



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service

Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Ontological Freedom as the Essence of Dasein:
Heidegger's Overcoming of Objectivism and Subjectivism

Christopher Ferdinand McNicolls

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Philosophy

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Philosophy at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

August 1991

Copyright Christopher McNicolls, 1991



National Library
of Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Canadian Theses Service Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

The author has granted an irrevocable non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of his/her thesis by any means and in any form or format, making this thesis available to interested persons.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in his/her thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence irrévocable et non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de sa thèse de quelque manière et sous quelque forme que ce soit pour mettre des exemplaires de cette thèse à la disposition des personnes intéressées.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège sa thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

ISBN 0-315-68792-4

Canada

Abstract

ONTOLOGICAL FREEDOM AS THE ESSENCE OF DASEIN: HEIDEGGER'S OVERCOMING OF OBJECTIVISM AND SUBJECTIVISM

This thesis examines Heidegger's critique of metaphysics. More specifically, it examines his criticisms of Objectivism and Subjectivism. We argue that while the concept of ontological freedom enables Heidegger to reject both Objectivism and Subjectivism, positively, it also furnishes him with the critical vantage point from which to think the meaning of things more concretely.

The argument is worked out in four stages followed by a conclusion. First we lay out Heidegger's critique of Objectivism in *Being and Time*. We do this by examining his critique of meaning as "present-at-hand," and human nature as *animal rationale*. We then lay out in some detail Heidegger's concept of ontological freedom and show how, from this standpoint, the concept of meaning is rearticulated as "ready-to-hand," and human nature as "Dasein." At the second stage of the argument we attempt to show that Heidegger's rejection of Objectivism does not entail a slide into Subjectivism - as some of his critics contend (Rosen, Habermas, Megill, etc.). To this end, we examine Heidegger's critique of Subjectivism by focusing on the Nietzschean metaphysics of the will to

power. This brings us to the third stage of the argument: Having rejected the two fundamental strands in Western metaphysics, Heidegger has now only one path to follow which leads him to the question of human nature as Dasein. As such, we attempt to show the internal connection between Heidegger's concept of ontological freedom and his concept of human nature as Dasein. At this level of the argument, we attempt to show how the critique of Objectivism and Subjectivism dovetails into the problem of personal identity. At the fourth stage of the argument this concept of personal identity is articulated from the twin poles of **authenticity** and **inauthenticity**. Finally, we conclude by discussing briefly some of the consequences that ensue from the connecting of the concept of ontological freedom to that of human nature as Dasein.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the advice, help, patience, and kindness of a number of people. First, I would like to thank Dr. Ernest Joós who undertook the job of directing the thesis and seeing it to completion. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Christopher Gray, Chair of the Philosophy Department at Concordia for his sound advice on many aspects related to the preparation of the thesis. Also, I would like to thank Mehran at the GSA for many hours spent showing me the workings of WordPerfect, and Ramesh at the Norris Library for his invaluable assistance. I would also like to thank Ms. Eudene Whittaker, Graduate Secretary of the Philosophy Department at Concordia for her friendly assistance and advice over the years. And lastly I would like to thank Ms. Ana Arroyo for reading the entire manuscript and saving me from many grammatical errors, as well as suggesting many changes for making the manuscript more readable.

Table of Contents

Introduction

| | |
|---|---|
| Heidegger's Overcoming of Objectivism and Subjectivism: An Overview | 1 |
| Objectivism and Subjectivism | 3 |
| Transcendence, Freedom, and the "Dasein in Man" | 6 |

Chapter 1

| | |
|---|----|
| Ontological Freedom as the Essence of Dasein: The Overcoming of Objectivism | 13 |
| Meaning as Present-at-hand | 13 |
| Meaning as Present-at-hand and Human nature as Animal Rationale | 16 |
| Ontological Freedom | 20 |
| Meaning as Ready-to-hand | 23 |
| Ontological Freedom, Animal Rationale, Dasein | 27 |

Chapter 2

| | |
|--|----|
| Overcoming the Übermensch: Heidegger's Critique of Subjectivism | 32 |
|--|----|

| | |
|--|-----|
| Nietzsche, Metaphysics, Nihilism | 33 |
| Chapter 3 | |
| Ontological Freedom, Authenticity, and Individual Existence | 47 |
| Understanding and Freedom | 49 |
| Being-with-Others: How Dasein loses its Freedom and becomes Inauthentic | 51 |
| The Recovery of Freedom through the Key mood of Anxiety | 52 |
| Chapter 4 | |
| The Self as Personal Identity | 58 |
| Conclusion | |
| Ontological Freedom and The Project of Personal Identity | 69 |
| Glossary of German Terms | 71a |
| Bibliography | 72 |

Introduction

Heidegger's Overcoming of Objectivism and Subjectivism: An Overview

Readers of Heidegger's books and essays seem to agree that all of Heidegger's concerns centre on the question of the meaning of Being. Even when he discusses issues such as truth, identity, language or technology, Being seems to hold the centre of the stage. Scholars and thinkers who have been influenced by Heidegger's work acquiesce in this judgment: Being, or, as Heidegger sometimes says, the truth of Being, is the most important concept in Heidegger's thought.

It is certainly true that in *Being and Time* Heidegger does attempt to "raise anew the question of the meaning of Being" (SZ/1).¹ Why does Heidegger attempt to do this? The answer to this question demands a historic as well as a systematic response.

Historically, according to Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being "is not just any question. It is the one which provided a stimulus for the researches of Plato and Aristotle..." (SZ/2). And, he continues, "what these men

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). All references are to the pagination of the 7th edition of *Sein und Zeit*; hereafter SZ.

achieved was to persist through many alterations and 'retouchings' down to the logic of Hegel. And what they wrested with the utmost intellectual effort from the phenomena, fragmentary and incipient though it was, has only since become trivialized" (SZ/2).

Systematically, the metaphysical question of the meaning of Being has been of historic importance because Being as an all-embracing concept is what, supposedly, makes reality what it is. That is, what things are, as things, is conditioned by one's interpretation of Being. Heidegger states this point in a later work in the following way: "metaphysics is the truth of beings as such and as a whole. The fundamental positions in metaphysics therefore have their ground in the respective essence of truth and in their respective essential interpretation of the Being of beings."² It is this systematic concept of metaphysics as a theory of Being as a whole that Heidegger rejects. Heidegger does indeed want to work out an answer to the question of the meaning of Being, but what he does not want to do is give an abstract interpretation of Being, and consequently, of things. Therefore, it is the task of this essay to lay out the new standpoint from where Heidegger raises the question of the meaning of Being, and moreover, to show how, from this standpoint, specifically, Heidegger deals with the problem of human nature.

² Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume IV: Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, ed. David Farrel Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 139.

This essay claims that Heidegger's questioning of the traditional metaphysical problematic is done from the standpoint of ontological freedom. More specifically, we show how from this standpoint human nature gets articulated as Dasein or freedom. It is from the position of ontological freedom, then, that Heidegger is able to say farewell to metaphysics in some of its older forms. That is, it is the position of ontological freedom which gives to Heidegger the critical vantage point from which to reject both the metaphysics of Objectivism as well as Subjectivism. As he put it in *The Essence of Reasons* (a work which was published two years after *Being and Time*):

...transcendence cannot be disclosed and understood through a flight to the objective, but solely through an ontological interpretation of the Subjectivity of the subject: an interpretation which if constantly renewed, will speak against "subjectivism" and, at the same time, deny "objectivism" any authority.³

Objectivism and Subjectivism

Though we do not find in Heidegger a further definition of how Objectivism and Subjectivism should be understood, the context enables us to speculate on what these terms mean in his philosophy. Therefore, Objectivism as a metaphysical position,

³ Martin Heidegger, (*Vom Wesen des Grundes*), *The Essence of Reasons*, trans. Terrence Malick (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969), p.97; hereafter ER.

for the purposes of this essay, can be characterized as the belief that there exists one and only one true description of reality; that is, Being consists in one specific thing - that there exists an ultimate conception of Being to which all reality can be reduced, or with which all reality can be described. In relation to issues such as truth, knowledge, human nature, etc., Objectivism postulates that all of these concepts possess a singular essence, a set of necessary and sufficient conditions which are pre-defined, that are a priori, and which must be met whenever these concepts are used. If we are talking about cases where claims to knowledge are made, these claims in order to pass as knowledge must meet certain criteria, for example, that they be certain, or that they correspond to real objects in the world; in the case of truth, true as a predicate can be attached to propositions or judgments if, and only if, they correspond to some object or state-of-affair in the world. In the case of human nature, human beings are rational animals, or things created by God, or rational beings, or products of the social forces of production, or the will to power, etc.. In every single case, Objectivism postulates a reduction of the manifold to a simple unity. In every single case, all reality gets conceptualised from one and only one standpoint. As such, Objectivism as the belief that reality consists in an ultimate conception of Being is a reductive approach to reality.

In contrast to Objectivism, Subjectivism can be crudely characterized as the denial of the former. Where Objectivism sees one, Subjectivism sees many. Subjectivism in a more rigorous sense can be further characterized as the belief that reality lacks an "ultimate" nature. That is, for Subjectivism, the concept of an ultimate Objective reality is one which does not make sense. It does not make sense because as human beings we act and live in the world as particular creatures of time and place. For Subjectivism, then, Being is relative to time and place, culture, personality; and to invoke a conception of reality which goes beyond the here and now is to succumb to metaphysical illusions at worst, or merely to take one way of interpreting reality, and claim that this is the way reality really is. Subjectivism in its more radical form, which is the form we will be looking at in this essay (specifically Nietzsche), makes the claim that reality itself is only what we make of it: that the meaning of reality is internal to the articulation of the subjective will; that is, reality is subordinate to the will because it is the latter which shapes, and even transforms it.

The constant oscillation between Objectivism and Subjectivism is what Heidegger wants to put an end to. This is why he raises the question of the meaning of Being from the standpoint of ontological freedom: freedom which neither belongs to the Subjective will nor to Objective Being, but freedom to which both belong. Ontological freedom, as we

intend to show, furnishes Heidegger with the critical standpoint from which to think the meaning of Being, but at the same time manages to avoid both Objectivism and Subjectivism. The term "ontological freedom" is exactly Heideggerian. Freedom as the permanent characteristic of Dasein comes as the final leg of his argument on Transcendence in *The Essence of Reasons*. We added the term "ontological freedom" to distinguish it from freedom as the latter is used in moral philosophy as a basic characteristic of moral agents. Our use of the term ontological freedom stresses Dasein's inherent ability to use its reason in such a way that it is able to transcend, leap over, in a manner of speaking, different levels of understanding which is the moving force of interpretation. For Heidegger ontological freedom as the essence of Dasein denotes both power and independence. Hence, it represents the essence of Transcendence.

