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# The Philosophy of Anxiety

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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF ANXIETY

By

Julie Daniels

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Philosophy  
of Trinity College in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Bachelor of Arts Degree

May 3, 2013

## Table of Contents

<i>Intentions</i>	4
<i>Part One: The Fundamental Project</i>	
I. What is Dasein?	10
II. What is Dasein's Project?	12
III. The Private Sphere	14
IV. The Other	21
<i>Part Two: Anxiety as Attunement</i>	
I. Primacy and Repetition	25
II. Anxiety as Dizziness	35
<i>Part Three: The Philosopher and the Psychiatrist</i>	
I. Medard Boss on Liberation	42
II. Leslie H. Farber on Will	44
III. The Opposite of Anxiety	48

“That anxiety makes its appearance is the pivot upon which everything turns.”

-Søren Kierkegaard

## Intentions

Anxiety has been a constituent of my being since I was a little girl. Before I began the study of philosophy, my moments of panic were exacerbated by my inability to articulate the overwhelming sensations and emotions brought about by anxiety. I felt completely alone; as my anxiety increased, so too did the space between myself and others. No one talks about anxiety, and in the instances I attempted to describe to those around me what was happening 'inside me', it seemed no one could relate. It appeared I was the sole individual on planet Earth who felt indescribably nervous for no reason whatsoever. It wasn't shame so much as a sheer lack of adequate vocabulary that reinforced my silence. Even more frustrating was the fact that I was never able to decipher exactly *what it was* that had me so anxious. Strangely, the feeling assaulted me at seemingly random times; times in which danger was not visible, but rather sensed.

It wasn't until my sophomore year at Trinity College that anxiety became a topic of discussion in the classroom. In Philosophy of Ethics, Professor Donna Marcano discussed with our class the anxiety evoked in so-called normal minded people, by mentally unstable individuals. The claim: we have anxiety about them because their actions are mysterious; they lack the predictability so favored by human nature. Alas, a seemingly simple concept that perfectly described so much of what I felt, and often times continue to feel. As my philosophical studies progressed, I developed a repertoire of words and concepts, which I had been searching for, for years.

In utter selfishness, my hope is for the following pursuit, to which my reader will be witness, ends in such a way that I am calmer and my reader is anxious. Within the framework of self- liberation, I aim to draw strong ties between personal experience, and the views held by various thinkers, including Martin Heidegger, Søren Kierkegaard, and Jean-Paul Sartre. *Being and Time* will serve as the lens through which I examine the texts of Søren Kierkegaard and Jean-Paul Sartre. Their philosophies on anxiety serve as a voice for those who grapple with the phenomenon. I aim to illuminate the concept of anxiety by offering elucidating vocabulary, which philosophy offers its students. Perhaps then, those who have previously neglected to acknowledge the latent anxiety in all of us will discover the opportunity that lay beyond misconception, masked as something to fear. In considering the ultimate aim, I feel freed from the negativity that clings to anxiety.

In viewing the potential benefits of anxiety, one necessarily views anxiety as a mediation between *complacency* and *individuality*, and thus individuality as an essential aspect of human existence. This essay works to define the two terms as they stand in opposition to one another. Most if not all excerpts examined here lend to the concept of anxiety as a form of *progression*. Progression is manifest in anxiety, just as it is manifest in philosophical thought. My analysis is further complicated by the notion that anxiety is a form of progression in and of itself; it is means to an end *and* it is the end. Anxiety congruously works alongside the project of the human being. This is to say, anxiety aids in the already-happening process of one's advancement through space and time.

*Complacency* describes one's state of being, insofar as the individual has not (yet) acknowledged the existence of anxiety. If one is complacent, it is due to her failure to channel the power anxiety can potentially provide. She neglects to test her endurance. {A note with regard to word choice: anxiety is not merely an experience, rather one *endures* anxiety. In experience, self-involvement in the world is not a requirement. Of course an ideal experience is one that results in an acquisition of knowledge, or perhaps a self that is in some ways 'better' than the self prior to its experience. However, experiences are often passive; they do not necessarily require tension, discomfort, or decision-making. To *endure* is to experience tension, discomfort, decision-making. For this reason, I will refer to the *endurance of anxiety*.} Her life, in so far as she lacks the proper education is constituted by the life of others. (SK, CA) Because anxiety is a process of individualization, she is *not* individualized; her identity blends in with that of another, namely the Other. By examining the significance of the Other, I will be able to describe the significance of the Self and its particular orientation to the world.

*Individualization* is the consequence, if she accepts anxiety in order to embark on the unpredictable journey whose end is marked by complete self-realization. But this 'end' is continuous, for the goal is to live continuously as the product of progression. Freedom, namely the ability to choose anxiety, will become important at this time. In the 'moment' of choice, one possesses the freedom to return to complacency, or advance toward individualization. Or, in the face of choice, one has the capacity to accept or reject progression. Acceptance/openness leads to progress, which in turn leads to more progress. But at what point in the

progression does one achieve individualization? And if progression is progress toward a goal, what does it mean to progress after the goal is reached? When is the process complete?

*Notes on the philosophers-*

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger forms the Dasein Analytic. Authenticity is the term used to describe Dasein, during and after one's trajectory through the process of individualization, namely *Angst*, German for anxiety. By writing of *Angst* instead of anxiety, Heidegger works to stamp out the misuses of the word that have become commonplace. He writes, "...It is the business of philosophy to preserve the *power of the most elemental words* in which Dasein expresses itself and to protect them from being flattened by the common understanding to the point of unintelligibility..." (BT, 211) In this way, the word *anxiety* retains its power despite society's attempted dilution. Throughout his text, Heidegger distinguishes between 'I' and 'they', placing the individual and the mass on either side of an ambiguous ground. I, Dasein, is the authenticated individual, whereas 'they' describes all that it means to be inauthentic. It is the journey to/through authentication that resonates greatly with me, and which I aim to fully explicate in this paper. Further commentary on anxiety includes the seeming irrelevance of the world and its parts, for she who endures anxiety.

In addition to its examination of anxiety, Søren Kierkegaard's text, *The Concept of Anxiety*, involves the reader in religious discussions, specifically the discussion of Christianity. As SK's approach to religion does not concern us, I will



extricate his underlying message, which announces anxiety as the “pivot upon which everything turns.” (CA, 32) Similar to Martin Heidegger, SK treats the phenomenon of anxiety as the partner of possibility: focus rests on what can be made possible for the individual in addition to one’s own most possibility. “Anxiety as the Presupposition of Hereditary Sin and As Explaining Hereditary Sin Retrogressively in Terms of Its Origins” works to reveal the explicit relationship between anxiety and possibility. *Possibility* stands in opposition to *actuality*: this will serve as the preliminary and perhaps more important investigation in this strangely complex text.

*Freedom* lies at the foundation of Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophy. In order to understand his interpretations of anxiety, anguish as he calls it, we must first understand his intentions with the concept of freedom, and the importance it bears in *Being and Nothingness*. Like Heidegger and Kierkegaard, Sartre articulates anxiety within the framework of the fundamental project that constitutes existence. Coupled with absolute freedom is one’s *responsibility* to carry out freedom. In fact, responsibility is the means through which absolute freedom is moderated. Additionally, it channels the project of the individual toward *authenticity*, which is an essential way of being, according to Sartre. *Being and Time* describes things such as resoluteness, and choosing potentiality, but Heidegger neglects to articulate absolute freedom as the basis for our actions. Sartre brings to the forefront one’s harsh confrontation with the realization of freedom, as it is manifest in anguish. He writes, “In anguish I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself.” (EE, 40) As

human beings, our freedom allows us to be our own creators. This is our responsibility, according to Sartre, to exhibit our freedom and live in the most profound sense. Importantly, the role of the Other strengthens the self's conception of the world in which she lives. Being for-itself and being in-itself are two modes of being which work toward describing this notion. Freedom is necessary to the ongoing project of the individual. In order to seize this or that opportunity, from which our project moves forward, we must be free to do so- and fortunately, we are.

