the uttermost 'not-yet', the end of Dasein--was taken in the sense of something still outstanding, has been rejected as inappropriate in that it included the ontological perversion of making Dasein something present-at-hand" (250). So, the uttermost 'not-yet' or the end of Dasein cannot be taken in the sense of something still outstanding. But is this not what most commentators take Heidegger to be saying when he talks about the possibility of Dasein's death--in other words, that death can come at any moment and is thus a possibility? "The uttermost 'not-yet' has the character of something *towards which* Dasein *comports itself*" (250).

Heidegger says that "Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With

Death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being" (250). In other words, in anxiety in the face of death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being (authenticity). Recall in section 40 Heidegger states that anxiety frees Dasein for its ownmost-potentiality-for-Being. Dasein's ownmost-potentiality-for-Being is not death but is rather authentic existence.

Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost-potentiality-for-Being--that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself [or, in other words, authenticity]. (188)

So, in relation to section 40, I would like to draw specific attention to the above quotation. Dasein's ownmost-potentiality-for-Being is authentic existence.

Heidegger then states that "Its death is the possibility of no-longer-able-to-be-Dasein (Nicht-mehr-dasein-konnens)³" (250). In other words, death is the possibility of becoming "absolutely nothing. So, "when Dasein stands before itself in this way, all relations to any other Dasein have been undone" (250).

³The translation of Nicht-mehr-dasein-konnens as no-longer-being-able-to-be-there is an unhappy translation because it implies a sense of finality or finitude. I think my translation as no-longer-able-to-be-Dasein is more consistent with the untranslatability of the word Dasein and allows the reader to keep to the meaning that the word Dasein has come to have in Heideggerian scholarship.

Since Dasein is essentially ahead-of-itself, it cannot avoid the possibility of death. "Death is the possibility of the absolute impossibility of Dasein" (250). In other words, death is the absolute nothingness from which Dasein can never return to the world of its concern. Anxiety in the face of death is essentially anxiety in the face of nothingness to which Dasein is destined. "Its existential possibility is based on the fact that Dasein is essentially disclosed to itself, and disclosed, indeed, as ahead-of-itself [as nothingness]" (251). In section 40 Heidegger argues that anxiety is a basic state-of-mind in which Dasein is disclosed. It was argued that Dasein is disclosed as a nothingness. The definition Heidegger provides for death is "that *possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped*" (250-1). Heidegger then states that death reveals itself to Dasein in anxiety. He says:

Thrownness into death reveals itself to Dasein in a more primordial and impressive manner in that state-of-mind which we called 'anxiety'. Anxiety in the face of death is anxiety 'in the face of' that potentiality-for-Being which is one's ownmost, non-relation, and not to be outstripped. That in the face of which one has anxiety is Being-in-the-world itself. That about which one has anxiety is simply Dasein's potentiality-for-Being. Anxiety in the face of death must not be confused with fear in the face of one's demise. (251)

Upon a close reading of this passage, one will notice that

Heidegger adds a new phrase which has heretofore not been announced or defined: potentiality-for-Being which is one's ownmost, non-relation, and not to be outstripped. He has used the subject, i.e., potentiality-for-being, but now it is used with predicates that have not been associated with it, i.e., one's ownmost, non-relation, and not to be outstripped. The predicates have been used but in relation to one's ownmost possibility. One may suggest that potentiality-for-Being and possibility are synonymous or interchangeable and both stand for death, but Heidegger specifically uses the word possibility and not potentiality-for-Being to define death. A few sections later Heidegger states: "Anticipation turns out to be the possibility of understanding one's *ownmost* and uttermost potentiality-for-Being--that is to say, the possibility of authentic existence" (263). Further, he states that: "Death is Dasein's *ownmost* possibility. Being towards this possibility discloses to Dasein its *ownmost* potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue" (263). This suggests that one's ownmost possibility and one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being are not synonymous. If they were taken as synonymous, then the above passage would read this way: Death is Dasein's ownmost possibility. Being towards death (this possibility) discloses to Dasein its death (its ownmost potentiality-for-Being). One way, and