Transcendence, Freedom, and the "Dasein in Man"

What Heidegger means by the "subjectivity of the subject" is what he sometimes calls the "Dasein in man":

the 'Dasein in man' is the essence that belongs to Being itself. Man belongs to that essence in such a way that he has to be such Being. Dasein applies to man. As essence, it is in each case his, what he belongs to, but not what he himself makes and controls or his artifact."⁴

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Volume IV: Nihilism*, p. 218.

Heidegger names the essence of human nature as Dasein. Dasein is that to which we as human beings belong, that which is constitutive of who we are. But moreover, the meaning of Being also belongs to Dasein: "the 'Dasein in man' is the essence that belongs to Being itself." Thus, as human beings, to be who we are, we must be as "individual" Dasein: "Dasein... [as] essence...is in each case his." But, as Heidegger points out, even though Dasein as the essence of human nature is given individually in each case, Dasein is "not what he himself makes and controls or his artifact." Dasein as the essence of human nature makes possible both human being as well as the meaning of Being since it is the link between human beings and Being.

But apart from naming what both human nature and Being belong to as "Dasein," exactly what does Heidegger mean by this term? First of all, Dasein refers to the reality which is denoted by the term "transcendence." For Heidegger, the term transcendence signifies "what is unique to human Dasein - unique not as one among other possible, and occasionally actualized types of behaviour, but as a basic constitutive feature of Dasein that happens prior to all behaviour" (ER/35f). Therefore, to speak about "transcendent Dasein" (ER/37) is, as Heidegger put it, "a tautological expression" (ER/37). As such:

if we choose the term "subject" for the being which all of us are and which we understand as Dasein, then transcendence can be said to denote the essence of the subject or the basic structure of

subjectivity. The subject never first exists as "subject" and then, in the event objects are present at hand, goes on to transcend as well. Instead, to be a subject means being in and as transcending (ER/37).

What Heidegger wants to emphasise by using the concept of transcendence to denote what is basic to human nature is the idea of transcendence as "surpassing" [Überstieg]. That is, human nature as belonging to Dasein, as belonging to transcendence, not only surpasses itself, but it also surpasses the world. It is in this continuous surpassing that Dasein, hence human nature, is: "in surpassing itself, Dasein first attains to the being that it is; what it attains is its 'self'" (ER/39). It is in transcendence as surpassing that human nature as Dasein attains itself: "transcendence constitutes self-hood" (ER/39). In addition to constituting itself by surpassing itself, human nature as Dasein also surpasses the world (we use the concept world to denote both the natural and social worlds): "although Dasein is in the midst of, and surrounded by, being, it has always, as existing, already surpassed nature" (ER/39).

In addition to claiming transcendence as basic to Dasein, and connecting the concept of surpassing to the former, Heidegger also explicitly connects surpassing, hence transcendence, to freedom: "surpassing to the world is freedom itself" (ER/103). And, he continues: "only because freedom constitutes transcendence can it announce itself in existing Dasein" (ER/105). In other words, transcendence

denotes what is basic to human nature; but, insofar as freedom is its constitutive part, it follows that freedom is what is basic to human nature. Moreover, since Being and human nature both belong to Dasein, and Dasein is itself freedom, this entails that the meaning of Being is itself enabled by freedom: "as transcendence, freedom is not merely a particular 'kind' of reason but the origin of reasons [grounds] in general. Freedom is freedom for grounds" (ER/105). Since both Being and human nature belong to Dasein for their constitution, hence to transcendence and to freedom,

by its very essence, ontological founding opens marginal realms of the possible - within which the character of possibility varies with the constitution of the Being of the being that is disclosed - because Being (the constitution of Being), as something that founds and as a transcendental obligation for Dasein, is rooted in Dasein's freedom (ER/125).

"Dasein's freedom" is, like "transcendent Dasein," a tautology. It must be emphasized that the claim that Being is rooted in Dasein's freedom does not mean that freedom is something that human beings possess. Freedom is, as Heidegger put it above, that which we neither make nor control. Human nature as well as Being both draw their articulation from freedom. This is why in "The Letter on Humanism" Heidegger says that "thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation."⁵

⁵ Martin Heidegger, "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farrel Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), p. 193.

Thinking, conditioned by freedom, helps to accomplish, to fulfil the meaning of Being. Human thinking by itself, neither makes nor causes the meaning of Being. To hold the converse would be, for Heidegger, to affirm the Descartes-Nietzsche-Sartre thesis that Being is subordinate to the human subject as cogito. For Heidegger, Being as subject, sub-iectum, finds its enabling condition in freedom itself. This is why, to be repetitive, Heidegger constantly affirms that "man does not possess freedom, ex-istent, disclosive Dasein, possesses man."⁶ In other words, freedom is the essence of human Dasein itself. Freedom is the essence of human nature, but not as something which the latter possesses.

The question of whether or not the concept of human nature as freedom is an important concept in Heidegger's thought is perhaps nothing but a moment, - a note, - in Heideggerian scholarship. However, what is not so academic is the question of human nature itself. Is there such a thing? In this century the concept of human nature as something transcendental, something that lies outside of all possible vocabularies, descriptions, and contexts, has come under intense scrutiny and criticisms from a variety of sources.⁷

⁶ Martin Heidegger, "The Essence of Truth," in *Basic Writings*, p. 129.

⁷ Cf. John Dewey, *The Quest For Certainty*, (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961); José Ortega y Gasset, *History as a System*, trans. Helene Weyl, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961); Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*; Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*; *Consequences of Pragmatism*; *Contingency, Irony, Solidarity*; "Postmodernist

However, in spite of this surplus of criticisms against the concept of a basic human nature, this essay interprets, defends, and argues that it is just such a notion that holds Heidegger's thought together, and it is this very idea of a basic human nature that gives Heidegger the resources with which to articulate a form of reason which avoids the pitfalls of both Objectivism and Subjectivism. So, those critics who claim that Heidegger's thought moves along a transcendental axis are indeed correct. They are wrong, however, when they identify this transcendental aspect of Heidegger's thought, that is, the basic concept of human nature as freedom, as just another misguided metaphysical attempt to underwrite reality in a universal way. Why these critics are wrong is that they miss the positive function freedom performs in Heidegger's thought. Heidegger is not

Bourgeois Liberalism," in Robert Hollinger, ed., *Hermeneutics and Praxis*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985); "Habermas and Lyotard on Postmodernity," in Richard Bernstein, ed., *Habermas and Modernity*, (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1985); "Solidarity or Objectivity?" in John Rajchman and Cornel West, eds., *Post-Analytic Philosophy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty, [Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976]; also, cf. Foucault's poignant formulation: "...man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever brighter upon our horizon." [Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 386];

concerned with giving an abstract, metaphysical definition of human nature as freedom. Instead, his concern is to use human nature as Dasein, freedom, as a standpoint which makes possible a concrete articulation of the meaning Being. That is, human nature as freedom, because it has Being-in-the-world as its basic state, enables Heidegger to give an articulation of reality which is in no way dependent on metaphysical conceptualizations, and as such, does not ensue in abstract articulations of the meaning of things.

Chapter 1

Ontological Freedom as The Essence of Dasein: The Overcoming of Objectivism

This chapter examines Heidegger's critique of Objectivism. This critique, as this chapter hopes to make clear, is articulated from the standpoint of ontological freedom. Specifically, the critique of Objectivism is directed against the traditional definition of human nature as animal rationale, and the theory of meaning which underlies this definition, namely, meaning as present-at-hand. The negative critique of meaning as present-at-hand from the standpoint of ontological freedom makes possible Heidegger's articulation of meaning as ready-to-hand. Similarly, his critique of human nature as animal rationale from the standpoint of ontological freedom makes possible the rethinking of human nature as Dasein, and the "subject-object relationship" (ER/37) which is a central issue in Heidegger's philosophy.

Meaning as Present-at-hand

When we ask questions such as "What is human nature?" we assume that human nature must consist in one specific thing. Furthermore, we tend to have a rough notion of what the response to this question might look like. For example: This

and not that is what human nature really is. Heidegger thinks that questions such as these, that is, the way they are posed, tend to elicit certain responses, and, as such, exclude others. We tend to assume that human nature is a unitary concept, that once we state what human nature is, it then becomes something given, unconditionally, once and for all. And if human nature is both unitary and unchanging, then it is not subject to the vicissitudes of history, to the contingencies of personality, culture, place. Heidegger thinks that these objectivist assumptions that underlie the question concerning human nature elicits answers which are abstractions of the reality to which they refer. That is, these Objectivist assumptions generate counter-intuitive responses which force us to think and act as if human reality were something which floats above the contingencies of history - that human reality is not necessarily finite. In addition, the concept of meaning that informs the various responses to the question of human nature is such that not only does it raise this reality to an abstract level, but it also places human nature on the same level as things, objects, relations, etc. From this conception of meaning it follows that human nature is accorded the same ontological status as a colour, or a shape, things to which we can point to, unequivocally. Human nature becomes an ostensibly definable thing. Heidegger characterizes this concept of meaning as present-at-hand (SZ/48).

Meaning as present-at-hand is connected to a specific mode of time: the present. The meaning of a thing is given in the present; that is, meaning, on this view, is directly given. It is something actual because it exists in the present: "entities are grasped in their Being as 'presence'; this means that they are understood with regard to a specific mode of time - the Present" (SZ/25). From this point of view, things, in the broadest sense of the term, are to be understood in the manner that they are actually perceived. The meaning of a thing, how and what it is ontologically, is analyzable, in principle, into present-at-hand concepts which include colour, shape, size, texture, etc.. In short, the so-called "phenomenal properties." Thus, we have a fairly rigorous criterial conception of meaning: the meaning of a thing is to be articulated only in present-at-hand categories; present-at-hand categories are given in present immediate experience; what is given to present immediate experience are phenomenal properties, things such as colour, texture, shape, size, etc.. As such, whatever exists, in order for it to be meaningful, must bend itself to the above conditions. It is on this criterial conception of meaning as present-at-hand, Heidegger claims, that the traditional definition of human nature as animal rationale is based (SZ/48).

**Meaning as Present-at-hand,
and Human Nature as Animal Rationale**

In the previous section we discussed some of the assumptions that underlie the concept of human nature as well as, according to Heidegger, the theory of meaning that underlies this concept. Now, the received answer to the question of human nature has been that of human nature as animal rationale. This means that human beings are those animals who possess reason. Reason differentiates us from other creatures. Reason in this instance is the capacity to know things by having true representations of them in our minds. Things are known in the way that they present themselves to the mind: "entities are grasped in their Being as 'presence'; this means that they are understood with regard to a definite mode of time - the 'Present'" (SZ/25).

Human nature as *zoon logon echon*, animal rationale, is the definition made famous by Aristotle. But this definition of human nature, Heidegger claims, is based on a specific conception of Being or meaning: "the kind of Being which belongs to a *zoon* is understood in the sense of occurring and Being-present-at-hand" (SZ/48). Moreover, even though "the *logos*" which is attached to a *zoon* may be seen as "some superior endowment; the kind of Being which belongs to it remains quite as obscure as that of the entire entity thus compounded" (SZ/48). In other words, what Heidegger means to

say by claiming that the concept of human nature as *zoon logon echon* remains obscure is that the consequences of the conception of meaning as present-at-hand that underlies this definition of human nature are not fully spelled out. That is, the Objectivist conception of meaning as present-at-hand is taken to be non-problematic.