## Part One

### I. What is Dasein?

In order to understand the project of Dasein, we must first understand Dasein at its most fundamental level. Martin Heidegger writes,

“Dasein is my own, to be always in this or that way. It has somehow always already decided in which way Dasein is always my own. The being which is concerned in its being about its being is related to its being as its ownmost possibility. Dasein *is* always its possibility.” (BT, 42)

Firstly, Dasein is “I”; it is constituted by existence and defined by possibility. It is being. It is the very ground from which Dasein itself moves forward and upward. To say Dasein *is* its possibility is to place nearly all focus onto possibility. Dasein is *not*, without the existence of possibility, for possibility is defining of all things from this moment onward. As my fingers move across this keyboard, each second becomes a second passed, and though passed, I once possessed the opportunity to type. In this particular instance, I *seized* the possibility that was my ownmost. Importantly, the only possibility that exists is that which Dasein has conceived of. In this way, possibility has become Dasein’s ownmost, Possibility, as it stands as Dasein’s possibility, is the only means through which Dasein can conceive of *itself*. In the very act of contemplating it’s being, Dasein self fulfills. The possibility of its being is further enlivened by the carrying out, or seizing, of possibility.

Additionally, Dasein is not an abstract entity, to the likes of a soul, which may be viewed in abstraction or placed in a realm other than “here”. Dasein has a home,

namely the world, which enables its concretized situation. As a being-in-the world, Dasein gives life and meaning to its surroundings. Or, world, as an infinite collection of settings, contexts is that which is made sense of *by* Dasein. World here is not described in objective terms, rather it becomes subjective to Dasein. As a characteristic of Dasein, world is necessarily included in its definition, for it is the very place in which Dasein dwells. Dwelling, which Heidegger describes fully in his text, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, is the position of human beings, of Dasein. As beings, we are always already in the world, in the most situated of ways. We are connected with world as we allot it meaning.

If Dasein is its ownmost possibility, how do we begin to define possibility in narrower terms? It cannot be the case that possibility includes all that *is*, for this is actuality in reality. Possibility is the defining characteristic of all that floats in the realm of the future. If Dasein can think it, it is a possibility. Possibility here does not include notions of likelihood. Throughout this essay, possibility with regard to Dasein's project, describes the *very invention* of possibility. As I conceive of the *possibility of possibilities*, I am quintessentially Dasein.

In the instance that Dasein *seizes* its ownmost possibility, it has reinforced itself as Dasein. Defined as a being that *is* possibility, Dasein is now two things: on the one hand, it is the possibility of possibility; on the other, it is simply possibility. In the act of seizure, Dasein takes powerful claim over that which stands to be seized. It is the act of seizing which transforms that which was possible, to that which is now actual. This does not mean, however, that that which was possible has now 'come true' in some manner. Seized possibility instead refers to the deliberate

actions of the individual, in response to the possibility of possibility. To seize possibility is to act in accordance with anxiety. According to Heidegger, seizing is neither seen as an ethical responsibility nor a privilege. Rather, the desire to seize is evoked in the individual who actively chooses to advance his position in the world- to do so is precisely the project of the human being.

## II. What is Dasein's project?

In the beginning pages of this essay it is mentioned, *anxiety congruously works alongside the project of the human being. This is to say, anxiety aids in the already happening process of one's advancement through space and time.* Discussion of anxiety will be temporarily abandoned as I work to define what I mean when I say 'the already happening process of one's advancement through space and time.' As Dasein exists, it organically travels through life, molding itself and those around it. The slow forward movement that is life pushes the human being from behind, and the being lives. She necessarily has experiences, if experience is defined by inadvertent encounters with the world. Let us paint the picture of progression as that which moves *toward something*. In the already happening movement of life, we are always moving toward our own end.

This natural advancement through space and time, namely living, can be coupled with another type of movement, if the individual so chooses- or, rather, if the possibility in question is seized. This kind of movement is called anxiety. To say anxiety aids in an already happening process is to assert the propelling nature of anxiety. Movement in its metaphorical sense becomes a constituent of Dasein for it

enables the *intersection* of Dasein and possibility. The very word 'project' alludes to the carrying out of something. What, then, is Dasein to carry out? And in what ways does anxiety help or hinder the carrying out of what is possible? Dasein is always moving through life, but this does not necessitate the movement of one's *own* life forward. To move, to live, in such a way that facilitates forward movement of our own circumstances, is to assign Dasein's project. Anxiety, to the rescue!

The distinction between project as a noun and project as a verb is an important one, and both parts of speech are of equal relevance to our discussion. Project as a noun is what I have detailed above. It is the general facilitation of one's being. It is comprised of each and every aspect of Dasein's life. Jean-Paul Sartre writes, "I am nothing but the project of myself beyond a determined situation, and this project pre-outlines me in terms of the concrete situation as in addition it illumines the situation in terms of my choice." (BN, 706) The small projects that constitute my daily existence combine into my overall project: being. Project as a verb describes the way in which Dasein projects itself *onto* something, i.e. the future. Projection is the active aspect of one's project. In other words, we further are project by projecting ourselves. Projection is a form of extension; it is the manifestation of our potentiality. To project myself onto my future is to gain access into my future. I am expanding the ground beneath me and before me. I am my own creator.

### III. The Private Sphere

Heidegger ascribes the term *authentic* to Dasein insofar as Dasein has applied the fundamental principle of anxiety to its being. We ask now, what is this fundamental principle? –To live in accordance with authenticity. In order for one's existence to fall into the category *authentic*, one must exist independently from foreign aspirations and pressures, cast upon her by the inauthentic realm to which the 'they' belongs. To best understand the 'they', we refer to the following cliché: "You know what they say..." Who exactly *is* this 'they' society incessantly mentions? *Who* says it's going to rain? *They* says it's going to rain, therefore it must be the case that it is going to rain. Why- because *they* said so. 'They' refers to the blend of everyone that stands in opposition to I. As 'I' exists as the representation of individuality, 'they' is a sum of persons whose identity has been stripped and replaced by the identity of the collective. In the 'they', there does not exist an individual who executes personal goals. One cannot find someone who thinks or acts for his or herself. Rather, one thinks and acts based on the expected thinking and acting facilitated by an imposed normalcy. In contrast, authenticity is a realm of selfishness, for it is in this realm that the possibility of possibility exists. In effort to elucidate: that which is selfish is that which propels you forward and alone. Anxiety itself is necessarily selfish for it propels us forward in an effort to gain a greater perspective of our selves and our world. To have anxiety about possibility is to have awareness of the endless array of possibilities, and this is most selfish of all. Kierkegaard writes, "But anxiety is of all things the most selfish, and no concrete expression of freedom is as selfish as the possibility of every concretion...In anxiety

there is the selfish infinity of possibility, which does not tempt like a choice but ensnaringly disquiets with its sweet anxiousness." (CA, 61)

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"In anxiety, the things at hand in the surrounding world sink away, and so do the innerworldly beings in general. The "world" can offer nothing more, nor can the Dasein-with of others. Thus anxiety takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, falling prey, in terms of the "world" and the public way of being interpreted." (BT, 181)

Heidegger uses the preposition *in*, alluding to the existence of a place into which anxiety falls. As a state of being, anxiety has abstract location and borders. The 'they' does not live within these borders, rather 'I' does. 'They' should be understood as the sweeping Other; it is everyone else, and their place is the ambiguous world. The sweeping Other is indicative of a single unit of normalcy, out of which 'they' prey on and reel in 'I'. In anxiety, which Heidegger differentiates from world, the world 'can offer nothing more' - that which is being offered is meaning, tainted by an inauthentic context, comprised of what 'they' purposefully maintain and provide-familiarity. When Heidegger discusses "the public way of being interpreted", he is referring to a tainted interpretation, which aims to hinder Dasein's ownmost possibility of individuality. Therefore, when it is stated that Dasein is unable to understand itself in anxiety "in terms of the 'world'" it is not to be stated that Dasein is not able to understand itself. Rather, it is to say that Dasein is unable to use world as *means of reference*.... a new understanding of Dasein must therefore be formulated and this understanding is the understanding of possibility.