the only way I can think of, to make sense of this and to remain consistent with the text is to let death stand for one's ownmost possibility which is non-relational, and not to be outstripped, and to let authentic existence stand for one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being which is non-relational and not to be outstripped. In light of this, in the above passage where Heidegger states that "Anxiety in the face of death is anxiety 'in the face of' that potentiality-for-Being which is one's ownmost, non-relational, and not to be outstripped," (251) anxiety, then, in the face of death is anxiety in the face of authentic existence. But what does it mean to be anxious in the face of authentic existence? I will answer this later in this chapter.

Section 51
Being-towards-death and the
Everydayness of Dasein

In this section Heidegger discusses how the Self of everydayness comports itself towards its death. The first component of everydayness is idle talk, the way things have been publicly interpreted. "Idle talk must accordingly make manifest the way in which everyday Dasein interprets for itself its Being-toward-death" (252). Along with any interpretation is a state-of-mind which accompanies it.

In its everydayness, Dasein is aware of people who die. It is a well-known event encountered within-the-world. Death gets talked about by everyday Dasein in the following

way: "'One of these days one will die too, in the end; but right now it has nothing to do with us'" (253). The possibility of death gets covered up and passed off as something actual by the ambiguousness of idle chatter, and death gets perverted into an event of public occurrence which is constantly occurring. The "they" transforms the anxiety in the face of death to fear, and it "is passed off as a weakness with which no self-assured Dasein may have any acquaintance" (254). In doing this, Dasein is alienated from its own authenticity. Heidegger states it this way: "What is 'fitting' according to the unuttered decree of the 'they', is indifferent tranquillity as to the 'fact' that one dies. The cultivation of such a 'superior' indifference *alienates* Dasein from its ownmost non-relational potentiality-for-Being [authentic existence]" (254). Dasein, as falling, is fleeing in the face of death.

As falling, everyday Being-towards-death is a constant *fleeing in the face of death*. Being-towards-the-end has the mode of *evasion in the face of it*--giving new explanations for it, understanding it inauthentically, and concealing it. (254)

Section 52

Everyday Being-towards-the-end, and the Full Existential Conception of Death

In this section Heidegger discusses the certainty of death in the mode of everydayness. Everyday Dasein covers

up the certainty of its death and "This factual tendency to cover up confirms our thesis that Dasein, as factual, is in the 'untruth'" (256-7). If death is understood as an event encountered in one's environment, the certainty here does not apply to Being-towards-the-end.

They say, 'it is certain that 'Death' is coming.' *They* say it, and the 'they' overlooks the fact that in order to be able to be certain of death, Dasein itself must in every case be certain of its ownmost non-relational potentiality-for-Being [authentic existence]. (257)

I am not exactly sure what sense to make of this passage. The phrase "certain of its ownmost non-relational potentiality-for-Being", which I argue is authentic existence seems plausible, because if it meant death, the phrase would imply 'that in order to be able to be certain of death, Dasein itself must in every case be certain of its death', which tells us nothing; it is tautological. So, I keep my interpretation, but I am left with trying to understand what it means to be able to certain of death, Dasein must be certain of its authentic existence. I will, therefore, conclude that anxiety can only be anxious about nothingness (see section 40) and if Dasein is anxious of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, its ownmost potentiality-for-Being (authentic existence) must be nothingness.⁴

⁴ In order to substantiate my claim that one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being and one's ownmost possibility are not synonymous, see *Being and time*, 188, 191, 221, 228,

One is certain of death, but yet not certain of one's own death. Death is put off to some time later in life. The "they" covers up the fact that death is possible at any moment, and that is what it means, according to Heidegger, to be authentically certain. Further, it is indefinite according to its when.

