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I stepped into an avalanche  
It covered up my soul

Leonard Cohen

(Cohen, L, 1971, Track 1)



This untitled drawing was kindly contributed by artist Cheryl Gilchrist and was commissioned for this thesis, based on the above lyric from Leonard Cohen.

# INTRODUCTION

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This paper is an analysis of the ontological structure of ‘despair.’ It is an existential cartography of disconsolate sorrow, an attempt to map a phenomenon that is some kind of treachery, a bleakness steeped in shadow. Despair is a despondency that deconstructs and disrupts the way the world can matter to the subject, where meaningfulness and intelligibility corrode and collapse so that existence is haunted by a darkly absurd irreality. In this way, despair is a reckoning with the emptiness inherent in a loss of meaning in Being. As despair unravels, death both threatens and seems utterly unattainable. This is perhaps the most disconcerting implication of despair: that, that which would end the suffering is unreachable because temporality, with its critical component of ‘*Being-towards-death*’ has collapsed. Death not only seems no longer inevitable, but it seems impossible.

In its attempt to understand the ontological structure of this phenomenon despair, this paper is theorised within the framework of Heidegger’s existential analytic, put forward in ‘*Being and Time*’ (Heidegger, M, 2008). This means that this paper will draw on Heidegger’s understanding of ontology, which diverges somewhat from Aristotle’s. As Inwood identifies, Heidegger criticises the traditional Greek conception of ontology because he claims it ambiguously conflates ‘what is’ and the ‘being’ of what is (Inwood, M, 1999, pg 147) Alternatively, Heidegger understands ontology as the investigation of the ground or fundament of ‘*Being as such*,’ effectively the meaning of Being, rather than the investigation of ‘beings’ (See Inwood, M, 1999, pg 148). For Heidegger, the investigation of the meaning of Being as such is necessarily realised through the investigation of ‘*Dasein*,’ where Dasein means ‘there-being,’ and is Heidegger’s unique conception of the human subject.

In determining the existential ontological structure of Dasein, Heidegger discusses the ‘*care structure*,’ which understands the human condition as being existentially structured as ‘*Thrown Projection*’- and as necessarily ‘*Being-in-the-world*.’ This paper will accordingly understand ‘*Thrownness*,’ as realised in mood, as the subject’s affective situatedness or ‘*attunement*.’ Thrownness conditions the way the world can

matter to the subject and temporally it is designated as the 'past.' Whilst it will understand 'Projection' as that which reflects the idea that the subject is always ahead of itself, pressing into possibilities through 'understanding,' and working towards projects. Importantly one's definitive ownmost project is that of Being-towards-death and thus temporally, projection designates the futural aspect of the subject.

This paper will contend that the affective attunement of despair radically disrupts and dismantles the Heideggerian structure of Being known as 'thrown projection' or 'thrown possibility.' It will be argued that the ontological structure of despair is 'thrown impossibility,' and effectively that it is lived impossibility as such. This means that the unique 'thrownness' of despair is an affective conditioning that utterly diminishes the capacity for projection into meaningful possibilities through understanding, and dismantles the subject's most definitive, ownmost possibility, which is Being-towards-death. This fundamental disruption to the existential constitution of the subject has profound ontological implications that are thus far largely unrealised in critical analyses of melancholia and major depression within conventional psychiatry. This paper is an attempt to disclose the ontological *meaning* of the radical loss of the ground of hope that occurs amidst despair, it is an attempt to uncover the ontological meaning of sorrowful lived impossibility as such.

### **Introduction:**

The remainder of this introduction will first give an outline of the various sections of this paper and what they will each undertake to analyse. It will secondly give a preparatory exposition of Heidegger's existential analytic of Being-in-the-world as 'thrown projection,' by first looking at thrownness, which is constituted by 'affectedness' or 'attunement' that is realised in Heidegger's unique conception of mood, and then at projection, which is constituted by understanding. Thus this introduction will set up the 'ordinary' existential structure of Heidegger's Dasein. This preparatory analysis is critical because Sections One, Two and Three, the vast majority of this paper, will then show how this fundamental existential structure is radically dismantled and reconfigured in the phenomenon of despair.