The notion of *falling prey* is that which threatens to *permeate the integrity* of the private sphere. We ask, who is falling prey and to what imminent danger? It is the 'I' that falls prey to the influential 'they'. As Dasein falls prey, it simultaneously renders itself as a non-anxious being. Dasein has actively chosen the path of complacency in the process of actively dismissing progression. Familiarity takes priority. For it is certainly easier to join the majority- decisions are pre-made, judgments and emotions pre-assigned. Best of all, the uncomfortable feeling of uncanniness dissolves nearly instantaneously. Uncanniness is that which makes the endurance of anxiety most difficult. It articulates the puzzling occurrences of bewilderment that accompany moments of anxiety, or rather, moments in which the individual finds herself confronted with the choice of A or B. Her very ground is located in the space between A and B- here in lies the origin of uncanniness. A and B are representative of situatedness, and between them exists a gap. As humans, we are naturally always in the world; we are beings-in-the-world. The familiar settings which constitute the world, our home, provide us comfort. The experience of uncanniness is marked by our realization of not-being-in-the-world. The 'they' summons to Dasein, calling Dasein to join it in comfort. Feeling uncanny provides Dasein with the urgency to move in one direction or the other; to join the 'they' or to seize the possibility of possibility, namely to live as an individual. Here again, we sense the particular type of movement inherent in anxiety as it acts as a motivating force.

For Søren Kierkegaard, the ambiguous ground between situations A and B is what he calls the Qualitative Leap. *The Concept of Anxiety* describes the Qualitative Leap under a religious lens. As religion does not concern our discussion, I will describe the leap as it pertains to philosophy only. Most abstractly, the leap describes movement that closes the gap. We see evidence of the gap as it exists between possibility and actuality. It is in Kierkegaard's view that man, as he exists in innocence, is constituted by his possibility to become actual. As possibility and actuality are marked as points along a linear path, there lies between them an ambiguous realm. If the goal is for possibility to morph into actuality, how is this process brought about? Who or what instigates the progression, the movement, or perhaps the exchange?

Anxiety, translated in *The Concept of Anxiety* as *dread*, shrinks the ambiguous space between possibility and actuality, bringing the two ends closer toward one another, enabling the individual's transition between them. More importantly, the ambiguous space which anxiety shrinks is itself anxiety. Here, possibility describes a sort of abstraction in which the ultimate end is concretization. To claim anxiety as the 'driving force necessary to commit man' is to prioritize the commitment. This commitment is the concretization of one's pursuit of progression. Possibility becomes actuality, in the sense that possibilities are actualized. In an abstract sense, possibilities float on the periphery as ethereal *what ifs*. What is described here is not the abolition of possibility, rather the actualization of possibilities. In essence, the actualization of possibilities comes to us via anxiety, for it forces the leap. As the middle ground between possibility (A) and actuality (B), anxiety necessarily forces

the individual in question to seize his own most possibility, and force it into his reality. In this sense, possibility and actuality are one in the same. This is the very notion that the anxious person is anxious about- *the reality of endless possibility*, unfolding onto one another, culminating in an assault on his existence. "...Dasein exists as a whole assembly of possibilities for being in the world and that in any given moment it may "carry out" only one of these while each of the others remain simply "uncarried out"." (Boss, *Recent Considerations in Daseinanalysis*)

At this time, the following question arises: what is the difference, if any, between A. Living an authentic life and B. Living a life of authentic possibility? It appears to be the case that living an authentic life is to live a life that is constituted by the recurrence of authentic possibilities. To live an authentic life is to live a life completely void of influence from the inauthentic. It is to say, there does not exist a moment in which the powerful, inauthentic 'they' inhabits Dasein's sphere. To live an authentic life is to never *fall prey* to the public sphere. On the other hand, to live a life of authentic possibility is to live a life in which one moves between the public and private sphere. Unlike a purely authentic existence, time is split between authentic being, provoked by moments of choice. Such a choice is the choice between possibility itself, and the complacency constituted by inauthenticity.

As I consider my own existence, I consider it as one of authentic possibility for I am constantly confronted by the choice which anxiety sets before me, but only sometimes do I seize my own possibility. Søren Kierkegaard writes, "...whoever is educated (by possibility) remains with anxiety; he does not permit himself to be

deceived by its countless falsifications and accurately remembers the past". (CA, 159) In other words, he who understands the possibility manifest in anxiety knows not to deny anxiety. It is a personal goal to 'accurately remember the past', which describes moments of anxiety and the path onto which one is lead upon seizing possibility. We will get a better sense of this notion of 'accurately remembering' in Part Two.

### *Resoluteness*

The choosing of our own most potentiality- namely choice- is what Heidegger calls *resoluteness*. "Understanding the summons reveals itself as *wanting to have a conscience*. But in this phenomenon lies that existentiell choosing of the choice of being-a-self which we are looking for and which we call *resoluteness...*" (BT, 260) In resoluteness, I authentically choose to choose. I accept the risk associated with abandoning the 'they' as I move forward into the 'I'. What is at risk in resoluteness? It is the support offered by the 'they'. This support is in essence an affirmation of my rejection of individualization, of (my) self. "Entangled flight *into* the being-at-home of publicness is flight *from* not-being-at-home, that is, from the uncanniness which lies in Dasein as thrown, as being-in-the-world entrusted to itself in its being." (BT, 183) Publicness is at the base of the 'they', and when I accept the risk presented to me by resoluteness, I am in turn transitioning from publicness to privateness where any additional risks are only my own to assess and take on. What, then, does it mean to choose to not to choose, or rather, to ignore choice in pursuit of the 'they'? If I am choosing not to choose, am I rendering myself no choices at all and thus the word

'choice' becomes irrelevant? It seems to be the case that Heidegger would deem "choosing the 'they'" impossible. Instead, by ignoring the call of our conscience, we automatically fall into the 'they'; it is not a choice. We do not choose the 'they', rather we are subject to it unless we *choose to hear* the call of our conscience. We are always already fallen. This is not to say that the 'they' does not make choices because indeed they do. But as a part of the 'they', I do not choose- I go along with the choices other have made. For how could it be the case that I choose if I am not an 'I' among the 'they'; I *am* 'they' and nothing more. Resoluteness pertains to *authentically* choosing to choose, which again reveals the necessary notion of individuality.

#### IV. The Other

"Such then is the totality of processes by which we try to hide anguish from ourselves; we apprehend our particular possible by avoiding considering all other possibles, which we make the possibles of an undifferentiated Other." (BN, 43) The Other is that which occupies the public sphere, representative of inauthentic existence. Insofar as Dasein is authentic, I is authentic, therefore the Other stands in opposition. But how does the self make sense of the Other? What role does the Other play in the life of the self? Can one be in anxiety amidst the Other(s)? According to Sartre, and within the framework of anxiety, the Other can be viewed as means of escape. What does this mean? By conceiving of the Other as 'over there' and the self as 'here', the individual is able to mentally transpose her own most potentiality onto the Other. Who this other is, we do not know nor does it matter. In anxiety, my

immediate inclination is to assign that which is possible for me, to someone else in an effort to abandon my possibilities. I want the possibility of nothing.

The Other becomes the object of one's flight in a twofold manner: the subject flees from anxiety by ascribing the Other as her means, and the subject flees *toward* the Other in search of what Heidegger calls "tranquilized familiarity". The role of the Other, however, is not a passive one. Thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty have examined the notion of the gaze, and the ways in which it helps us understand the power the Other as it objectifies the self. The gaze, or the look as Sartre calls it in *Being and Nothingness*, describes the relationship between he who gazes and she who receives the gaze. In the process of perceiving the Other, the gazer turns the individual into an object he can examine. The Other becomes void of personality and is instead viewed merely as a representation of something. He directly or indirectly conveys to his object of perception, *I am looking at you*. She who receives the gaze is made aware of her gazer. A sense of self-awareness and self-consciousness emerges as she realizes her presence in-the-world, and herself as an object. She receives his message, *I am looking at you*, and internalizes it, *he is looking at me*. She assumes his perspective and begins to see herself from somewhere outside of herself. In this way, she objectifies herself. Next, her gaze turns towards him. She becomes the I and he becomes the Other. The two are involved in a relationship of objectification, as they simultaneously perceive one another's existence. The objectification of the Other is furthered by the concept of temporality. Because we can only conceive of forward movement in terms of our

own fundamental project, the Other does not embody a sense of time for us, and is therefore not representative of something that is analogous to 'me'.