Everyday Being-towards-death evades this indefiniteness by conferring definiteness upon it. But such a procedure cannot signify calculating when the demise is due to arrive. In the face of definiteness such as this, Dasein would sooner flee. Everyday concern makes definite for itself the indefiniteness of certain death by interposing before it those urgencies and possibilities which can be taken in at a glance, and which belong to everyday matters that are closest to us. (258)

"The full existential-ontological conception of death may now be defined as follows: *death, as the end of Dasein, is Dasein's ownmost possibility--non-relation, certain and as such indefinite, not to be outstripped*" (258-9).

Part III

I will now attempt to answer the question posed at the outset of this chapter: What does Heidegger mean by death? There are two possible answers to this question. The first is that the end is an ontic event which terminates life (demise). But this cannot be the case since Heidegger states that Dasein is already its 'not-yet' and its end too. How can Dasein be some ontic event that will happen in its future? I think this refutes the positions of those commentators mentioned in Part I of this chapter.

The second answer is that the end towards which Dasein directs itself is nothingness. It is non-ontic, 'something' ontological in the very constitution of Dasein. Heidegger says: "*Death is, as Dasein's end, in the Being of the entity towards its end*" (259). Since Heidegger argues that there are two ways of Being-towards-death, inauthentic and authentic, the former involves concerning oneself with some ontic event which will come in the future but does not concern one at the present moment; the latter does not, therefore, involve sitting around paranoid that at any moment the sky may fall. I am here referring to the issue of the indefiniteness of when the event may happen. It seems to me that most commentators pick up on the issue of the indefiniteness of death, that it can happen at any moment. Authentic Being-towards-death, they argue, is being

aware that death can come at any moment. This is a central part of Heidegger's concept of death, but there are other elements of authentic Being-towards-death. Authentic being-towards-death is to consider death as a non-ontic event. In other words, death for Dasein is to become what it already is: Nothingness. Fear in the face of one's demise, Heidegger argues, replaces anxiety in the face of nothingness which limits our Being.

As Heidegger says: "The 'not-yet' has already been included in the very Being of the fruit, not as some random characteristic, but as something constitutive. Correspondingly, as long as any Dasein is, it too *is already its "not-yet"* (244). But if we take the "not-yet" as a final end (death) or some ontic event causing the termination of Dasein's existence, how can it already be its "not-yet"? Once again, we have not properly understood what Heidegger means existentially by the "not-yet" and consequently death. This is supported by the fact that Heidegger states: "That which makes up the 'lack of totality' in Dasein, the constant 'ahead-of-itself', is neither something still outstanding in a summative togetherness, nor something which has not yet become accessible. It is a 'not-yet' which any Dasein, as the

entity which it is, has to be" (244).¹ So, Dasein's "not-yet" is its own nothingness. It is already a nothingness and it has to be as long as it is.

So, what kind of ending do we have in mind when we speak of the death of Dasein? Heidegger says that "... just as Dasein *is* already its 'not-yet', and is its 'not-yet' constantly as long as it is, it *is* already its end too. The 'ending' which we have in view when we speak of death, does not signify Dasein's Being-at-an-end, but a *Being-towards-the-end* of this entity" (245). Dasein is its "not-yet" and its end too. Death here does not have any signification of mortality, although it could take on that interpretation. If this were the case, then how can we make sense of the phrase Dasein is its "not-yet" and its end too and that death is a Being-towards-the-end. Further, Heidegger states that "Death is a way to be, which Dasein takes over as soon as it is" (245). I think the "not-yet" and the end suitable to Dasein are both nothingness and that death is to become

¹This supports my claim in chapter 2 that in anxiety Dasein experiences nothingness and nothingness is independent from an awareness of mortality, that it is going to die. The fact that some commentators equate nothingness with an awareness of mortality is, as I have shown, incoherent with *Being and Time*, and I now further argue that Heidegger does not equate mortality with death. To equate mortality with death is to understand death inauthentically, as the "they" would understand death. The term mortality suggests that a human being becomes something that it is not so long as it is alive, i.e., a corpse. Death, ontologically understood, implies becoming what you are already, nothingness.

totally nothingness from which one never returns. As

Heidegger states it:

We have conceived death existentially as what we have characterized as the possibility of the impossibility of existence--that is to say, as the utter nullity of Dasein. Death is not 'added on' to Dasein at its 'end'; but Dasein, as care, is the thrown (that is, null) basis for its death. (306)

I would like to direct attention to Dreyfus' book *Being-in-the-world*, because he argues, and I think rightly, that there are some problems with the standard interpretation of Heidegger's notion of death.