## Section One:

Section One of this paper will concentrate on the Thrownness of despair. This will involve a phenomenological analysis of the mood of despair and the unique way in which it affectively conditions the world as mattering (or ceasing to matter) to the subject. This phenomenology will draw on research in the fields of the philosophy of psychiatry and psychoanalysis, which will be integrated with more poetic reflections on despair in an attempt to demonstrate that despair is lived impossibility as such, involving a withdrawal from the world, a withdrawal from others and a radical diminishing of the capacity to strive towards possibilities: all of which is experienced amidst the suffering of disconsolate sorrow.

## Section Two:

Having analysed the *thrownness* of despair in the phenomenological study of Section One, Section Two will begin to examine the way *projection* or *possibility* is radically diminished in despair. In order to do this, Section Two will draw up a comparison between the phenomenology of despair as discerned in Section One and Heideggerian anxiety. Through using the work of Dreyfus, who determines that Heideggerian anxiety can be understood through either a positive or negative existential reduction, it will become apparent that despair is an *aspect* of Heideggerian anxiety only in its *negative* existential reduction. This analysis will then serve as a preparatory structure for showing how in despair, the capacity for projection into possibilities through understanding is radically diminished and even dismantled altogether. It will become apparent that the most significant implication of the collapse of the capacity to project into possibilities, is the collapse of the capacity to project into one's ownmost, definitive possibility, which is Being-towards-death. What is most insufferable and disquieting about despair as thrown impossibility, it will be argued, is that death itself becomes impossible.

### Section Three:

Section Three will attempt to map the analyses of Sections One and Two onto Heidegger's 'temporal care structure' because, for Heidegger, the ontological condition of thrown projection is made coherent through its grounding in temporality. This section will demonstrate that the diminishing of the capacity for projection that occurs in despair is reflected in the collapse of the 'horizon' of temporality: so that the subject becomes detached and disconnected from time. It will be argued that as thrown impossibility, despair involves the collapse of the temporal horizon, but especially the futural ecstasis, which according to Watts is arguably the most important of the three 'temporal ecstases.' Through demonstrating that it is the subject's futural self that collapses in despair, it will again be emphasised that despair is characterised by lived impossibility as such, the most unbearable implication of which is the impossibility of death.

### Conclusion:

The conclusion of this paper will briefly summarise the preceding analysis of the ontological structure of despair, emphasising the conclusion that in despair death becomes impossible which in turn makes life itself impossible. It will conclude with the idea that an ontological analysis of despair has stirring implications for the understanding, intervention and treatment of melancholia or major depression that are only beginning to be realised.

### Thrown Projection as realised in Affectedness and Understanding

To begin with, it is important to recognise that Heidegger's overall philosophical project, put forward most influentially in 'Being and Time,' (Heidegger, M, 2008) is an ontological inquiry into the human being. More specifically, it is an ontological inquiry into the structures which make it possible to *be* human (See



Dreyfus, H and Wrathall, M in Dreyfus, H and Wrathall, M (eds) 2007). Crucially, Heidegger is arguing against a Cartesian understanding of Being, which comprehends Being as being grounded in a subjective consciousness, and instead attempts a more Aristotelian analysis, whereby Being is grounded 'objectively' in the world and existence is thus constituted as Being-in-the-world. As Dreyfus and Wrathall reflect,

“One of Heidegger’s most innovative and important insights is that the essence of the human mode of existence is found in our always already existing in a world...For Heidegger, our way of being is found not in our thinking nature, but in our existing in a world. And our being is intimately and inextricably bound up with the world that we find ourselves in.” (Dreyfus, H and Wrathall, M in Dreyfus, H and Wrathall, M (eds) 2007, pg 4- 5)