Let us then examine shame with respect to the Other. My assumption is that the Other, an embodiment of the 'they', lives by a strict code of normalcy, imposed upon him by the public sphere. He will most certainly understand my behavior to which he is witness as bizarre, uncanny. In expressing anxiety, I demonstrate behavior particular to my self, and I am embarrassed. *Shame* is precisely the phenomenon that fuels the silence of anxiety. In anxiety, my behavior is necessarily particular to my self because I am alone; I am undergoing the process of individualization; the world offers no help; nothing holds meaning, and certainly not the objectified Other in my presence. Imagine what the Other would think if they knew of this experience? Surely, they have never experienced this before, because this is strange. And the Other is not strange, the other is an archetype for normalcy. I can't lead on to what's happening; I must stay silent in an effort to fool the Other into thinking I am balanced and predictable. I must blend in with familiarity. In silence, my anxiety festers. I have neither seized my potentiality, nor am I fallen. I am stuck in the ambiguous intermediary between two distinct kinds of relief. I begin to consider endless, abstract possibilities. The terrible potentiality of unending freedom shortens my breath, and I succumb to the 'they', overwhelmed.

"The hypochondriac is anxious about every insignificant thing, but when the significant appears he begins to breathe more easily...Because the significant actuality is after all not so terrible as the possibility he himself had fashioned, and which he used his strength to fashion, where as he can now use all his strength against actuality." (CA, 162)

It is necessarily the case that the hypochondriac is anxious about death. Let us say for example that he is particularly anxious about a pain in his hand leading to death. Because the individual cannot find the cause of the pain, the pain is mysterious. The mysterious pain leads him to consider irrational possibilities. Instability lay at the foundation of his considerations. As he considers more potential reasons for why his hand hurts, he simultaneously considers all the ways in which the pain could exacerbate and ultimately lead to his demise. Without the answers that provide security and concretion, the hypochondriac tortures himself with an endless stream of questioning. Suddenly, he remembers burning his hand on a hot plate the previous evening. This is his actuality. As he remembers the events from the night before, he brings his irrational stream of contemplation to a halt, and provides it with the firm ground of *actuality*. He is no longer anxious, because he has answers. He has found a *reason* for the pain. The meaning of the world seemed to wither away in his efforts to find answers among insignificant possibilities. The meaningless world in which the anxious individual finds himself in only furthers confusion and nonsensical rationales. It is self perpetuating. "... Unfreedom becomes more and more inclosed and does not want communication...It manifests itself in hypochondria, in capriciousness; it manifests itself in the highest passions, when in a profound misunderstanding they introduce the silent treatment." (CA, 124)



## Part Two

“The elaboration of this fundamental kind of attunement and the ontological characteristics of what is disclosed in it as such take their point of departure from the phenomenon of entanglement, and distinguish anxiety from the related phenomenon of fear analyzed earlier. As a possibility of being of Dasein, together with the Dasein itself disclosed in it, anxiety provides the phenomenal basis for explicitly grasping the primordial totality of being of Dasein.” (BT, 177)

*Being and Time*, *The Concept of Anxiety*, and *Being and Nothingness* each describe the way in which anxiety serves as one’s way of relating to the world. Just as Maurice Merleau-Ponty views human sexuality as *the* form of expression through which one demonstrates his or her aliveness, the three philosophers discussed in this essay view anxiety as a quintessential mode of being. We refer to the Ancient Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, to best understand the meaning of attunement, before understanding anxiety as Dasein’s way of being. It is under Heraclitus’ view that the world has a way, and it is human responsibility to *listen* to this way and consequently act in accordance with it. *The call of consciousness*, mentioned in Chapter One, is analogous to the conception of attunement. With respect to anxiety, it is Dasein’s responsibility to *hear* the call that brings about the possibility of authenticity. To listen, to hear the call, is to align one’s self with the way of the world. Anxiety aids in this alignment. Here, we are able to make the important distinction between anxiety and fear. While fear is concrete, it does not possess the profound ability to enlighten. The concept of attunement enables the bridging between anxiety and one’s existence as a being-in-the-world.

## I. Primacy and Repetition

Like Heidegger, Kierkegaard's philosophy casts bright light on anxiety, revealing it as something positive. Let us reflect on his following claims from *The Concept of Anxiety*:

- The more primitive the man, the more profound his anxiety.
- The more profound the anxiety, the more profound the culture.

Therefore, the more primitive the man, the more profound the culture. Anxiety then becomes the tool with which we use to measure quality of existence. 'Primitive' describes man as he lives in a pure world; world has not yet been shaped by others their habits, nor their experiences. Primacy is lost with the passing of time. SK writes, "Anxiety in a later individual...is more reflective as a consequence of his participation in the history of the race- something that can be compared with habit, which is something of a second nature..." (CA, 53) Here, later individual describes he who comes into existence after Adam. Kierkegaard considers Adam, the archetype of primacy, as having the most profound anxiety. Having come into a world free from the mark of other existences, his anxiety was not produced by or related to pre-existing habits. Instead, each occurrence of anxiety was new, and thus pure. He did not approach anxiety with a sense of 'know-how', as does the 'later' individual, the individual existing in a world less primal. Because his endurance of anxiety was not *explained* to him, it was never made sense of. His lack of worldly knowledge, which would have provided him the knowledge and understanding of anxiety as a phenomenon, facilitated the repetition of anxiety as something equally as

unforeseen. In a later world and amidst later individuals, Adam would be presented with the opportunity to find answers to his questions. But more likely, he was not in search of answers; he unconsciously accepted recurring anxiety as the experience of existence. And for this reason, his anxiety is most profound.

SK's assertion that the primitive man is in direct relation to the profoundness of a culture may appear to contradict all that we have discussed with respect to authenticity. How could it be that primacy, associated with things such as individuality and pureness, results in a more profound culture? As I am under the assumption that culture here refers to a body of people with shared beliefs, what does it mean for a culture to be comprised of primitive men? It would mean that Kierkegaard has provided us with an abstract conceptualization of an authentic 'they'.

Heidegger, too, writes of primordial anxiety in *Being and Time*. He says, "The indefiniteness of death discloses itself primordially in anxiety. But this primordial anxiety strives to expect resoluteness of itself. It clears away every covering over of the fact that Dasein is itself left to itself. The nothingness before which anxiety brings us reveals the nullity that determines Dasein in its ground..." (BT, 295) We have already asserted the meaning of resoluteness as one's choosing to choose. To say anxiety strives to expect resoluteness is to assert the desire of anxiety, namely its desire to bypass the mediation, marked by uncanniness, and immediately proceed to assuming the role of progression. This progression, of course, is choosing to choose authenticity. We may attribute the profoundness of primordial anxiety to its being a manifestation of the openness that allows for the

potentiality of choice. Let us explore this notion further. SK regards Adam as the most primitive, and therefore as possessing access to the most profound anxiety. Adam's anxiety is primordial, for his anxiety is non-habitual; it inherently accepts the recurring opportunities for resoluteness. By stating that primordial anxiety "clears away every covering over" is to render non-primordial anxiety, perhaps SK would prefer "later" anxiety, as that which covers. This lends to anxiety as a misguiding force, as it covers the potentiality of anxiety itself.

Jean-Paul Sartre writes of repetition in a similar way. "Since freedom is a being-without-support and without-a-springboard, the project in order to be must be constantly renewed. I choose myself perpetually and can never be merely by virtue of having-been-chosen..." (BN, 456) This sense of renewal mirrors Kierkegaard's description of the primitive man, for the primitive man is primitive insofar as he has never been 'chosen'; nothing is of a second nature; anxiety comes to him freely and without misguided impositions of the mind. Support, which the anxious individual craves, can be viewed as the antithesis of freedom and analogous to inauthenticity. According to Sartre, the goal of existence is authenticity, therefore we cannot rely on our projects that have been. Project is necessarily something that is, and is something to be. It is to be renewed, and it is anxiety that enables this renewal.