Dreyfus states that the way Heidegger is using the word death is not demise. The way death is understood by the public covers up Dasein's structural nothingness. He suggests that Heidegger's "... similarity between Dasein's structural lack of possibilities of its own and the annihilation of all possibilities at life's end ... [makes it seem that] the existential possibility of having no possibilities ... is simply ... the existentiell possibility of demise."² This is, he states, the standard interpretation of Heidegger on death. He then adds:

But if the existential nullity cannot be understood in terms of demise, but is rather covered up by thinking of death as something that has not yet happened, then it seems natural to suppose that the *possibility* of demise as an event

²H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 310.

later in life would be a cover-up too. Moreover, this common interpretation of the text would contradict Heidegger's explicit assertion of the formal, ontological character of his analysis.³

This interpretation is hard to avoid because Heidegger "... speaks of existential death as the 'ultimate possibility,' and the 'possibility of the impossibility of any existence at all'".⁴ What else could this mean but "... just plain dying?"⁵ Dreyfus suggests that the interpretation of this terms must "... do justice to Heidegger's assertion that death is an existential structure that defines what Dasein is."⁶ Therefore, Death

... cannot be some event that is possible but not yet actual, or even the possibility of that event. The event of death when it comes must manifest what Dasein *has been all along*, which is not at all the same as saying that all along Dasein had been nothing more than the possibility of the event of death.⁷

In other words, the event of death must manifest what Dasein has been all along, and this means that when Dasein experiences death it experiences nothingness. This is consistent with my interpretation of anxiety in chapter 2.

³ H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 310.

⁴ H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 311.

⁵ H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 311.

⁶ H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 311.

⁷ H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 311.

In anxiety, it may be recalled, Dasein experiences nothingness. And that is what Dasein is as long as it is.

Dreyfus suggests that the only way death can have any existential meaning is analogically.

Death shows us in a specific case that Dasein can have no possibilities that define it and its world. "Death as possibility, gives Dasein nothing to be 'actualized,' nothing which Dasein, as actual, could itself *be*". Thus the anxiety at the moment of dying when I have no possibilities left, the world recedes, and everything is seen to be meaningless, can be an analogon for living lucidly in such a way that the world is constantly seen to be meaningless and I am constantly owning up to the fact that Dasein is not only a *null basis* as revealed in the anxiety of conscience but also is a *nullity* in that it can make no possibilities its own.⁸

In anxiety Dasein experiences nothingness. Anxiety in the face of death is anxiety essentially in the face of nothingness.

⁸H. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-world*, 311.

Conclusion

I think I have shown that Heidegger's notion of death as a "not-yet" and end which belong to Dasein is not simply the possibility of Dasein's death. To consider death this way is to make it into a "not-yet" which is still outstanding. And Heidegger states that Dasein is already its "not-yet". In relation to section 40, Anxiety reveals Dasein's structural nothingness. And that is what Dasein is as long as it is. It is not simply the possibility of its death. Dasein's death is, I think, the possibility of becoming totally nothing. I would like to make reference to statements made by Heidegger in later sections of *Being and Time* in order to show that my interpretation is consistent, although I suppose I am breaking with my hermeneutical method (i.e., following the logic of the text) by jumping ahead, but I think what Heidegger says supports the claims I make in this chapter.