According to Heidegger, the concept of human nature as *animal rationale*, as something definable in present-at-hand terms, is also found in medieval thought. The difference between the medieval and Greek conception of human nature lies in the advent of Christianity. In medieval thought, human beings are conceived as things that are created by God. And like the classical Greek definition of a *zoon logon echon*, *animal rationale* is also based on the concept of meaning as present-at-hand. Like the Greek concept of *logos*, which Heidegger claims is left in obscurity, the concept of *rationale* in *animal rationale*, is thought of as an actual property, a property that is predicable, essentially, of every human being. *Rationale*, in medieval philosophy, is thought of in the same way as Aristotle conceived *logos*, viz., the capacity to have true representations of things - true representations of things being the way things present themselves to the mind; that is, true representations of their properties. But, in addition to the way things are defined, the manner in which reason, as the essence of human nature, is also based on the concept of meaning as present-at-hand.

The rationale in animal rationale is also, strictly speaking, a property - albeit a different kind of property, but still something strictly definable in present-at-hand terms, restricted to the present mode of temporality, and is, as such, immediately given, hence, taken to be non-problematic. But surprisingly, Heidegger claims that in both Greek and medieval thought, the question of the meaning of human nature, what human nature actually is, remains forgotten. This claim is based on the premise that in both Greek and medieval thought, human nature is "conceived as something obvious or self-evident in the sense of Being-present-at-hand" (SZ/49).

The objection could be made that Heidegger's claim that human nature in both Greek and medieval thought remains forgotten is false. After all, what are *zoon logon echon* and animal rationale? But Heidegger does not deny that human nature is indeed defined in Greek and medieval thought as animal rationale. It is not the case that in both Greek and medieval thought the question of human nature is not discussed. What Heidegger is saying is that the Objectivist conception of meaning as present-at-hand which conceives of human nature as something definable in phenomenal categories, and which underlies the definition of human nature as animal rationale, does not, and cannot state what is essential about human nature. Heidegger's point is that the definition of human nature as animal rationale is flawed because the concept

of meaning or Being on which this definition is based is also flawed.

Heidegger rejects the concept of meaning as present-at-hand not only because, as he claims, it is unable to come to terms in an adequate manner with the concept of human nature, but also because, according to him, from this point of view the concept of meaning itself collapses.¹ In short, the Objectivism of meaning as present-at-hand collapses into just one way of explicating reality, or it may collapse into sheer Subjectivism. Furthermore, if we try to follow through Heidegger's reflections, we may not be far from the truth if we were to claim that since there are no objective grounds to support the claim that meaning as present-at-hand is or ought to be the language of reality itself, then the only recourse available for sustaining the claim to objectivity would be sheer force, the will, itself. In short, the claim that meaning as present-at-hand is the most objective way of describing or thinking about the world reduces to subjectivism. Thus Objectivism is but the mirror image of Subjectivism. But this is not surprising. It is not surprising because both Objectivism and Subjectivism share the same assumption about reality: that the meaning of the world consists in one single criterion, one single conception of meaning. And even if we flatly deny the validity of any form

¹ Cf. Martin Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'," in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 54ff.

of Objectivism and attempt to go the Subjective route, this only becomes a tacit admission that nothing is given per se in the world and only thinking makes it thus. This would be to reduce reality to what Heidegger calls mere "world-stuff" (SZ/85); world-stuff which has to be shaped and moulded by the subjective will. And since human nature as animal rationale is also based on the concept of meaning as present-at-hand, it too either becomes mere "world-stuff" or it is nothing but a subjective construct. If we reject both horns of this dilemma, and yet still want to retain the concept of human nature, then the hermeneutic thesis of reality returns with force. That is, human nature, to be human nature, has to be hermeneutically conceived, viz., interpreted. But the question remains from what point of view.

Ontological Freedom

Heidegger is clearly at odds with the Objectivist conception of meaning as present-at-hand. He also thinks that the entire history of Western metaphysics from Plato down to Nietzsche has been nothing more than the theoretical unwinding of this Objectivist rope.² Moreover he believes that continued adherence to Objectivism fetters the attempt to articulate a

² Cf. the essay "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, Appendix 4. Also, Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power as a manifestation of extreme Subjectivism is discussed in Chapter 2 below.

proper understanding of meaning, and consequently, a proper understanding of human nature.

It is common to say that Heidegger, since *Being and Time*, or perhaps even earlier,³ has been occupied with the question of the meaning of Being. To this extent, he does not depart from the importance placed on this question by his philosophical predecessors. However, where he does differ from them is in the position from where he attempts to raise again this question. Heidegger retains the primacy of the ontological question, but he puts aside the Objectivist assumptions which are connected to it. More specifically, he puts aside the conception of meaning as present-at-hand. The position from where Heidegger tries to give a new answer to the old question of Being is what we called in the Introduction **ontological freedom**

Ontological freedom connects two concepts: freedom and ontology. This connection indicates two things: the retention of the ontological question and its rearticulation from the standpoint of freedom. Crudely: if ontology has to do with the meaning of reality, then freedom furnishes the means whereby this meaning can be articulated.

Since, as we pointed out in the Introduction, Heidegger conceives of freedom as synonymous with *Dasein*, or human nature itself, the fact that freedom furnishes the means of

³ Cf. Heidegger's essay "My way to Phenomenology," in *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).

articulating the meaning of reality itself suggests that human nature is intimately connected to reality. Heidegger puts this point in the following way: "Dasein in its familiarity with significance is the ontical condition for the possibility of discovering entities which are encountered in a world with involvement (readiness-to-hand) as their kind of Being, and which can thus make themselves known as they are in themselves [in seinem Ansich]" (SZ/87). It is Dasein as freedom that interprets the things as they are. That is, human Dasein frees the things that are for their own authentic reality, their involvement with one another.⁴ Since freedom is ontologically determinative of Dasein, for that freedom to "be" it must free the things that are in order that they might be in their own concrete reality, rather than interpreting them from some abstract, overarching Objectivist conception of meaning. That is, ontological freedom as the essence of Dasein has to be articulated in the world. This, in a word, is implied by Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

But if ontological freedom as the essence of Dasein frees the things that are so that they can be made sense of concretely, then ontological freedom can be further characterized as a method, the manner of being a Dasein which through its involvement tackles so-called philosophical problems in a radical way, viz., concretely. For example, in

⁴ Cf. the discussion in the next section of Heidegger's concept of meaning as ready-to-hand.

reference to the question of human nature, ontological freedom, from a negative point of view, is a sustained refusal to accept the Objectivist assumption that human nature consists in one specific thing, viz., to be an animal rationale. More positively, ontological freedom as determinative of human Dasein and also as the method of Dasein's way of being itself is an attitude that is radically empirical in terms of its attachment to the concrete meanings of things, the particular contextual interpretation of meaning. Thus, ontological freedom amounts, negatively, to freedom from trying to think about the meaning of things from a universal Objectivist standpoint. Positively, ontological freedom amounts to freedom towards more concrete particular engagements with things. Thus, ontological freedom eschews the Objectivist bias in philosophical reflection by anchoring the question of human nature in everyday reality. Heidegger calls this starting point Being-in-the-world. And he characterizes the concept of meaning which is operative in this everyday world as ready-to-hand (SZ/69).

Meaning as Ready-to-hand

In our discussion of the Objectivist conception of meaning as present-at-hand we discussed how things were conceptualized, hence, articulated from this standpoint. In this section I

want to show how things look when they are articulated from the standpoint of ontological freedom.

Heidegger claims that as human beings we do not live in a present-at-hand world. From the standpoint of everyday Being-in-the-world things are not experienced as present-at-hand entities but as concrete ready-to-hand objects. By ready-to-hand Heidegger means that things are already meaningful for us, though in different ways and to different degrees as instruments. As human beings we already live in a meaningful world. Heidegger can affirm the meaningfulness of everyday Being-in-the-world because not only is it a fact that we do live in such a world, but also, from the standpoint of ontological freedom, meaning as present-at-hand has already been put aside. As such, it is important that we bear in mind that it is the concept of "ontological freedom" which makes possible Heidegger's negative critique of Objectivism as well as his positive articulations of non-Objectivist concepts such as Being-in-the-world and meaning as ready-to-hand.

Being-in-the-world means that we already have as our basic state an involvement with things and with other people. The claim that things, instead of being experienced as present-at-hand, are instead experienced as ready-to-hand means that "to the extent that any entity shows itself to concern - that is, to the extent that it is discovered in its Being - it is already something ready-to-hand environmentally; it is not 'proximally' a 'world-stuff' that is merely

present-at-hand" (SZ/85). Further, by denying that meaning as present-at-hand has ontological primacy over meaning as ready-to-hand; by denying that we ought to describe reality in an ultimate ontological vocabulary, viz., meaning as present-at-hand, Heidegger, in a manner of speaking, frees reflection from the Objectivist demand: that reality be described in only one way. Subsequently, by this denial, Heidegger also frees reflection for the possibility of making alternative ready-to-hand descriptions of the world, but without giving up the notion of objectivity, and moreover, without forsaking the ground which enables all of this: the freedom of Dasein, ontological freedom. Heidegger can still retain the concept of objectivity with a small o since by disavowing both Subjectivism and Objectivism, he is thus able to give concrete ontological interpretations of experience.

From the point of view of ontological freedom, Heidegger is able to give an answer to the meaning of things by interpreting what is encountered in the world: "when an entity within the world has been proximally freed for its Being," its "involvement." And, Heidegger continues, "the fact that it has such an involvement is ontologically definitive for the Being of such an entity, and is not an ontical assertion about it" (SZ/84). By involvement Heidegger means a "context of relations" where a thing becomes the thing that it is, where it "fits," where we can make sense of it: "letting an entity be involved, if we understand this ontologically, consists in

previously freeing it for [auf] its readiness-to-hand within the environment" (SZ/85).

Another positive result of this rethinking of meaning from the standpoint of ontological freedom is to make the concept of meaning itself more holistic. That is, meaning now has to be interpreted rather than "immediately" grasped or represented by the mind. By freeing the question of meaning from its Objectivist underpinnings, and thus making it hermeneutic, Heidegger wants to emphasise that the meaning of a thing can only be achieved through the articulations of concrete characteristics carried out by human beings, a process Heidegger calls "letting be," or "letting something be involved." This amounts to the following:

ontically, "letting something be involved" signifies that within our factual concern we let something ready-to-hand be so-and-so as it is already and in order that this ontical sense of letting be is, in principle, ontological (SZ/85, last emphasis added).