A great deal of anxiety's power stems from its ability to revisit Dasein as something surprising. Or rather, Dasein fuels the power of anxiety by opening itself up to authentic possibility, which in turn enables anxiety to be presented as something seemingly new. The opening of one's self toward anxiety is necessary in

order for anxiety to repeat itself, otherwise the call to one's consciousness is ignored in an attempt to assuage uncanniness. Kierkegaard writes, "The possible corresponds exactly to the future...If I am anxious about a past misfortune, then this is not because it is in the past but because it may be repeated, i.e., become future." (CA, 192) At this time, consider anxiety itself as the past misfortune about which Dasein is anxious. She who has not accepted anxiety as the constituent of her being is anxious about anxiety, specifically anxiety as something to be repeated. Anxiety becomes the agent which transcends the realm of the past. I am anxious about anxiety, not because it once happened, but because I never want it to happen again. For the anxious individual, it is a question of *when* and *from where* will it come. However, the pursuit of finding answers is an empty one, for "...what is threatening cannot come closer from a definition direction within nearness, it is already "there"- and yet nowhere. It is so near that it is oppressive and takes away one's breath- and yet it is nowhere." (BT, 180) As beings-in-the-world, that which is accessible to us by way of being-in-the-world is precisely not that which makes us anxious. Anxiety has its roots in the ground of unpredictability, and this terrifies the anxious individual, described as one who craves the security offered by answers, not found in the future, for repetition is found there. The world as my home offers no help during my endurance of anxiety, since the world knows not of things outside itself. In anxiety, I am alone in the most profound sense because that which I am anxious about does not pose a threat to anyone other than myself. No one but me is equipped to deal with it.

In his book *Repetition*, Kierkegaard describes the phenomenon within the framework of freedom and understanding. According to Frederick Sontag, a noted Kierkegaard scholar, SK's views of repetition are as follows: "Repetition gives to the ethical life this beauty through consistency because it develops the equilibrium in the self, without which the self would fall into despair. Thus, the anxiety of dread, which of all moods does the most to destroy happiness, is countered by consciously admitting repetition. The result is the maturity of life." (KH, 122) Repetition, as it allows for consistency, provides us with a complex conception of temporality. If we view the past as that which repeats itself, and the future as that which will be an embodiment of a repeated past, our notion of what it means to be present comes into question. If we understand repetition as a particular form of movement, we see the present as void of repetition, thus we may deem the present as inauthentic. Indeed, Robert Mugerauer, author of *Heidegger and Homecoming: The Leitmotif in the Later Writings*, writes, "The inauthentic focuses on the present, both spatially and temporally, whereas Dasein exists in a different dimension..." (HH, 47) (Dasein exists in this different dimension insofar as Dasein is authentic.) To say anxiety is "countered by consciously admitting repetition" is to say that the anxious individual may turn the experience of anxiety into something positive, insofar as the repetition of anxiety is accepted. To have anxiety about anxiety is to dismiss the potentiality of repetition. In order to consciously admit repetition, one must approach the world with openness and newness, in order to gain access to the insight which repetition itself provides. "To understand repetition is to overcome the unhappiness of recollection." (KH, 124) Repetition and recollection differ in that recollection is a

matter of misconstrued reflection. To recollect an uncomfortable moment of panic is to think, I hope *that* never happens again. To experience repetition is to properly understand anxiety as that which must necessarily be repeated. Recollection evokes in the anxious individual a sense of sadness. By experiencing anxiety as it is repeated, insofar as one is properly educated by possibility, one perceives the phenomenon as nonthreatening and potentially beneficial with respect to the fundamental project of human existence.

I have closed myself off from authentic possibility for the time being. I know this, because while anxiety repeats itself before me, frequently if not daily, I am never surprised by the form in which it comes, nor am I surprised by its arrival. As a so-called later individual, my experiences with anxiety have become second nature. I have suppressed its repetition by means of medicine. I have adopted coping mechanisms that enable me to flee from uncanniness even before the sensation fully discloses itself. The practice of concentrated breathing furthers my being as closed. Breathing, an automatic action, characterizes my aliveness. As the beginning signs of anxiety assault me from everywhere and nowhere, I refer to an apparatus located inside my own body in an effort to achieve inner balance. By breathing, I simultaneously remind myself of my humanness and my aliveness→ my being-in-the-world. In this way, I use my own body as a tool for relaxation. Relaxation, a state of calm, may be seen as synonymous to the “tranquillized familiarity” one finds amongst the ‘they’. (BT, 183) Just as anxiety brings one back to confront one’s own existence, so too does the act of concentrated breathing. The difference between anxiety and breathing with respect to this bringing back, however, is what each

brings Dasein back to. Anxiety brings one back to the ambiguous ground between two choices, complacency and individuality. Breathing, on the other hand, brings Dasein back to the 'they'. Or, perhaps we should say it enables Dasein to reclaim its fallenness. In a similar manner to breathing, language also serves as a helpful tool in combating anxiety. *I have survived this before, I will survive this again*, I think to myself. *This is just anxiety, it will end soon*. Just as the girl supports herself with her own finitude in the face of the infinite abyss, I too find solace in my own finitude by reminding myself that the endurance of anxiety will come to an end. To focus on two constituents of my everydayness reaffirms not only my being-in-the-world, but also my mortality. (In this sense, *being-toward-death* reveals itself as a necessary entity of Dasein's existence.) Breathing and language lend to my appropriation of reality as something established via *consistency*.

"I will say that this is an adventure that every human being must go through- to learn to be anxious in order that he may not perish either by never having been in anxiety or by succumbing in anxiety. Whoever has learned to be anxious in the right way has learned the ultimate." - Søren Kierkegaard

*Part Two: Anxiety as Attunement* reveals anxiety as the means through which Dasein relates to the world. *Learning to be anxious* is arguably the most important element of attunement, along with the Heraclitean notion of listening; Dasein listens to the call of consciousness in order to be brought back onto one's own self. Learning to be anxious and learning to be anxious in the right way appear to be one in the same, as learning to be anxious necessarily includes learning all that it means to be anxious- including the carrying out of anxiety as a motivating force. To



describe the process of *learning to be anxious* as an adventure is to ascribe anxiety itself as the end goal. Complexly, as is written elsewhere in this essay, anxiety is unique in that it is the end AND it is continuous. This is precisely one of the components of learning anxiety- to recognize anxiety, and subsequently living in accordance with the ways of anxiety. This is attunement.

What *exactly* is one to learn about anxiety? Or, how does one learn anxiety? It would appear anxiety is not learned; it is *a priori*. One day in my childhood, it just happened to be that I was nervous. I didn't need to *learn* that I was anxious because I *knew* that I was anxious... Or was that so? As I reflect on earlier years of anxiety, I wasn't certain *what* I was feeling in moments of panic. My knowledge of the phenomenon was limited; I was unable to say much else beyond that I "felt weird" or nervous, or short of breath. It wasn't until my dad told me I was experiencing anxiety that I was able to identify it as something more concrete than merely a bizarre sensation. Here in lies the first step of learning, a pathway during the adventure: recognition. It is recognition that enables any and all movement forward. Before recognition, the positivity associated with anxiety is masked by one's inability to describe the phenomenon. Recognition of anxiety coincides with 'the moment': the sudden occurrence of choice, situated between complacency and progression. "Anxiety is that which places one at the moment of decision about how one should live, about how time itself is experienced." (IKC, 181)

Anxiety itself is necessary in order for Dasein to learn anxiety. Complete participation in time and space allows for the experience of anxiety to present itself. Otherwise, one views the world from the periphery, and anxiety becomes something

unobtainable. To learn anxiety is to be anxious, again and again. In the instance that Dasein neglects to reflect on happenings of anxiety, the meaning is covered by silence. To participate in the adventure that is learning to be anxious, is to be continuously confronted with moments of anxiety. Only once Dasein has acquired the proper knowledge made available during one's adventure (or endurance) through anxiety, is it possible to achieve a life constituted by authenticity.