In the structure of thrownness, as in that of projection, there lies essentially a nullity. This nullity is the basis for the possibility of inauthentic Dasein in its falling; and as falling, every inauthentic Dasein factually is. *Care itself, in its very essence, is permeated with nullity through and through.* Thus 'care'--Dasein's Being--means, as thrown projection, Being-the-basis of a nullity (and this Being-the-basis is itself null). This means that *Dasein as such is guilty*, if our formally existential definition of 'guilt' as 'Being-the-basis of a nullity' is indeed correct.

(285)

When Dasein is resolute, it takes over authentically in its existence the fact that it is the null basis of its own nullity. We have conceived death existentially as what we have characterized as the possibility of the impossibility of existence--that is to say, as the utter nullity of Dasein. Death is not 'added on' to Dasein at its 'end'; but Dasein, as care, is the thrown (that is, null) basis for its death. The nullity by which Dasein's Being is dominated primordially through and through, is revealed to Dasein itself in authentic Being-towards-death. (306)

Thus, we can now see that death is not outside of our experience if it is understood as an absolute or utter nothingness. Dasein does experience nothingness in anxiety. Anxiety in the face of death is simply anxiety in the face of utter nothingness. The standard interpretation in general and Sartre's claim that death lies outside the ontological structure of what it means to be human in particular is therefore shown to be misleading because death as nothingness is something we do experience. The usual interpretation that Dasein is essentially and nothing more than the possibility of its own death is, I think, misleading. Death has to be understood ontologically and if it is merely an event that is possible, but which is never experienced by Dasein, then Heidegger is doing metaphysics, not phenomenology.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I began with a discussion of Heidegger's concept of inauthentic existence. It was necessary to address inauthentic existence because anxiety, as it is described in section 40 of *Being and Time*, is the distinctive state-of-mind which reveals to Dasein its inauthenticity and brings Dasein back to itself from its lostness in the "they", thus freeing Dasein for its possible authenticity. What Dasein experiences in anxiety is related to inauthentic existence. In anxiety, the domination of the "they" is shattered, but because Dasein takes it easy and understands itself and the world according to the "they"'s way of understanding and because it concerns itself with its public 'world', Dasein experiences something uncanny. Anxiety is uncanny because Dasein is no longer familiar with the world, no longer at home. Further, we tend to think of ourselves as what we do. Things ready-to-hand and our Being-with-others also contribute to who we are. However, in anxiety all these become insignificant; our inauthentic skin is shed, the world becomes insignificant, Others are insignificant, and we, therefore, experience nothingness. Everything, and we with it, slips away and all that remains is pure Dasein or nothingness. It is here that we get a

clue of the existential meaning of death.

I also (re)interpreted Heidegger's concept of nothingness in section 40. It was necessary to reinterpret this section because it is usually misinterpreted or its significance is overlooked. Most commentators discuss anxiety in connection with death. In this interpretation, death is what causes Dasein to experience anxiety. Once a human being acknowledges its mortality, it experiences anxiety or nothingness. It was shown that the problem with this interpretation is that Dasein cannot experience anxiety without acknowledging its mortality. In other words, if human beings were immortal, they would not experience anxiety or nothingness. But Heidegger specified that anxiety does not have to be related to an awareness of mortality or death. The interpretation I put forward showed that for no reason and from nowhere Dasein simply finds itself in anxiety in which the its 'world' has collapsed. ✓ Dasein experiences its nothingness.

Nothingness has far reaching consequences. First, death takes on a different meaning than what is generally understood in the standard interpretation. Since Dasein experiences nothingness, the "not-yet" or the end suitable for Dasein's kind of Being is not something still outstanding. It is what Dasein already is. And what Dasein already is is nothingness. Thus the existential meaning of

death is nothingness.

It is at this point that we could begin to investigate authentic existence. But that is a discussion for another day. As Gadamer says in *Truth and Method*:

... I will stop here. The ongoing dialogue permits no final conclusion. It would be a poor hermeneuticist who thought he could have, or had to have, the last word.¹

¹Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* Revised ed. trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989), 579.

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