Only human beings can "let something be involved." This indicates the direct involvement human beings have in the articulation of the meaning of things. By freeing the meaning of things from the Objectivism of present-at-hand concepts, we reclaim them for their own concrete "involved" reality. However, although the rearticulation of meaning as ready-to-hand is an important moment in Heidegger's thought, the crucial point is this: meaning as ready-to-hand, involvement, emerges only out of the attempt by our Dasein to be itself: meaning as ready-to-hand is a only a consequence of Dasein's

attempt to live out its freedom within the world. Ontological freedom, by pushing Dasein towards its own possibilities, also pushes Dasein to free the things that are; because, this is the only way Dasein can be itself.

Ontological Freedom, Animal Rationale, Dasein

Heidegger thinks that the traditional definition of human nature as animal rationale is inadequate because it is based on a flawed conception of meaning, viz., meaning as present-at-hand. The concept of meaning as present-at-hand is a meaning which is restricted to the present, immediate, and non-relational. In contrast, we saw that ontological freedom enables Dasein to recast the way of thinking the meaning of things, viz., as ready-to-hand. Meaning as ready-to-hand emerges from the process of "letting be" which frees a thing for its own involvement with other things in the world, and not solely from the context of meaning as present-at-hand. This is what Heidegger called the "ontological" meaning of a thing.

Heidegger approaches the question of human nature from the same point of view. Rather than approach the question of human nature with an antecedent concept of meaning as present-at-hand, Heidegger suggests, from the standpoint of ontological freedom, that we set aside this Objectivist problematic and, instead, look and see, examine in concrete

detail how human nature involves itself within the world. Not that human nature becomes a ready-to-hand thing, but that human nature can only emerge through a sustained effort to let it be what it is, and not restrict its articulation to present-at-hand categories. So in thinking out the nature of human beings, Heidegger would say that "those characteristics which can be exhibited in this entity are not 'properties' present-at-hand of some entity which 'looks' so and so and is itself present-at-hand..." (SZ/42). The entity we ourselves are can be best characterized by the possibilities we can choose from. Thus, Heidegger wants to emphasize that from the standpoint of ontological freedom, human nature cannot but be that of "existence." As he put it: "the essence of Dasein lies in its existence" (SZ/42). What Heidegger means by existence is nothing more than "possible ways" for human beings "to be" (SZ/42).

By formally characterizing human nature as existence, i.e., possible ways to be, Heidegger does not mean to say Dasein has no choice. Rather, he stresses that by having its ground in ontological freedom, human Dasein as existence cannot depart from this ground without compromising itself, that is, without being something other than human Dasein.

If ontological freedom tosses human Dasein into existence, that is, towards itself and for the sake of itself, and nothing else; and if the concept of human nature as animal rationale restricts or compromises the ideal of free existence

in the world, then the former would have to go by the board. Ontological freedom frees human nature for its own existence in the world. Since ontological freedom is the ground of human nature, Heidegger uses the term Dasein to refer to this reality. As we pointed out in the Introduction, Dasein and freedom, together with transcendence are synonymous terms. But insofar as Dasein enables human nature to exist in the world for its own Being, then existence becomes individual existence. That is, human existence is not determined a priori by predefined ways of Being-in-the-world, like animal rationale: having true representations of things. Human nature is not made possible by an objective scheme of thought which lays out beforehand its contexts of possible relations. Human nature is existence through and through; and as such, only finds its articulation in particular contexts. However, this does not mean that ontological freedom exhausts itself in the here and now. Ontological freedom as both the ground and ideal of Dasein is the counter-factual force which finds its realization in the present, but which always moves towards the future. In other words, human Dasein which is determined by ontological freedom is not fully definable in the present. And since Dasein is individual Dasein, then too, the latter cannot be fully countenanced in the present.

Even though Heidegger claims that existence is characterized by what he calls "mineness" - "that Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being, is in each case

mine," (SZ/42) - he does not mean that freedom which, as the ground of individual Dasein is something which human beings possess. He means simply that existence along with freedom are given individually, particularly. The only predefined way of existing is to enact freedom in the world. And because Dasein is determined by freedom in an individual manner, this means that existence can be either authentic or inauthentic:

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...As modes of Being, authenticity and inauthenticity...are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein is characterized by mineness" (SZ/42f).

That is to say, authenticity and inauthenticity depend on individual existence which in turn is determined by ontological freedom. Also, to say that Dasein has as its basic state Being-in-the-world, means that ontological freedom as the determining ground of existence has to be worked out in the world. This is why Heidegger can say that to be is an issue for Dasein. Freedom as the determining ground of existence is not, as in Kant, restricted to an "intelligible order" or a "noumenal world" of the beyond. Instead, for Heidegger, freedom as the determining ground of individual existence finds its resolution in the world. Freedom, which is another way of saying Dasein, as an ideal of individual existence, only finds its fulfilment in the real world. This is why existence is such an issue for individual Dasein. This

also makes clearer why the meaning of things cannot but emerge as ready-to-hand concrete entities. Insofar as Dasein, as the ontic condition of any meaning whatsoever, has to exist in the world, and insofar as this means that Dasein has to exist concretely amongst things **without** compromising the ideal of ontological freedom, then Dasein cannot but "free" the things that are in order to be itself. Dasein in order to be itself cannot but liberate the things that are from the interpretation of reality as meaning as present-at-hand by freeing the things that are for their own concrete involvement; because, this is the only way Dasein is able to be authentic.

Chapter 2

Overcoming the Ubermensch: Heidegger's Critique of Subjectivism

Heidegger's critique of Objectivism provoked the criticism of his opponents. One of them, Stanley Rosen, claimed that instead of overcoming metaphysics and destroying the history of ontology, Heidegger subjectivised ontology in the name of a deluded concept of authenticity.¹ These critics viewed Heidegger's fundamental ontology as Subjectivism, hence, nihilism, because it denied an objective basis for thought and action.

Heidegger denied that he subjectivised ontology. Although in *Being and Time* he did claim that Dasein, "this 'subjectivity' perhaps uncovers the 'Reality' of the world at its most 'Real'" (SZ/141), he also stated unequivocally that this concept of subjectivity "has nothing to do with 'subjective arbitrariness' or subjective 'ways of taking' an

¹ Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969) pp. 41ff; Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986) pp. 151ff; Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 131-160.

entity which 'in itself' is otherwise" (SZ/141). It didn't follow that by criticising Objectivism Heidegger was embracing some form of Subjectivism. Indeed, Subjectivity is not equivalent to Subjectivism. Heidegger sees both these extremes of thought, Objectivism and Subjectivism, as being closely intertwined with each other. So, having put Objectivism behind him, Heidegger tackles Nietzsche whom he sees as the most honest and most consistent of radical subjectivists, in order to show that his rejection of Objectivism does not entail a slide into Subjectivism.² Heidegger wants to show that his brand of "thought," as he likes to call what he is doing, avoids both these extremes. Thus the confrontation with Nietzsche.

Nietzsche, Metaphysics, Nihilism

Heidegger claims that his discussion of Nietzsche's thought is an attempt to "clarify a stage in Western metaphysics that is probably its final stage" (QCT/53).³ For Heidegger metaphysical thinkers usually have views about Being. And,

² Cf. Husserl's polemic against naturalism and historicism in "Philosophy as Rigorous Science," in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. Quentin Lauer, (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 79ff; for arguments similar to Husserl's and Heidegger's, see Hilary Putnam's essay "Why Reason can't be Naturalized," in *Realism and Reason: Philosophical Papers Vol. 3*.

³ Martin Heidegger, "Nietzsche's Word 'God is Dead'," in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), hereafter QCT.

since he classifies Nietzsche as a metaphysical thinker, albeit the last "metaphysician of the West," Heidegger claims that "to think means this for Nietzsche: to represent what is as is. Any metaphysical thinking is onto-logy or is nothing at all" (QCT/55). To represent "what is as is" is the business of metaphysics. Heidegger claims that Nietzsche's doctrine of "the will to power, as the fundamental characteristic of everything real" (QCT/75) is indeed a metaphysical position. And his examination of Nietzsche's thought in light of this position is his way, as he put it, of "trying to take Nietzsche seriously as a thinker" (QCT/55). But to reduce Nietzsche's thought to what he has to say about "what is as is" is to simplify his thinking enormously. Nietzsche the ironist, the wicked, irreverent, playful writer gets reduced to a serious "metaphysical thinker" with a theory of Being.⁴

Nietzsche who looked squint-eyed at Being as a kind of bad vapour - the sort of thing only "after-worldsmen" and philosophers upon whom the spirit of gravity weighed heavily dabbled with, - and who once said "I should believe only in a God who understood how to dance," whilst his devil, in contrast, was "serious, thorough, profound, solemn...the spirit of gravity - through him all things are ruined,"⁵

⁴ Compare, for example, Alexander Nehamas' treatment of Nietzsche in his book, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, (Hammondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 68.

would, I believe, look askance at Heidegger's approach to his work. It is as if his worst enemy had come back to haunt him. However, be that as it may, it is not something that is going to stop Heidegger from reading him as a metaphysician, a "thinker"; because in doing so, Heidegger is able to draw Nietzsche into his fight to articulate a position which knows no shade of either Objectivism or Subjectivism. A position which Heidegger hopes "can light up that space within which Being itself might be able to take man, with respect to his essence, into a primal relationship" (QCT/55).

Heidegger calls his approach to Nietzsche's thought "preparatory thinking." Preparatory thinking for Heidegger "maintains itself necessarily within the realm of historical reflection. For this thinking, history is not the succession of eras, but a unique nearness of the same" (QCT/57). He maintains that preparatory thinking has to be attempted because "in the history of Western thinking, indeed continually from the beginning, what is, is thought in reference to Being" (QCT/56), but the irony of the thing is that in spite of always thinking in reference to Being, "the truth of Being remains unthought" (QCT/56). Moreover, "not only is that truth denied to thinking as a possible experience, but Western thinking itself, and indeed in the form of metaphysics expressly, but nevertheless unknowingly, veils the happening of that denial" (QCT/56). This is why Heidegger is taking Nietzsche seriously as a thinker: in so far as Nietzsche

claims to be the countermovement to all forms of Platonic decadence, Heidegger wants to see whether or not Nietzsche's claim holds true. Heidegger wants to gauge to what extent Nietzsche is in fact a liberating counterstroke to the Plato-Aristotle-Thomas-Descartes-Kant axis, or if in fact, Nietzsche unknowingly, in the manner of metaphysics, fails to think, in essence, the truth of Being.