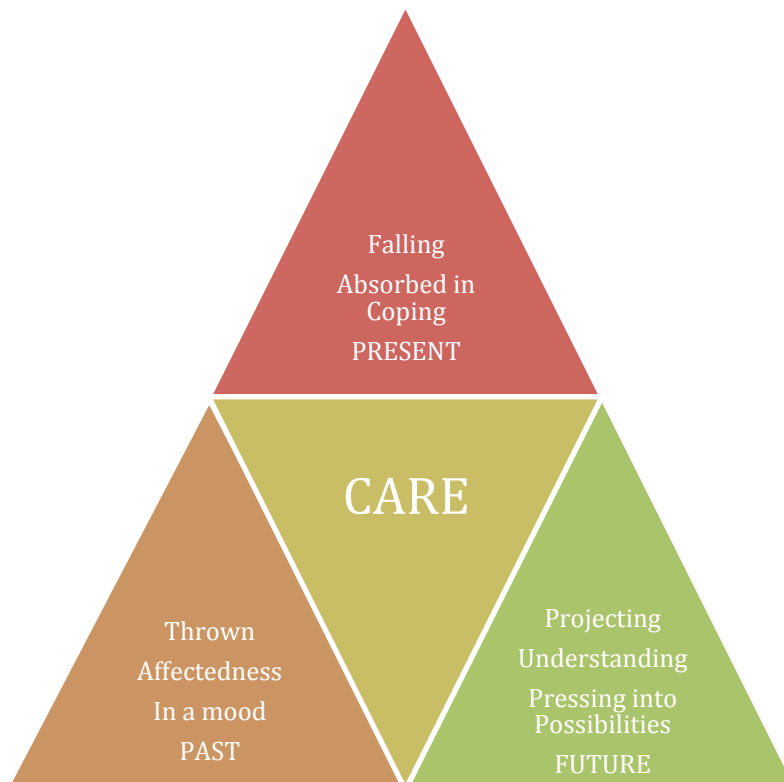
Thus Heidegger’s existential analytic in ‘Being and Time’ is an attempt to explicate the ontological structures that make Being possible and crucially argues that Being is always already ‘Being-in-the-world.’ In analysing the ontological structure of Being-in-the-world, Heidegger determines that Dasein’s fundamental condition is necessarily ‘Thrown Projection’ where thrownness is affectedness or attunement as realised through mood and projection is projection into possibilities through understanding. Thrownness, expressed temporally as the past, and Projection, expressed temporally as the future. Along with these is ‘Falling,’ which is Dasein’s everyday, inauthentic absorption in the world of ‘the They’ expressed temporally as the present, make up Dasein’s ‘care structure.’ It is thrownness and projection, as affectedness and understanding, which will be the focus of this inquiry.

In his important work ‘Being-in-the-world: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time,’ (Dreyfus, H, 1991) Dreyfus explains that “Affectedness and Understanding are two correlative aspects of Dasein’s disclosing of its current world- two aspects of Dasein’s openness.” (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 184) Importantly they are structured as thrown projection or thrown possibility, where thrownness reflects affectedness and projection or possibility reflects understanding. As Heidegger writes “As *existentialia*, states-of-mind and understanding characterise the primordial disclosedness of Being-in-the-world. By way of having a mood, Dasein ‘sees’ possibilities, in terms of which it is. In the projective disclosure of such possibilities, it already has a mood in every

case.” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 188) Importantly, affectedness constitutes ‘how one finds oneself,’ one’s situatedness or facticity, which is disclosed through moods, and conditions how the world can ‘matter’ to the subject. Whilst understanding on Dreyfus’ reading of Heidegger constitutes ‘being able to manage something,’ ‘being competent to do something,’ ‘knowing how,’ or ‘being capable of.’ (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 184)

The following table is adapted from Dreyfus’s analysis of Heidegger’s care structure and exhibits the structure of existence as being thrown projection. (See Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 240):