At this time, we ask *why* it is important to learn to be anxious. Why does Kierkegaard view the adventure of anxiety as a necessity for all human beings? He answers this question as he presents two cases: she who has never been in anxiety, and she who succumbs in anxiety. According to Kierkegaard, neither case is favorable. Moreover, each possesses the danger of perish. She who has never been in anxiety has failed to hear the call of her consciousness. She exists solely as an element of which comprises the 'they'. Her knowledge of herself, the world, and herself as a being-in-the-world, is limited by her lack of experiences. She possesses a distorted representation of her freedom and of her possibility. In the most profound sense, her existence is marked by incompleteness, or perhaps more appropriate, an incomplete expression of self-realization. She has never been assaulted by the moment, despite the moment's attempts. She therefore fails to move alongside the current of anxiety. On the contrary, she who succumbs in anxiety is inhibited in a certain way. She simultaneously fails to seize her own most possibility as she fails to harness the power anxiety could potentially be and provide. Anxiety becomes instead becomes something Dasein is anxious about. In the instance Dasein learns to be anxious in the right way, anxiety is what she is anxious-for. (Heidegger's

adjustment of prepositions describes the way in which anxiety affects Dasein. To say “anxious for” is to make anxiety analogous to desire. Dasein is anxious for, or longs to be, a being-in-the-world.)

For SK, having learned “the ultimate” is to have learned to be anxious in the right way. This notion of the ultimate is logical as we regard anxiety as *the* tool with which we navigate through space and time. If anxiety is the tool Dasein uses in order to propel one’s self forward, and each movement brings one closer toward the goal of authentic existence, then using anxiety to one’s advantage is in fact *the* most important knowledge Dasein can and should acquire. Furthermore, by learning anxiety, one avoids the misfortunes allotted to she who is not anxious, and she who succumbs. In a certain sense, the two can be viewed as opposing lifestyles. He who is educated properly executes the proper lifestyle, according to SK. “If at the beginning of his education he misunderstands the anxiety... then he is lost. On the other hand, whoever is educated (by possibility) remains with anxiety...” (CA, 159) Here, we learn the importance of *learning in the right way* to be anxious, which is distinguished from *learning to be anxious in the right way*. When SK writes of learning to be anxious in the right way, he is describing what it means for Dasein to reap benefits of anxiety. *Learning in the right way* means first and foremost to adequately understand anxiety. He who understands possibility goes on to learn in the right way about the right things. Unlike he who lacks the proper education, he who remains with anxiety is not lost. Rather, he knows the ground upon which he moves for he *is* the ground upon which he moves. Here, anxiety is reinstated as a

guiding and motivating force. These two notions, ground (Heidegger) and lostness (Kierkegaard), appropriately lead us to the discussion of anxiety as dizzying.

“Anxiety may be compared with dizziness. He whose eye happens to look down into the yawning abyss becomes dizzy. But what is the reason for this? It is just as much in his own eye as in the abyss, for suppose he had not looked down. Hence anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself. Freedom succumbs in this dizziness.” (CA, 61)

Firstly, we must identify the markings of dizziness as a sensation, i.e. the experience of being dizzy. Being dizzy is due to one’s state of unbalance. In moments of dizziness, I feel the sway of my body as it struggles to find its center. Objects in my visual field are spinning and distorted. Things lose the meaning they possess in my balanced state. Nothing makes sense. In this present moment as I work to articulate dizziness, I find it similar to anxiety in the way that I am grappling to find the proper vocabulary which would adequately describe the experience. (In the realm outside of philosophy, namely physiology, moments of anxiety are indeed dizzying. I literally feel unbalanced, even nauseous, in instances of panic. Upon reading Kierkegaard’s comparison of anxiety to dizziness, I yet again celebrate philosophy as the means through which I am able to connect strange physical feelings to broader meanings.) I take the “it” Kierkegaard describes as being located in both one’s eye and the abyss, to be that which enables dizziness. As one peers into an abyss, one is made aware of several things, the first being the incompleteness of the abyss. The visual of something infinite produces in the finite being a state of unbalance. Consequently, one is made aware of her immediate relation to that which

is infinite. Kierkegaard argues had she not looked down, she would not feel dizzy. Had she not become aware of the possibility, manifest in the dark, unconceivable hole, she would have remained balanced. Perhaps *oblivious* is a more useful term for her state prior to her loss of balance, as she was oblivious to the hole, representative of freedom. In one's attempt to stop the dizziness, one grabs hold of something stable, something that reassures us of our own inner stability. *The dizziness produced by the awareness of the abyss's infiniteness is analogous to anxiety produced by the awareness of possibility, specifically the possibility of freedom.* Importantly, both dizziness and anxiety coincide with uncertainty. In the case of the abyss, the bottom is uncertain. In the case of time, the future is uncertain. It is the concept of uncertainty that provokes in the anxious individual the dizzying realization of her own potentiality. Even more notable amongst the similarities between dizziness and anxiety, is the subject's desire for the experience to stop. In dizziness, that feeling of unbalance and disarray is comparable to the uncanniness one experiences in anxiety. In an effort to seek refuge from the phenomenon, one seeks that which is stable, certain, and seemingly permanent. Just as she who peers into the abyss steadies herself with her own finitude, the anxious subject escapes uncanniness by *fleeing*.

The concept of fleeing gives way to two distinct ideas: fleeing toward and fleeing from. (Here again we see the importance of language, specifically the use of prepositions, as a subtle change profoundly changes a word's meaning.) In flight, the individual demonstrates her capacity to abandon the discomfort of her immediacy. Heidegger writes, "Entangled flight *into* the being-at-home of publicness is flight

*from not-being-at-home*, that is, from the uncanniness which lies in Dasein as thrown, as being-in-the-world entrusted to itself in its being.” (BT, 183) In anxiety, and given that one is educated properly, flight from the world is a flight *toward* authenticity. The mission of anxiety is to facilitate the movement that is flight, but it is a flight *from* publicness and home. In spite of anxiety’s will, Dasein also possesses the capacity to utilize flight in such a way that she may flee uncanniness. Thus fleeing is demonstrative of Dasein’s ability to transcend into the realm most favorable at any given time. Most often, we fly toward what feels good, *not* what is ethically appropriate.

At this time, I wish to enter a brief discussion on the significance of home; the location of one’s existence is the world. Here, one exhibits being-in-the-world. In the world, I am home, for home is representative of all things Dasein regards most familiar. The things that make up my home are things whose significance I know, value, and foster. Additionally, home possesses the notion of habituation; it is a place revisited where similar, if not the same, actions occur. The area is enclosed, the boundaries literal or imaginary. The goal of the boundaries is to separate what is home from what is not home- what is personally constructed and thus familiar, from that which is unfamiliar, unknown, and abstract. In my home, my perceptions of my sensory contents are consistent and affirmed with each revisit. The meaning I associate with things has become second nature; it requires no contemplation. Instead, I have a sense of predictability and security. I feel at ease. I *feel at home* in my home. By inhabiting the world, I am demonstrating my desire to familiarize my surroundings. I want to feel comfortable, and to establish the relations that will

ground me. *I want to feel at home*. In his chapter “At Home in Metaphysics’ Uncanny Homelessness”, Mugerauer writes, “...Genuine homecoming would amount to a refusal of the comfortable being-at-home and instead enter into not-being-at-home in the uncanny...” (HH, 43) With Mugerauer’s help, we are able to make the distinction between being-at-home and feeling-at-home. Or, perhaps the distinction should instead be made between home and world. As we have asserted, the human being always already exists in the world as a being-in-the-world. To feel at home is to live amidst familiarity, and publicness- to borrow from Heidegger. In order to achieve an existence marked by authentic possibility, it is necessary for the individual in question to change their conception of home; to find a *new* home, namely within the realm of authenticity, which is represented by feelings of uncanniness. To deem *home* as that which is unfamiliar is to abandon the public realm of the ‘they’, as well as what is commonly conceived of as home. Thus by viewing *home* as that which is achieved by feeling not-at-home, one accepts anxiety and thereby *lives* in an auspiciously precarious state of being. But in his text, Mugerauer concerns himself with the issues of *homecoming*, in addition to home. Homecoming, to come home, is to return to a state of being-at-home. *Genuine* homecoming, from the perspective of Mugerauer and Heidegger, means for the individual to come home; but home takes on a radically different meaning. Dasein, insofar as it is authentic, lives in a dimension contrary to that which everyone else considers home. So, Dasein is home in authenticity. To feel a sense of homelessness is to be at home, insofar as home is analogous to the ground of possibility. With respect to authentic existence, the concept of home should be conceptualized as a

combination of concreteness and ambiguity. “The crucial point for us is that in everydayness the mode of being ‘at home’ does *not* realize Dasein’s full potential: indeed, it prevents it from coming to itself.” (HH, 34)