Heidegger happens to think that Nietzsche failed to come to terms with metaphysics proper, and ends up perpetuating, in its most refined form, what Heidegger calls "the unique nearness of the same." This for Heidegger amounts to nihilism. It is nihilism because metaphysics does not think the truth of Being. The truth of Being for Heidegger is what enables any metaphysical positing of reality. That is, the truth of Being is the ground on which any theory of Being stands. This enabling ground, as the bulk of this essay attempts to show, beginning with Heidegger's attempt in *Being and Time* to raise again the question of the meaning of Being, is none other than Dasein as disclosive freedom, Dasein as the place where any dissimulation of Being whatever comes to presence. Heidegger puts this in the following way:

"the Dasein in man" is the essence that belongs to Being itself. Man belongs to that essence in such a way that he has to be such Being. Dasein applies to man. As his essence, it is in each case his, what he belongs to, but not what he himself makes and controls as his artifact. Man becomes essential by expressly entering into his essence. He stands in the unconcealment of beings as the concealed locale within which Being essentially occurs in its truth. He stands in this locale, which means that he is

ecstative in it, because he is as he is always and everywhere on the basis of the relationship of Being itself."⁶

It is from this insight into "the Dasein in man" that Heidegger approaches Nietzsche's work: does he or does he not thematise this disclosive identity to which we as human beings belong and which we neither control nor make? That is, does Nietzsche come to terms with the crucial idea of ontological freedom as the essence of Dasein? As such, the attempt made by Heidegger to "elucidate Nietzsche's word 'God is Dead' has the same significance as does the task of setting forth what Nietzsche understands by 'nihilism' and thus showing how Nietzsche stands in relation to nihilism" (QCT/62). Or, in other words, how Nietzsche stands in relation to metaphysics.

For Heidegger, "the realm for the essence and the coming-to-pass of nihilism is metaphysics itself" (QCT/65). The concept of nihilism that is normally associated with this word, viz., the degeneration and breakdown of values and traditional relationships which held life together are for Heidegger mere effects of nihilism, hence, not nihilism proper. Nihilism is not to be confused with nor reduced to its historical effects: it is "not simply one historical current that along with others, with Christendom, with humanism, and with the Enlightenment - also comes to the fore within history" (QCT/62). According to Heidegger, Nietzsche sees

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche, Vol IV: Nihilism*, trans. Frank A. Capuzzi, ed. David F. Krell, (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 218, hereafter (Nihilism).

"nihilism as a historical movement" (QCT/62). "Nihilism, thought in its essence, is, rather, the fundamental movement of the history of the West" (QCT/62). And as I have pointed out earlier, history for Heidegger is nothing but the "unique nearness of the same"; that is, the motor of history is driven by the different substitutions and instalments of what the great thinkers took, though mistakenly, for the truth of Being itself. Thus, nihilism, disguised as the discourse on Being, is the fundamental movement of history itself; nihilism, in its negative, that is to say popular, mode becomes

history's open space wherein it becomes a destining that the suprasensory world, the ideas, God, the moral law, the authority of reason, progress, the happiness of the greatest number, culture, civilization, suffer the loss of their constructive force and become void (QCT/65).⁷

These names by which Being has been thought throughout the ages are but simulacra of Being, not the ontos on as Plato would have said. This is what Nietzsche, messenger of the death of God, recognized steadfastly. And this is what he counteracted with what he called "an active nihilism," a revaluation of all values hitherto accepted:

⁷ This is in fact the basic premise of MacIntyre's book *After Virtue*. As he put it: "the hypothesis which I want to advance is that in the actual world which we inhabit the language of morality is in...grave disorder...What we possess...are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived. We possess indeed simulacra of morality, we continue to use many of the key expressions. But we have - very largely, if not entirely - lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical of morality." [Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 8].

the fact that earlier aims now disappear and former values are devalued is no longer experienced as sheer annihilation and deplored as wasteful and wrong, but is rather greeted as a liberation, touted as an irrevocable gain, and perceived as fulfilment (Nihilism/5).

This phenomenon is perceived as fulfilment because for Nietzsche these transcendental values are nothing more than human artifacts. For Nietzsche, "it was suffering and impotence - that created all afterworlds."⁸ Further, since Nietzsche, according to Heidegger, recognized that "nihilism is not in any way simply a phenomenon of decay; rather, nihilism is, as the fundamental event of Western history, simultaneously and above all, the intrinsic law of that history," and that "Nietzsche thinks nihilism as the 'inner logic' of Western history" (QCT/67), he therefore saw his thought as the counterstroke to this otherworldly dialectic which had now dried up. Here is Heidegger's comment:

nihilism is the increasingly dominant truth that all prior aims of being have become superfluous. But with this transformation of the erstwhile relation to ruling values, nihilism has also perfected itself for the free and genuine task of a new valuation. Such nihilism, which is in itself perfected and is decisive for the future, may be characterized as "classical nihilism." Nietzsche describes his own "metaphysics" with this name and conceives it to be the counterstroke to all preceding metaphysics. The name nihilism thus loses the purely nihilistic sense in which it means a destruction and annihilation of previous values,..."Nihilism," now thought in its classic sense, calls for freedom from values as freedom for a revaluation of all (such) values (Nihilism/5).

⁸ Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p. 5.

So when Nietzsche called for an active nihilism, in addition to seeing his form of nihilism as the countermovement to the history of Western metaphysics, he placed himself squarely, according to Heidegger, in the tradition of metaphysical thinking; that is, Nietzsche saw himself as doing what every thinker from Plato down to Hegel did: they made up Being in order to get a handle on reality:

What formerly happened with the stoics still happens today, too, as soon as any philosophy begins to believe in itself. It always creates the world in its own image, it cannot do otherwise. Philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the "creation of the world," to the *causa prima*.⁹

What is different about Nietzsche is that he was under no illusions about what he was doing. When he stated his doctrine of the will to power, he was summing up what philosophers did all along. Nietzsche believed that the world, reality, was nothing unless relativised to an evaluative schema; that is, he didn't buy into what he called the "abysmal ignorance" of philosophers who claim to read "the canon" of what is really their own law "in nature itself."¹⁰ Nietzsche didn't want to be like other philosophers whom he considered "advocates" and "wily spokesmen for their prejudices which they baptize 'truths' - and very far from having the courage of the

⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Viking Books, 1966), Section 9.

¹⁰ *Beyond Good and Evil*, Sec. 9.

conscience that admits this."¹¹ Moreover, Nietzsche, not unlike Putnam, saw clearly the embarrassment philosophers face when they put forward these various theories of Being which were not self-validating.¹² Nietzsche saw that what underscored these views was sheer will, force, power: this is how these views were made true. His reaction to this was to say that philosophers just like to remake the world in their own image, that is, to be their own *causa prima*. For Nietzsche, it is just dishonest talk by philosophers who do not have the courage to assume their own convictions; they refuse to admit that it is they themselves who made up these transcendental otherworldly ideals.

But, according to Heidegger, Nietzsche's attempt to move away from a canonical other-worldly conception of truth to a perspectival, more relativistic view, does not leave metaphysics behind. Nietzsche's militant, unrelenting perspectivism, which refuses the self-deceptive rhetoric of metaphysics, is, for Heidegger, but a subtler moment in the consummation, the fulfilment of metaphysics itself. For Heidegger, Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power is forgetful of the truth of Being: the *Dasein*, the freedom in human beings, - the *Dasein* in man that makes possible the

¹¹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, Sec. 5.

¹² Cf. Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Chapter 5.

articulation of any view of Being, contingent or non-contingent.

By interpreting Nietzsche's teaching of the will to power as a metaphysical thesis about Being, Heidegger is able to link Nietzsche's project with that of Descartes', where "the ousia [beingness] of the *subiectum* changes into the subjectness of self-assertive self-consciousness, which now manifests itself as the will to will" (QCT/80). The only difference between Descartes and Nietzsche is that Nietzsche was under no illusions about himself and his full embrace of **everything** as artifact, as created by the human will: even "necessity is not a fact but an interpretation"! Whereas Descartes, as Heidegger notes,

also asks, as does Aristotle, concerning the *hypokeimenon*. In as much as Descartes seeks his *subiectum* along the path previously marked out by metaphysics, he, thinking truth as certainty, finds the *ego cogito* to be that which presences as fixed and constant. In this way, the *ergo sum* is transformed into *subiectum*, i.e., the subject becomes self-conscious. The subjectness of the subject is determined out of the sureness, the certainty of that consciousness (QCT/83),

Nietzsche finds that there is a deeper truth which underlies that of certainty, viz., the will itself. It is the unconditional will and nothing else which posits certainty as the criterion of the real. This is why Heidegger claims that Nietzsche turns against Descartes. Nietzsche turns against Descartes because "the latter still does not posit man as *subiectum* in a way that is complete and decisive enough" (Nihilism/28). That is, "the representation of the *subiectum*,"

according to Heidegger, "is still not subjective enough for Nietzsche" (Nihilism/28). This is how, according to Heidegger, "modern metaphysics first comes to the full and final determination of its essence in the doctrine of the *Übermensch*, the doctrine of man's absolute preeminence among beings" (Nihilism/28). And it is in that doctrine we find, Heidegger writes, the consummation of modernity: "the name *Übermensch* designates the essence of humanity, which, as modern humanity, is beginning to enter into the consummation belonging to the essence of its age" (QCT/96).

Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power as the essence of reality, and the advent of the *Übermensch* as the "essence of humanity" in the modern age, is, for him, a singular attempt to see reality without lies, illusions, shadows. This attempt by Nietzsche is for him the time of the great noon. This is the time as Heidegger says,

of the brightest brightness, namely, of the consciousness that unconditionally and in every respect has become conscious of itself as the knowing which consists in deliberately willing the will to power as the Being of whatever is; and, as such willing, in rebelliously withstanding and subjugating to itself every necessary phase of the objectifying of the world, thus making secure the stably constant reserve of what is for a willing of the greatest possible uniformity and equality (QCT/102).

But for Heidegger, the time of "the brightest brightness" is also the time of the most impenetrable darkness, this is the irony of the thing:¹³

all that is, is transformed into object. That which is, as the objective, is swallowed up into the immanence of subjectivity. The horizon no longer emits light of itself. It is now nothing but the point-of-view posited in the value-positing of the will (QCT/107).

In other words, subjectivity and objectivity as equipollent terms collapse into meaninglessness. As Heidegger has shown, subjectivity and objectivity are but two sides of the metaphysics of presence, the metaphysics which sees Being as **one** thing. For example:

nowhere are we confronted by a thinking what thinks the truth of Being itself and therewith thinks truth itself as Being. This is not thought even where pre-Platonic thinking, as the beginning of Western thinking prepares for the unfolding of metaphysics in Plato and Aristotle.... The history of Being begins, and indeed necessarily **with the forgetting of Being**. It is not due then to metaphysics as the metaphysics of the will to power that Being itself in its truth remains unthought (QCT/109).

In Nietzsche's case, it is only a matter of emphasis: radical subjectivism; but the consequences, according to Heidegger, are the same: the forgetfulness of the truth of Being - the forgetfulness of freedom as the **essence** of human beings. This is what metaphysics overlooks: the needed cooperation by human beings for the articulation of **any** theory of Being. This is

¹³ Cf. Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Logic of Late Capital," *New Left Review*, 146 (July-August, 1984): 53-92; see also Charles Taylor, *Hegel*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 546ff.

why Heidegger says "metaphysics as such is nihilism proper" (Nihilism/211). This is why "thought in terms of the essence of nihilism, Nietzsche's overcoming (of metaphysics) is merely the fulfilment of nihilism" (Nihilism/219). This is why, Heidegger continues, "in his metaphysics of the will to power...the essence of nihilism is enunciated for us more clearly than in any other fundamental position of metaphysics" (Nihilism/219). Moreover, when the metaphysics of the will to power adheres to evaluative thought and claims to posit standards whereby the world is rendered intelligible, this tendency itself is for Heidegger a nihilistic stance.