**Figure 1: Heidegger’s care structure**



**Thrownness reflected in Affectedness**

In §29 of *Being and Time*, Heidegger explicates his conception of thrownness through the idea of affectedness or attunement, which he calls *Befindlichkeit*. Working with the 2008 translation of *Being and Time* by Macquarrie and Robinson (Heidegger, M, 2008), Dreyfus discusses the difficulty in translating Heidegger's use of the word *Befindlichkeit*, for which he means 'the receptive aspect of Dasein's way of being, that it just *finds* things and ways of acting mattering to it.' (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 168) Dreyfus explains that *Befindlichkeit* is not an ordinary word in German but is rather 'constructed from an everyday greeting' that asks, 'How do you find yourself?' (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 168) For Dreyfus, Macquarrie and Robinson's term 'state-of-mind' is completely inadequate as this suggests inaccurately a "mental state, a determinate condition of an isolable, occurrent subject," where "Heidegger is at pains to show that the sense we have of how things are going is precisely *not* a private mental state." (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 168) Dreyfus then sketches some different possibilities for the translation of the term *Befindlichkeit*, such as "disposition," "situatedness" and "where-you're-at-ness," which he decides are all inadequate because they "fail to convey the idea of *being found in a situation where things and options already matter.*" (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 168) Dreyfus eventually resolves that the term 'affectedness' most meaningfully conveys Heidegger's idea for Dasein's situatedness, the conditions structuring things mattering to it in the world.

Sometime after Dreyfus's analysis from 1991, the 2010 Stambaugh translation of *Being and Time* (Heidegger, M, 2010) translates *Befindlichkeit* as 'attunement,' which is far more adequate than Macquarrie and Robinson's 'state-of-mind' because it evokes less of an interior mental state and more of the way Dasein, as being-in-the-world, finds itself in a situation in which things already matter. Importantly though, this thesis will use the Macquarrie and Robinson translation of 'Being and Time' throughout primarily because this is the translation that most commentaries and critiques work with and it will necessarily prevent confusion. The Stambaugh translation has not yet received enough critical appraisal for it to be admitted as the primary text.

Importantly for Heidegger, attunement is disclosed through Dasein's *Stimmung*, which is translated by both Macquarrie and Robinson and Stambaugh as 'mood.' Heidegger writes of mood that "What we indicate *ontologically* by the term 'state-of-

mind' is *ontically* what is the most familiar and everyday sort of thing; our mood, our Being-attuned." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 172) In apprehending mood as the way attunement is disclosed it is important to realize that for Heidegger, Dasein is always in some variety of mood, as he writes, "The fact that moods can deteriorate [verdorben werden] and change over means simply that in every case Dasein always has some mood [gestimmt ist]." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 173) Thus Dasein is always already situated through attunement, which is realised through mood.

Attunement as realised through mood expresses the idea that Dasein is always already immersed in the world, always already *situated* in thrownness. Attunement thus reflects Dasein's *facticity* of having been delivered over to the world (See Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 174). Through this situatedness in the world, attunement crucially discloses Dasein's Being as necessarily being-in-the-world, where "*The mood has always already disclosed, in every case, Being-in-the-world as a whole, and makes it possible first of all to direct oneself towards something*" (Heidegger, M, 2008, 176). Thus moods disclose Dasein's thrownness as situatedness in the world, as being immersed in a world in which things can have meaningful significance.

This emphasis on being as Being-in-the-world is crucial for Heidegger, as Blattner writes, "Phenomenologically, moods are atmospheres in which we are steeped, not interior conditions." (Blattner, W, 2006, pg 77) Importantly, this means that moods are pre-objective and pre-subjective and not inner psychological phenomena as Heidegger emphasises: "A mood assails us. It comes from neither 'outside' nor from 'inside,' but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such Being" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 176). Crucially "Having a mood is not related to the psychical in the first instance, and is not itself an inner condition which then reaches forth in an enigmatical way and puts its mark on Things and persons." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 176).