We revisit the notion of flight by reviewing Jean-Paul Sartre’s conception. He writes, “I flee in order not to know, but I can not avoid knowing that I am fleeing; and the flight from anguish is only a mode of becoming conscious of anguish.” (BN, 43) *What does Dasein wish not to know? Anxiety itself*. For Sartre, flight from anguish is what he calls *bad faith*. But in order to properly delve into *bad faith* as it applies to our discussion, we must first revisit the fundamental aspects of Sartre’s philosophy, briefly described earlier. The framework of *temporality* shapes the concept of anguish. Using the past, present, and future as guidelines for consciousness gives way to a concrete discussion of freedom. According to Sartre, we as humans exhibit absolute freedom. In fact, as he famously stated, “we are condemned to be free.” Although sinister in tone, his use of the word condemn perhaps best describes the inevitable predicament of existence, manifest in anguish. In addition to being free, we are also responsible beings. We live freely and we must act in accordance with our responsibility as that which assigns meaning to the world in which we live. Thirdly, we are conscious beings. Complexly, as conscious beings, we are conscious of being conscious. This is what Sartre calls self-reflective consciousness, “where consciousness becomes its own object.” (RPG, JPS, 21) Self-reflective consciousness is analogous to Heidegger’s discussion of self-consciousness. As the individual is made aware of his own consciousness, he realizes his self as something conscious; a



being that exists. Self-consciousness is most generally conceived of as having to do with vulnerability, evoked by the Other. In this context, self-conscious describes the realization of one's own self as free. Furthermore, it enables the awareness of the presence of anxiety. For in anxiety, one is utterly alone. An important part of self-consciousness is the understanding of this aloneness; to be conscious of one's self, as that which possesses the power to advance the fundamental project at hand, namely the continued execution of responsible freedom.

Because we are conscious of our consciousness, a complex element must be considered in one's flight from anguish, namely bad faith. "*Bad faith: A lie to oneself within the unity of a single consciousness.*" (Barnes/ BN, 547) We see here under Sartre's view that flight from anxiety does not eliminate anxiety; rather flight may be seen as temporary means of assuaging the discomfort associated with anxiety. Flight is one's attempt to forget anxiety exists. According to Heidegger however, there is a latent anxiety in all of us, and it may be the case that we are at one time or another presented with the choice of accepting or ignoring it. To be in anxiety is to have accepted what one inherently possesses. Sartre means to speak along similar lines. In flight from anxiety, one attempts to fool one's own self into thinking she have indeed taken flight- but absolute flight is impossible, for one is conscious of one's own intent. Bad faith describes one's inability to flee anxiety completely, due to self-reflective consciousness.

"This means that anguish, the intentional aim of anguish, and a flight from anguish toward reassuring myths must all be given in the unity of the same consciousness. In a word, I flee in order not to know, but I can not avoid knowing that I am fleeing; and the flight from anguish is only a mode of becoming conscious of anguish. Thus anguish, properly speaking, can be neither hidden nor avoided." (BN, 43)

We see here the differing perspectives of Heidegger and Sartre. While Heidegger claims that inauthentic existence is one's avoidance of anxiety, Sartre argues by way of bad faith that anxiety cannot be avoided. In fact, the conceptions of flight as being *away* or *toward* anxiety prove that Heidegger views anxiety as something Dasein can in fact avoid. As Dasein transcends into the public sphere, she abandons the private sphere, compartmentalizing authenticity as something that exists *over there*. Sartre argues by way of bad faith that the self is always aware of anxiety's existence as something that exists *here*.

### Part Three

In this section, I will detail the views of Medard Boss and Leslie H. Farber, two thinkers who beautifully articulate and juxtapose the phenomenon of anxiety within the scope of existentialist thinking. Additionally, I will demonstrate connections between the aforementioned philosophical opinions of Heidegger, Sartre, and Kierkegaard, and readings I acquired from sessions in cognitive behavioral therapy. Boss and Farber will aid in my analysis by serving as the bridge between the physical experience of anxiety and the discussion of anxiety. For anxiety affects the anxious individual in more ways than assaulting her with the 'moment', namely physiological responses like shortness of breath and tightness of the chest- characteristics of the fight or flight response of the human body in the face of danger. I will also address what I believe to be the opposite of anxiety. Flight towards the 'they' enables Dasein to flee the immediacy of her situation, but in *what specific state of being* is Dasein in periods of ease?

In *Anxiety, Guilt and Psychotherapeutic Liberation*, Medard Boss begins his essay by describing the *Of What* and the *About What* of anxiety. He writes, "The *Of What* involved in every anxiety is always a crippling attack on the integrity of the human existence...The *About What* of human anxiety is thus *existence* itself in so far as every anxiety is always concerned and fearful about the existence's continuing integrity." (REPP, 77) What does it mean for one's existence to have integrity? Integrity refers to the intactness of something. Integrity of the human existence therefore describes existence as that which persists. Although subtle, the distinction between the two modes of anxiety is of great significance. The *Of What* refers to the

fundamental aspect of anxiety; it is concentrated anxiety manifest in 'the moment'. The anxious individual is anxious about the possibility of an assault on existence. And because, in its assault, anxiety disguises itself as an attack on the integrity of one's existence, one is thus anxious about anxiety. The *About What*, "which it feels alarmed about", is existence itself, for existence is that which the subject wishes to preserve *and* that which becomes subject to destruction. The *About What* serves as a more general explanation for the presence of anxiety. As one acknowledges her existence, she is simultaneously confronted with the reality of the end of her existence, and this evokes anxiety. Anxiety as a continuous manifestation of this realization is therefore one's awareness and desire to avoid death, which Boss poetically describes as an attack on life's integrity. This is self-consciousness. It would then appear that an oblivious existence is one's way out of the *Of What* and the *About What*. To disregard the reality of existence is to live non-anxious. Is this in fact *the way* to overcome anxiety? "The highest aim of all psychotherapy is and remains the opening up of our patients to an ability-to-love-and-trust which permits all oppression by anxiety and guilt to be surmounted as mere misunderstandings. Such trust can and may be fitly called the most mature form of human openness." (REPP, 89) We see then that *openness*, from which love and trust stem, becomes the key to accepting anxiety. Through love, trust, and ultimately openness, the anxious individual is capable of viewing anxiety's in-itself; *what it really is*. And what is anxiety? –*a misunderstanding*, according to Boss.