Metaphysics passes over the truth of Being, namely, "the Dasein in man," because it continually seeks after the essence of that which is, that which makes things what they are. This has dissimulated itself under the names of eidos, God, subjectivity, absolute spirit, the forces of economic production. Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power shares the assumption common to these views. These views share the assumption that reality must consist of one master concept, one all embracing criterion from which everything else unfolds. Thus, these are all reductionistic and destructive views. They are destructive because the truth of things, how they are in their self-contained contingent being, gets passed over when they are thought from within these various theories of Being. Thus, in order to leave the nihilism of metaphysics behind, Heidegger suggests that "what is given to thinking is

not some deeply hidden underlying meaning, but rather something lying near, that which is nearest, which, because it is only this, we therefore constantly passed over" (QCT/111, emphasis added).¹⁴ Getting away from the type of thinking which floats above the self-identities of things by subjecting them to representation from within some theory of Being is the freedom Heidegger is aiming at. To Heidegger, the tendency toward metaphysical thought is disastrous. Disastrous not only in that we become blind to our own identity, but that we also end up with a disabling and restrictive view of things.

¹⁴ Compare Wittgenstein's remarks in *Philosophical Investigations*: "we feel as if we had to penetrate phenomena..." (90) because "the essence is hidden from us" (92). And, he continues, we tend to "see in the essence, not something that already lies open to view and that becomes surveyable by a rearrangement, but something that lies beneath the surface, something that lies within, which we see when we look into the thing and which analysis digs out" (92).

Chapter 3

Ontological Freedom, Authenticity and Individual Existence

We argued that both Objectivism and Subjectivism presented only a restrictive view on things. We can complete this statement by saying that the meaning of Being (*Sinn von Sein*) must then present a broader, if not total meaning of things. The way to this new meaning is already contained in Heidegger's first thesis on Dasein in *Being and Time* where he states that the essence of Dasein lies in its existence. By existence Heidegger means possible ways to be. Existence is not a present-at-hand property. Existence has to do with "modes of Being; specifically, the Being of those beings who stand in the open for the openness of Being" (EDS/271). By this Heidegger means that "man occurs essentially in such a way that he is the 'there' [Das "Da"], that is, the lighting of Being" and he gains his identity only through "an ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being."¹ This ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being is made possible by "ontological freedom"; that is, freedom determines both the essence of human Dasein as well as the meaning of reality. Human beings belong to

¹ "Letter on Humanism," in *Basic Writings*, p. 205.

freedom. Being belongs to freedom. Freedom is the ontological difference between human beings and the world. Since Dasein, in order to be what it is, must inhere in freedom, a freedom which it neither makes nor controls but which is constitutive of its nature, Heidegger is able to claim that "Dasein is distinguished by the fact that in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it" (SZ/12). In short, freedom as the "Da" of Dasein is not an easy situation to endure: "Dasein is its disclosedness, means at the same time that the Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being is to be its 'there'" (SZ/133). Moreover, "that Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine" (SZ/42). What Heidegger means by mineness is that even though Dasein as freedom is a shared identity in that it is given to every human being, this freedom is in each case given individually. As such, this is the reason why "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" (SZ/42). One can either be oneself, viz., endure the Dasein in one's nature, or not be oneself, which amounts to denying the freedom which lies at the heart of human existence; that is, to refuse to use it for an authentic choice. But as Heidegger notes, the idea that human Dasein can "win itself" or "lose itself" presupposes that human Dasein can be either authentic or inauthentic - either be the freedom that one is or deny it:

"as modes of Being, authenticity and inauthenticity...are both grounded in the fact that any Dasein whatsoever is characterized by mineness" (SZ/43). That is, authenticity or inauthenticity is predicated upon responsibility for one's personal identity. An identity which, as we have already pointed out, is shared by every human being.

Understanding and Freedom

There is no question that the concept of understanding, and the role it plays in human Dasein is one of the most important concepts in Heidegger's thought. Heidegger conceives of understanding as a "basic mode of Dasein's Being" (SZ/143). It is what he calls in *Being and Time* an existential. Understanding as an existential, being a basic mode of human existence, pertains also to freedom. That is, it is understanding which opens up the self-disclosive possibilities of Dasein as it finds itself within the world:

in understanding as an existential, that which we have competence over is not a "what," but Being as existing. The kind of Being which Dasein has, as potentially for Being, lies existentially in understanding. Dasein is not something present-at-hand which possesses its competence for something by way of an extra; it is primarily Being-possible. Dasein is in every case what it can be, and in the way it is its possibility (SZ/143).

To be Dasein within-the-world pertains to existing within the world wherein Dasein finds itself. That is, the possible ways of Dasein's being in the world are, as possible ways of

being, what Dasein inherits from its society or culture. The varying degrees of Dasein's self-disclosure are made possible by the inherited "understandings" of the factual contexts wherein human Dasein finds itself: "Dasein is Being-possible which has been delivered over to itself - thrown possibility through and through. Dasein is the possibility of Being-free for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. Its Being-possible is transparent to itself in different possible ways and degrees" (SZ/144).

Dasein understands itself in degrees. However, since in its nature, at root, we find freedom, the radical possibility of understanding itself authentically, viz., as "Being-free for its ownmost potentiality-for-Being" is always already latent. This is why Heidegger claims that understanding as "Being-possible" (Möglichsein) is "the most primordial way and ultimate positive way in which Dasein is characterized ontologically" (SZ/143). This means that Dasein is neither limited nor restricted to the possible ways of being available to it within any factual context. Heidegger states this point as follows: "because the kind of Being which is constituted by the existential of projection, Dasein is constantly 'more' than it factually is" (SZ/145). Freedom as the ground possibility of Dasein, hence the ultimate self-disclosive possibility of human existence, cannot be wholly countenanced by any set of possibilities wherein Dasein finds itself.

**Being-with-Others: How Dasein Loses its
Freedom and becomes Inauthentic**

In Chapter 4 of *Being and Time* Heidegger attempts to elucidate the self-understanding Dasein operates with within everyday Being-in-the-world - the world that Dasein is thrown into. Heidegger wants to show "who Dasein is in its everydayness" (SZ/114). To this end, Heidegger discusses the relationship individual Dasein has with other people. Since, in addition to having as its basic state Being-in-the-world, "the world of Dasein is [also] a with-world (Mitwelt)" (SZ/118).

Who is everyday Dasein? Heidegger's answer is that "the self of everyday Dasein is the they-self, which we distinguish from the authentic self - that is, from the self which has taken hold in its own way" (SZ/129). Dasein as being possible has the option of either being itself as freedom or not being itself; that is, being someone else other than itself. Dasein may either give up its freedom or fight for its identity as an authentic and unique being. But since it is easier to follow others, there is the danger, as Heidegger calls it, of "falling" into "das Man," of falling into the uniformity of being just like everybody else, of understanding oneself in categories that are external to freedom.

Heidegger characterizes the understanding that everyday inauthentic Dasein has of itself and the world as one of "distantiality [Abständigkeit]" (SZ/126). What he means by

this is that our human Dasein in its "everyday Being-with-one-another, stands in subjection to others" (SZ/126). The distanciality from our authentic Dasein in its subjection to others means that "the 'they' itself prescribes that way of interpreting the world and Being-in-the-world which lies closest" (SZ/129). As such, authenticity lies further; that is, authenticity is more difficult. That way of "Being-in-the-world which lies closest" is that of primarily Being-possible: Being-free for authentic Dasein, authentic freedom - Being-free for the radical self-disclosure of freedom which is the ground phenomenon of human existence, and the way to authenticity.

The Recovery of Freedom through the Key mood of Anxiety

How can Dasein reclaim itself as freedom and cease living in subjection to others? How can Dasein recover its own authentic potentiality to be itself? Heidegger's discussion of what he calls "state-of-mind [Befindlichkeit]" gives us the answers to these questions.

What does Heidegger mean by "state-of-mind"? "... 'state-of-mind' is ontically the most familiar and everyday sort of thing: our moods, our Being-attuned" (SZ/134). Moods pertain to the way we are feeling at the moment: happy, sad, dazed, disjointed, etc.. According to Heidegger, moods do three

things. One: moods lay bare what Heidegger calls the "thrownness of our human Dasein into its 'there'" (SZ/135). By thrownness is meant "the facticity of [Dasein] being delivered over" (SZ/135) to its there; that is, being delivered over to its nature as freedom for possibilities. Further, moods "disclose Dasein in its thrownness, and - proximally and for the most part - in the manner of an evasive turning away" (SZ/136). An "evasive turning away" from what? Again, the answer is away from its nature as freedom. This is why Heidegger claims that Dasein's Being-in-the-world is an issue. When moods catch our everyday Dasein off-guard and deliver it over to itself as Dasein, the understanding and interpretation Dasein may have of itself and of the world get shattered.

Two: moods also reveal "Being-in-the world as a whole and makes it possible first of all to direct one-self towards something" (SZ/137). This second capacity of moods is tied to the first; that is, because moods break our everyday habitual ties to the world, what is revealed "as a whole" is pure Dasein, viz., freedom.

Three: moods allow things to matter to us. Moods condition our interest or lack of interest in things. As such, "existentially, a state-of-mind implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us" (SZ/138).

These three characteristics of moods coalesce in Heidegger's analysis of anxiety which he takes to be the key mood whereby our human Dasein as freedom is totally disclosed.

Anxiety as a key mood by which Dasein is disclosed performs what Heidegger calls a "methodological function" (SZ/190). By this he means that anxiety reveals or discloses Dasein as possibility, and a possibility which has to be in the world: "possibility, as an existential, does not signify a free-floating potentiality-for-Being in the sense of the 'liberty of indifference' [libertas indifferentiae]" (SZ/145). Dasein as possibility, which is synonymous with freedom, is revealed as Being-in-the-world. One cannot take it or leave it; nor do like Kant and place one's freedom in a "noumenal" sphere. Freedom as Dasein's possibility for Being-in-the-world means that Dasein can either ignore this aspect of its identity, thereby becoming inauthentic, or it can choose to affirm this freedom thereby becoming authentic.

Human Dasein as Being-in-the-world, when it understands itself in terms of the interpretations of other people, is inauthentic. Heidegger calls this possibility of our human Dasein "fallenness." Fallenness does not have a religious sense attached to it. Fallenness is strictly an ontological possibility of human Dasein, and "does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world." Instead, fallenness is that aspect of Dasein "which is completely fascinated by the 'world' and the Dasein-with of Others in the 'they'" (SZ/178).

In addition, this "falling Being-in-the-world is...alienating" which, as a consequence, "closes off from Dasein its authenticity and possibility" (SZ/178). Therefore, what anxiety as a key disclosive mood of Dasein does is to take "away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the 'world' and the way things have been interpreted" (SZ/187). In short, "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," (SZ/187, emphasis added) which means that "anxiety discloses Dasein as Being-possible, and...as the only kind of thing which it can be of its own accord as something individualized in individualization [vereinzelt in der Vereinzelung]" (SZ/188, last emphasis added). This authentic potentiality for Being-in-the-world is nothing less than Dasein's Being-free for its identity as freedom, possibility.

Even though anxiety as a key disclosive mood of Dasein fractures the hold which the "they" interpretations and understandings may have had on us by bringing Dasein "face to face with its Being-free-for...the authenticity of its Being, and for this authenticity as a possibility which it always is," (SZ/189) this neither leaves us with the empty Kantian freedom of a "rational being" which floats above the world of everyday life, nor does it present us with the option of becoming mini-Ubermenschen. Rather, the freedom of Dasein is

inextricably bound to Being-in-the-world: "as Dasein falls, anxiety brings it back from its absorption in the 'world'. Everyday familiarity collapses. Dasein has been individualized, but individualized as Being-in-the-world" (SZ/189, emphasis added).

To summarize: The polarization of Dasein between the twin valences of authenticity and inauthenticity is disclosed through the powerful mood of anxiety. Anxiety also discloses Dasein as thrown possibility. That is, Dasein is factually "more" than it factually is. Dasein as freedom is recalcitrant to the false interpretations and understandings other people try to impose on us, directly or indirectly. This recalcitrance is manifested by the ease with which anxiety shatters these interpretations and, with the same destructive stroke, frees us from those "idols we all have and to which we are wont to go cringing" (EDS/257). Thus, the tension lurking at the centre of Dasein shows itself in the rift between freedom and the world. Ontological freedom as the essence of Dasein is a freedom which has to be in the world. This demand gives rise to what might appear to be a paradox:² granted that Dasein can be authentic, but to exist we have to live in a world governed by public criteria of sense which are socially inherited from the "they" hence, possibly inauthentic; how is

² Cf. Ernest Joós, *Lukac's Last Autocriticism: The Ontology* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1983), p. 84; Charles Guignon, *Heidegger and the Problem of Knowledge* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1984), p. 207.

it possible to be authentic without becoming a subjective nihilist? In short, how is "ontological freedom" as the essence of Dasein to be articulated in the world? This problem is taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

The Self as Personal Identity

The question still remains: how is authentic existence possible? Heidegger's answer is that "Dasein is authentically itself in the primordial individualization of the reticent resoluteness which exacts anxiety of itself" (SZ/322f). "The self which the reticence of resolute existence unveils is the primordial phenomenal basis for the question as to the being of the 'I'" (SZ/323). First question: who is the self that is revealed by resolute existence? Second question: in what way does this disclosed self become the basis for what Heidegger calls "the Being of the I," viz., personal identity? The answer to the first question is that of the self as freedom. Dasein's freedom, its Being-free for its authentic possibilities is what is revealed by anxiety. But in what way does this freedom become personal? That is, how does one build an identity of one's own out of freedom? Heidegger's answer is this: "Dasein becomes 'essentially' Dasein in that authentic existence which constitutes itself as anticipatory resoluteness. Such resoluteness, as a mode of the authenticity of care, contains Dasein's primordial Self-constancy and totality" (SZ/323).

The key to Dasein's personal identity lies in resoluteness. However, resoluteness is a mode of what Heidegger calls "care." What does "care" (*Sorge*) mean? Care is the term Heidegger uses to summarize what he calls the "everyday Being of Dasein." What he means by this is [1] "Being towards one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being means that in each case Dasein is already ahead of itself [ihm selbst..vorweg] in its Being" (SZ/191). The "itself" Heidegger has in mind here is the self of everyday inauthentic Dasein: "...when we speak of 'Being-ahead-of-itself', the 'itself' which we have in mind is in each case the Self in the sense of the 'they-self'" (SZ/193). [2] "Being-ahead-of-itself means, if we grasp it more fully, **ahead-of-itself-already-being-in-a-world**" (SZ/192). For Dasein to be ahead of itself presupposes that Dasein already exists in a world. [3] "Ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in-a-world essentially includes one's falling and one's Being alongside those things ready-to-hand within-the-world with which one concerns oneself" (SZ/192). The concept of "falling" which describes Dasein's way of Being-in-the-world means that Dasein is absorbed with the way things have been "publicly interpreted." That is, Dasein's care is for the most part inauthentic (SZ/192).

But inauthentic care does not exhaust the possibilities of Dasein. Since Dasein is essentially being-ahead-of-itself because of its freedom, this means that Dasein has the choice of resolutely affirming another form of care, viz.,

authentic care, and disavowing the "public interpretation" of its identity. Dasein's resolute affirmation of its identity as freedom takes the form of concern for things and solicitude for Others. As such, if "care" indicates in a general manner that Dasein has Being-in-the-world as its basic state, then concern and solicitude indicate more specifically the different forms "care" may take. Concern and solicitude as having their ground in freedom means that Dasein can become resolute in its identity as freedom in a concrete manner.

Therefore, if resoluteness, anchored in freedom, and as a mode of care, is the key to Dasein's personal identity, then this personal identity must manifest itself in the way Dasein acts towards things as well as people. This is how freedom as the essence of Dasein, in a manner of speaking, gets personalized. This is how Dasein's personal identity gets constituted.

We have seen that Dasein can be either authentic or inauthentic. These two existential possibilities of Dasein, along with freedom, were revealed through the powerful mood of anxiety: human Dasein can either choose itself or not choose itself; that is, it has the option of losing itself to the interpretations of its Dasein by other people or affirming its own unique identity. What is important here is the reversal Heidegger makes in thinking about freedom. It is not the case that because we are capable of willing or asserting ourselves that we are free; instead, it is only because freedom is the

ground phenomenon of Dasein and is, moreover, the site of intersection between Dasein and the world, that we are capable of choice. Freedom does not ensue from the assertive will. For Heidegger, freedom is the pre-condition of self-affirmation itself. What this means is that freedom is both unconditional and conditional. Freedom is unconditional because as the essence of Dasein, it is already-ahead-of-itself. That is, no possible set of social contexts can exhaust it. Freedom is conditional because it has to be articulated in the world. As such, freedom is not only the origin of Dasein, it is also its telos, its ideal end. Total freedom, total Dasein, or as Heidegger puts it "essentially Dasein," thus becomes the aim of Heidegger's fundamental ontology: "Dasein becomes 'essentially' Dasein in that authentic existence which constitutes itself as anticipatory resoluteness" (SZ/323).

A first step towards becoming "essentially Dasein" is to free the things of our concern for their own "involvement." Another step is changing the form of solicitude we show towards other people. Resoluteness for an authentic possibility of Dasein in the form of solicitude means that

resolute Dasein frees itself for its world. Dasein's resoluteness is what first makes it possible for the Others who are with it "be" in their ownmost potentiality-for-Being and to co-disclose the potentiality in the solicitude which leaps forth and liberates. When Dasein is resolute, it can become the conscience of Others" (SZ/298).

For Heidegger, there are two senses attached to the concept of solicitude. The first meaning Heidegger attaches to

the concept of solicitude has to do with the taking away of "care" from other people. "Care" as we have already seen is the summary term of Dasein's Being-in-the-world. But care is further underpinned by the ontological definition of Dasein as freedom. Thus, taking away care from someone implies the taking away of the potentiality of others understanding themselves as free, as possibility: "this kind of solicitude takes over from the Other that with which he is to concern himself" (SZ/122). With this taking away of the Other's care, the Other is "disburdened" of his or her freedom. It is in this manner that personal Dasein gets lost to the interpretations of other people. Consequently, "in such solicitude the Other can become one who is dominated and dependent, even if this domination is a tacit one and remains hidden from him" (SZ/122). In addition, this form of solicitude which dominates and makes the other dependent on the understandings of other people for his or her personal identity "is to a large extent determinative for Being with one another and pertains for the most part to our concern with the ready-to-hand" (SZ/122). In short, this form of solicitude, and by extension, the kind of concern one has with things, is inauthentic.

In contrast, the second sense that Heidegger attaches to solicitude has to do with the fact that it "helps the Other become transparent to himself in his care and to become free for it" (SZ/122). Heidegger goes on to claim that this form of

solicitude (Fursorge) is "guided by the virtues of considerateness (Rucksicht) and forbearance (Nachsicht)" (SZ/123). In all these cases a way of seeing is stressed which reminds us of the concreteness of such processes. Acts of solicitude which are guided by the virtues of considerateness and forbearance hold out the possibility that our enacted identity as freedom within the world can be free of distortion, partiality, and self-interest. Acts of solicitude guided by considerateness for and forbearance towards the Dasein in others hold out the possibility of an authentic involvement both with ourselves, in terms of self-disclosure, as well as with others. This form of solicitude frees us from the tacit despotism, the "fallenness" of our social character, and as such, advances us on the project of working out our authentic identity - in the form of personal identity - in the world itself.

Jurgen Habermas in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* criticises Heidegger. He claims that in *Being and Time* Heidegger still clings to the epistemological framework of a solipsistic subject. The difference Habermas sees between Descartes and Heidegger is that Heidegger tries to ontologize this epistemological model. Habermas' argument runs like this: "although Heidegger in his first step de-structs the philosophy of the subject in favour of a frame of reference that first makes possible subject-object relationships, in his second step he falls back into the conceptual constraints of

the philosophy of the subject."¹ According to Habermas, this occurs because Heidegger tries "to make the world intelligible on its own terms as a process of world-occurrence."² Consequently, "the solipsistically posited Dasein once again occupies the place of transcendental subjectivity."³ Such a subjectivity forces Heidegger to grasp "the world," Habermas continues, "as a process out of the subjectivity of a will to self-affirmation."⁴ Grasping "the world as a process out of the subjectivity of a will to self-affirmation" is, according to Habermas, how Dasein becomes authentic.

These criticisms of Habermas are standard⁵ and they do not seem to be justified for the following reasons. One: Habermas joins together the concepts of authenticity with that of the self-affirmative will. As a result : Habermas sees authenticity as the radical self-assertion of a solipsistic Dasein. But, as we have seen, Heidegger's concept of authenticity is bound to Dasein as an existing concrete being who can only maintain and preserve its identity through concrete solicitude for others. Dasein as a solipsistic entity which seeks to affirm itself in the name of authenticity by

¹ Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p. 150.

² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

⁵ Cf. Megill, *Prophets of Extremity*; Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*.

dominating others, is not free: freedom is not such a property of Dasein which we possess at will or affirm at leisure. The converse is the case. Freedom as the radical deployment of the self-affirmative will is constitutive of everyday Dasein in its inauthentic existence. So, given that freedom is not a property of human beings, Habermas' charge that Heidegger's concept of Dasein is solipsistic is false. For Heidegger, authentic freedom is "letting things be," authentic freedom "leaps forth and liberates" by showing consideration for others as well as the things that are.