Let us now reflect on the following excerpt from *Being and Time*: "What crowds in upon us is not this or that, nor is it everything objectively present

together a sum, but the *possibility* of things at hand in general, that is, the world itself. When anxiety has subsided, in our everyday way of talking we are accustomed to say, "it was really nothing." (BT, 181) *It was really nothing* describes precisely what anxiety is: a nothingness, concretized by immediacy, within the senseless and meaningless world in which the anxious individual lives. In a world in which all meaning is rendered useless, the anxious individual grows dizzy with confusion and fear. As the world regains meaning and the anxiety has gone away, one looks back with coherency and acknowledges that the moment lacked reasonable, substantial evidence of impending danger. *It was just a misunderstanding, now I see that it was really nothing.* This notion in its entirety is strengthened by an essay I was assigned to read by a cognitive behavioral therapist. Here, we see language as the tool through which understanding is conveyed, and understanding is the tool through which I learn to be anxious. The excerpt reads, "We call these thoughts and images automatic because they are rapid and spontaneous and occur without logical thinking or analysis. The automatic thoughts and images seem plausible when they occur, but are often less believable in retrospect. Looking back, it may be clear that they are distorted- unrealistic, exaggerated, or wholly erroneous." Alas, the psychiatrist and the philosopher see eye to eye. Boss, Heidegger, and X articulate anxiety's ability to confuse the subject, as 'the moment' puts fourth a misleading intensity.

Like Boss, Leslie H. Farber defines anxiety as a "painful state invoked by threat to human integrity." (REPP, 284) Her essay "Will and Anxiety" works to distinguish between anxiety as it is a basic human power, and will as *the* power

which drives all human actions. It is under her belief that the definition of anxiety remains problematic in its ambiguity. This ambiguity is due to one's tendency to describe other states of being, among which include uncertainty, alienation, and queasiness, as anxiety. While these three are surely symptoms of anxiety, they do not necessarily place the subject *in* anxiety. Her critique of the phenomenological perspective of anxiety aids in her analysis of the will.

She writes, "Unlike the will, which pushes actively toward its goal, whether appropriate or inappropriate, anxiety is an ache which helplessly cries for relief." (REPP, 284) Immediately, we may view the difference between will and anxiety as a matter of physiological discomfort. As the will aids in the forward movement of the human being's fundamental project, anxiety is that which brings the project to an abrupt halt, forcing the individual to get rid of their anxious feelings in one way or another. Farber makes the claim that philosophical theories have placed too much importance on anxiety, naming it as a force of equal capacity to the will. She asserts that anxiety should instead be viewed as the "...range of distress which attends willing what cannot be willed... anxiety can be located in the ever-widening split between the will and the impossible object of the will." (REPP, 288) Perhaps then anxiety stands as an antithesis to will, as it attempts to bring about that which cannot be brought about. *We should understand the "impossible object of the will" as that which anxiety simultaneously inhibits and considers.* From this definition, we are able to better understand anxiety as possessing qualities of deception. Let us consider a mundane example in order to elucidate these claims. I grow anxious as I consider the possibility of the plane on which I am a passenger crashing. The more

anxious I become, the more horrid places I am taken by my imagination. Regardless of my anxiety and the thoughts it brings about, my worrying has no influence or power over the outcome of my plane ride. This is what Farber means by the widening gap between will and the impossible object of the will; my anxiety grows and widens the gap, and I move farther and farther away from both the will and its object. It appears that Farber's conception of anxiety as that which falls between an A and B mirrors the philosophical perspective, which illustrates anxiety as the middle ground between complacency and continued progression. Consider the following statements:

1. (A)Complacency → ← Anxiety → Individuality(B)
2. (A)Will → ← Anxiety → Impossible Object of the Will(B)

In the first statement, we see anxiety as the force that enables transgression into complacency or individuality. Failure to seize one's own most possibility, according to Heidegger, leads one into the public sphere; the 'they'; the realm of complacency. The choosing of the possibility of choice leads one toward a life constituted by individuality. In the second statement, anxiety is located between the will and the impossible object of the will. Therefore, anxiety is that which muddles the clear vision of she who wills. The more time she spends in anxiety, the wider the space grows between A and B- just as is the case in statement one. Anxiety inhibits her continuation onto the object of the will, therefore deeming it impossible.

In short, anxiety falls between A and B in both the psychoanalytic perspective and the philosophical perspective. In statement 1, anxiety, when taken to be a

*misunderstanding* leads the subject towards A. In the case of statement 2, anxiety is presupposed as a misunderstanding, always already inhibiting the subject's intentional aim, namely the object of the will. *Importantly, it is the will that serves as the force which facilitates movement across sphere's of existence*, according to Farber. "Anxiety may be an ache which cries for relief, but whether or what will occur cannot be anxiety's decision." (REPP, 289)

At this time, let us revisit the nonverbal aspect of anxiety, as it pertains to the will.

"The failure of meaning, which is said to be characteristic of anxiety, stems from the deprivation of resources and the withering of the will's goal in the face of the will's demands. Because of this failure, eventually the anxious person may no longer be able to say what he is anxious about." (REPP, 290)

"Resources" refers to the powers of intellect and imagination- tools that allow for the articulation of anxiety as a phenomenon that occurs from within, as well as the articulation of the surrounding world. Deprivation of intellect and imagination coupled with an unachievable goal leaves the individual utterly lost. Just as Heidegger writes of the "withering away of the world", Farber too writes of the failure of meaning. Here, she furthers the Heideggerian perspective of anxiety as that which assaults from "everywhere and nowhere" by discussing the notion of will. To say, "the withering of the will's goal in the face of the will's demands" is to reiterate anxiety as that which falls between the will and the impossible object of the will. Anxiety occurs not only because of this aforementioned deprivation, but also because of the will's inability to accomplish its own aim. This phenomenon is



illustrative of anxiety's *self-perpetuating nature*. Anxiety grows; the gap widens; the will's demands of survival increase; the goal of meaning withers away.

Earlier it is mentioned that with love and trust, one is able to achieve the openness that allows for the overcoming of anxiety; this is the ultimate aim of psychotherapy according to Medard Boss. It appears then that love and trust are the antitheses of anxiety. How is this so? It is not the case that the non-anxious individual is perpetually in love, nor are they perpetually trusting. To understand love and trust as anxiety's opposites, one must not consider the *object of one's love*, nor the *object of one's trust*. Importance is placed instead on love and trust as they stand as distractions of the mind, and their ability to lead one away from the restrictiveness of anxiety, into an openness toward existence. In the case of one who loves, Boss views the subject as having a "more comprehensive, authentic understanding of the nature of human existence" than the anxious individual. (REPP, 83) This is because he views anxiety as that which constricts one's interpretation of meaning in its efforts to drive the subject to self-awareness. Even more radical is his view of dying, with respect to *he who loves the world*. While the anxious individual views death as "an impending attack on integrity", he who loves the world considers death to be an "absorption in the greater entirety of what is loved". (REPP, 83) Love promotes one's openness while anxiety brings about a certain kind of narrowness one feels compelled to fight against. It is this openness that translates into one's opening toward possibility. (Nevertheless, it is anxiety itself that precedes one's will to be open.)

The significance of trust is necessary in the discussion of anxiety. As we have asserted, the anxious individual is anxious about that which is *uncertain*, namely the repetition of anxiety. As the anxious individual contemplates her future, the lack of concreteness and answers drives her to a greater level of anxiety, where uncertainty evokes a continuously bombarding stream of invalid and illogical thoughts. *To trust is to surrender to uncertainty*. Just as the lover opens herself up to the world, trust enables the individual to abandon anxieties circulating that which is undetermined; the future. In order to assuage anxiety, one must trust the world and its possibilities. Otherwise, she is permanently in limbo between complacency and anxiety. "It almost seems as if human life comprised a counterforce to anxiety, showing itself in the phenomena of love, trust, security...where love, security and trust prevail all anxiety can fade away." (REPP, 81)

### *Concluding Thoughts*

The philosophies of Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Søren Kierkegaard bring an important ideal to the forefront: anxiety is a necessary component in aiding the fundamental project of the human being. By serving as the bridge between two spheres, anxiety insofar as it is recognized enables the individual to move into the dimension of authenticity. To live a life constituted by authentic possibility is to demonstrate human freedom. To live freely is to ride the wave of anxiety.

I stated at the outset of this essay that my hope was for my philosophical pursuit, to which my reader was witness, would end in such a way that I would be calmer and my reader would be anxious. At this time, I have finished my pursuit of anxiety (for the time being), and I remain hopeful that my reader is indeed presently anxious. I am even more hopeful that my reader understands *exactly* what I mean when I say this.

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