It is a serious error to see Heidegger's articulation of Dasein as being nihilistic and somehow giving legitimacy to the free reign of the self-affirmative will which masks itself under the guise of authenticity, and to further conflate the circumspective freedom of Dasein with that of the Nietzschean *Urbmensch*. Yet, this is how Heidegger's thought is viewed by some of his commentators:⁶ Heidegger the subjective nihilist of *Being and Time*, and the later Heidegger who saw the bankruptcy of his program of fundamental ontology, succumbed to quietism, turned to Holderlin and poetry and, in the end, gave up philosophy for something called "thought".

⁶ Cf. Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*; Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault*; Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*; Richard Rorty, "Overcoming the Tradition: Heidegger and Dewey," in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Jacques Derrida, "Differance," in *Margins of Philosophy*.

Though the charge of nihilism may be true of Nietzsche, given Heidegger's reading of his work as the last sustained attempt at metaphysics,⁷ (a reading of Nietzsche's work I am not fully convinced of because Nietzsche was too learned, too humorous, and too playful a thinker to pin him down in the manner Heidegger does as just another metaphysician with a thesis about Being), it clearly does not hold of Heidegger's work in **Being and Time**. In this work, there is the clear distinction between freedom, which is the identity of Dasein, and which leaps forth and liberates since it is guided by the virtues of considerateness and forbearance, and the will which dominates and subjugates others.

Nonetheless, one may object to my reading of Heidegger's work by asking: "Where does Heidegger get the concept of considerateness and forbearance from if not from public discourse which he so scornfully brands as inauthentic?" This charge has some foundation.⁸ However, the virtues of considerateness and forbearance, though taken over from public discourse, still have to meet the exacting criterion of freedom, which is not the case in everyday language. How many times do we hear political leaders, businessmen, taking the name of humanity in vain when, in fact, the humanity in

⁷ Cf. Heidegger's essay "Nietzsche's Word 'God is Dead'" in **The Question concerning technology and other essays**, and **Nietzsche**, vols. 1 & 4.

⁸ Cf. Rosen *op. cit.*; see also Karten Harries, "Heidegger as Political Thinker," in Michael Murray ed., **Heidegger and Modern Philosophy** (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

question falls into the class of a cloistered and select few who subsequently reap the benefits of all humanity.⁹

It would be foolish to think that when Heidegger talks about freedom, which we may equate with personal identity, it would be a non-problematic identity, something which we can just hold in our hands like a gift, something achieved without effort. For Heidegger, Dasein as uncompromisingly free is an ideal, an end to achieve. Dasein as ecstatic freedom which demands total disclosedness in the world is a visionary ideal. The visionary impulse of the ideal of Dasein as freedom demands from us enactment, engagement with the world through authentic concern and solicitude. The normative consequence that ensues from such a vision, viz., the practise of unrelenting, resolute, auto-critique leads to authenticity first, and only then to ethics which must be a way of life and not merely partial fulfilment of certain laws. Freedom is not something which is given to us once for all, it is something that happens and has to be continually made to happen. Like democracy, the concept of being "essentially Dasein" is not, practically speaking, an achievable goal; but if we can be allowed to speak of something like a goal, then the goal is the practise of freedom itself.¹⁰

⁹ Cf. Sheldon Wolin, "Revolutionary Action Today," in **Post-Analytic Philosophy**, ed. John Rajchman and Cornel West (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

¹⁰ Cf. Jacques Maritain claims that "the democratic philosophy thrives on the unceasing work of invention, criticism and demands of individual conscience - it thrives on it and would die of it if

Human existence is prone to backsliding, but the self-consciousness of one's freedom made possible by the opening up of our Dasein by angst, which we now possess, reminds us of our latent potential for being authentic. This in turn enables us to strive, to deploy all our forces in the full pursuit of total disclosedness in every corner of our lives; to declare an unrepentant but gentle war on all forms of domination which distort the free and contextual articulation of human experience. This translates into relentless and combative engagement with ourselves, ourselves as Being-in-the-world, and as such, also with the structures and social contexts which hold in place our social identities.

The virtues of considerateness and forbearance modify the historical Being of our Dasein in its involvements with people and the material contexts of our actions. These virtues are vague in regards to how they bear upon the context of social action, and how in turn these contexts are related to our identity. But this vagueness is something we just have to live with. There are no guarantees, no simple answers or reliable methods of how to get to the truth, freedom, without struggle or risk.

it were not also living on the unceasing gift of self which must correspond to this unceasing work of criticism and demand." [Jacques Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy and The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, trans. Doris C. Anson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 58].

Conclusion: Ontological Freedom and the Project of Personal Identity

For Heidegger, the concept of possibility is more important than that of actuality. Possibility enables actuality. The same holds for freedom. Ontological freedom makes possible the articulation of both the meaning of Being and Dasein's authentic identity. The relation between freedom, Being, and Dasein is as such: though freedom is at the center of both, neither Being nor freedom gets concretized without the cooperation of Dasein. It is through the attempt to concretize freedom as Being-in-the-world that Dasein's self gets constituted together with the meaning of Being. Dasein's identity as resolute existence is something that can only be fully articulated through the hard work of concern for things, and solicitude for others. Consideration and forbearance, when they inform our actions help us to focus attention on the concrete things, the minute relations of day to day Being-in-the-world.¹¹ In other words, to get at reality, one must

¹¹ Therefore, I cannot agree with Levinas' identification of Heidegger's work with the tradition of metaphysics in his claim that "ontology as first philosophy is a philosophy of power...Even when it opposes the technological passion issued forth from the forgetting of Being hidden by the existent [i.e., *étant*, "being"], Heideggerian ontology which subordinates the relationship with the other to the relation with Being in general, remains under obedience to the anonymous, and leads inevitably to another power, to imperialist domination, to metaphysics." [Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 46]. Levinas' erroneous, yet dramatic claim about the imperialism of metaphysics, and of Being over beings, which supposedly informs Heidegger's work also resonates in Derrida's criticisms of Heidegger; see his "Violence and

first care for it. This means that Dasein has to remain disclosed to itself in its freedom.

But, there is no denying the biting tension, on the one hand, between Heidegger's concept of Dasein which is unconditionally free in its identity from all social constraints, and the remorseless recognition, on the other, that this unconditional identity **must** find its meaning in the midst of the conditional, historical, social world. However, this tension between the unconditional freedom of Dasein and the necessity of having to work out this freedom in the historical world is toned down with the recognition that this identity which is disclosedness, this freedom which is transcendental, is not a property of human beings, - this freedom is not internal to the self-legislative will. It is only when we resist the understandings and interpretations pressed upon our Dasein in our passage through the social world (which are justified in the name of whatever but never in the name of who we are, viz., freedom) that human life for Heidegger even begins to be approximate to its potentiality for being free.

Furthermore, we need not only to resist in this negative sense, - a virtue prevalent in the work of French thinkers who are labelled post-structuralists¹² - but we also need to

Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in *Writing and Difference*.

¹² Cf. Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration* (London: Verso, 1987).

resist positively, concretely, by showing authentic solicitude for other people, concern for things. This is why the unconditional demand of our Dasein to be fully disclosed in the world makes the domain of language one of its battle grounds. It is in this domain that the articulation of the there, our lives with others, with the world, manifests itself.¹³ Admittedly, the concept of language in *Being and Time* is subordinate to that of ontological freedom, but it needs little imagination to deduce from the standpoint of ontological freedom that, in so far as language articulates the meaning of our authentic Being-in-the-world, language remains appropriated to the existential project of freeing our relationships with people and with things, and it is therefore not a tool of the self-legislative will.

Dasein makes, paradoxically, that first resolute step towards freedom when it lets things be, leaves them alone to refract in their own contextually bound world. For Heidegger, it is only by resolutely freeing ourselves from the understandings and interpretations of society which bind our freedom, that we can begin to make inroads on truth. In other words, it is only by being intransigent to the claims of organized society, "das Man," that the full visionary ideal of the kinds of actions which are necessary to enact in order to bring to realization Heidegger's concept of an authentic human identity as freedom can begin to take hold.

¹³ Cf *Sein Und Zeit*, pp.161/162.

Glossary of German Terms Used in the Text

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Angst: | Anxiety, Dread |
| Befindlichkeit: | State of mind |
| Besorgen: | Concern |
| Das Man: | The "they" |
| Dasein: | Being-there |
| Entschlossenheit: | Resoluteness |
| Erschlossenheit: | Disclosedness |
| Existenzial: | Existential |
| Faktisch: | Factual |
| Faktizität: | Facticity |
| Fürsorge: | Solicitude |
| In-der-Welt-sein: | Being-in-the-world |
| Nachsicht: | Forebearance |
| Rücksicht: | Considerateness |
| Sich vorweg | Ahead of itself |
| Sorge: | Care |
| Verfallend | Falling |

Bibliography

Works by Martin Heidegger

Being and Time. Trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson.
New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

The Essence of Reasons. Trans. Terrence Malick. Evanston:
Northwestern University Press, 1969.

Identity and Difference. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. New York:
Harper and Row, 1969.

Poetry, Language, Thought. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York:
Harper and Row, 1971.

On Time and Being. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. New York: Harper and
Row, 1972.

What is Metaphysics?. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. In Walter
Kaufmann (E.d.) **Existentialism: From Dostoevsky to
Sartre.** New York: The New American Library, 1975.

Acheminement Vers la Parole. Trans. Jean Beaufret, Wolfgang
Brokmeier, François Féder. Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

Basic Writings. (E.d.) David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper
and Row, 1977.

The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays. Trans.
William Lovitt. New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

Nietzsche, Vol IV: Nihilism. Trans. Frank A. Capuzzi. New York: Harper and Row, 1982.

Works by Others

Adorno, Theodor. *Against Epistemology*. Trans. Willis Domingo. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1983.

Derrida, Jacques. *Writing and Difference*. Trans. Allan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Margins of Philosophy. Trans. Allan Bass. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Dews, Peter. *Logics of Disintegration*. London: Verso, 1987.

Guilead, Reuben. *Etre et Liberté: Une Étude sur le Dernier Heidegger*. Paris: Éditions Nauwelaerts, 1965.

Habermas, Jürgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*. Trans. Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 1987.

Harries, Karsten. "Heidegger as Political Thinker." In Michael Murray (E.d.). *Heidegger and Modern Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978.

Megill, Allan. *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986.

Murdoch, Iris. *The Sovereignty of Good*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.

- Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Putnam, Hilary. *Reason, Truth and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- Realism and Reason: Philosophical Papers Vol 3*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- The Many Faces of Realism*. La Salle: Open Court, 1987.
- Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Consequences of Pragmatism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Rosen, Stanley. *Nihilism: A Philosophical Essay*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel Barnes. New York: Philosophical Library, 1956.
- Unger, Roberto Mangabeira. *Passion: An Essay on Personality*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958.