In addition, moods- having disclosed Dasein as situated as thrown Being-in-the-world- they also disclose the worldliness of the world through enabling it to *matter* to Dasein. Moods are not emergent epiphenomena, but fundamentally constitutive of Being. Through attunement, the world can have meaningful and intelligible significance. As Ratcliffe emphasises, moods 'constitute a sense of belonging to the

world,' where they "constitute the range of ways in which things are able to matter to us, and are thus essential to a sense of the kinds of significant possibility that the world can offer up for us." (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C, pg 3) As Heidegger writes, "*Existentially, a state-of-mind implies a disclosive submission to the world, out of which we can encounter something that matters to us*" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 177). Where "Dasein's openness to the world is constituted existentially by the attunement of a state-of-mind" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 176). Importantly then, for Heidegger, moods are fundamentally constitutive of the subject's being as thrown Being-in-the-world and comprehensively condition the way the world can be experienced, apprehended and understood.

Heidegger's unique theory of affect has radical implications for the way this paper attempts to conceive of despair. Following from above, the mood of despair should not be considered an emergent epiphenomenon, but as fundamentally constitutive of how the world is constructed, apprehended and afforded (or negated) meaning and significance. From this perspective, despair is a unique instantiation of thrownness as affectedness or attunement and it conditions the way the world can matter (or cease to matter) to the subject in a very specific way.

As explained above, Section One of this paper will undertake a phenomenology of the ground mood of despair in order to intricately explain the complex way it conditions the subjects' Being-in-the-world, specifically the way it causes the world to sink away, with the structures of signification collapsing, dissolving into unintelligibility and meaninglessness so that the subject feels utterly bewildered and uncanny.

### **Projection reflected in Understanding**

Having explicated how Heidegger's existential analytic understands 'thrownness' as affectedness or attunement reflected in mood of which despair is a specific instantiation, it is now important to determine how Heidegger understands 'projection' into possibilities which is reflected in understanding. This preparatory analysis will establish how Heidegger understands the existential structure of thrown

projection for ‘ordinary’ Dasein, which provides the conceptual context for the remainder of this paper, which will analyse how this structure is radically altered in despair.

As thrownness is reflected in affectedness, projection, as the way the subject presses forward into possibilities, is reflected in understanding. According to Richardson, understanding is “what its Being is capable of”: an intuitive, pre-cognitive ‘know-how’ that is implicit and often unconscious. (Richardson, J, 2012, pg 106) This idea is reflected in Heidegger’s use of the German word ‘*Verstehen*’ which means ‘to stand or take a stand in the open’ and implies a ‘clear grasp of a thing as a whole, but no necessary reference to any preceding process of thought’ (See Inwood, M, 1999, pg 234). This is distinct from the other German word for understand- ‘*Verstand*’- which is the ‘*faculty* of understanding, intellect or common sense,’ (Inwood, M, 1999, pg 234) and implies ‘conceptual comprehension’ which is derivative of the former and does not convey Heidegger’s sense that to Understand is a pre-cognitive, pre-theoretical capability or know-how.

This ‘knowing how’ or ‘ability-to-be’ of understanding is for Heidegger constituted by projection, which is a pressing into possibilities that signifies a ‘for-the-sake-of-which,’ ‘in-order-to’ or ‘towards-this.’ (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 120) Heidegger writes that “*Understanding is the existential Being of Dasein’s own potentiality-for-Being; and it is so in such a way that this Being discloses in itself what its Being is capable of.*” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 184) In this way Being is understood as Being-possible in understanding where “Dasein is never more than it factually is, for to its facticity its potentiality-for-Being belongs essentially. Yet as Being-possible, moreover, Dasein is never anything less; that is to say it *is* existentially that which, in its potentiality-for-Being, it is *not yet.*” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 185-186)

Understanding as projection into possibilities is the capacity responsible for the meaningfulness and intelligibility of the world and of Others, which is described as ‘significance,’ and of the subject’s own self-reflexive, self-conscious reckoning with their ownmost potentiality-for-Being, which is an issue for them, and is described as the ‘for-the-sake-of-which.’ This meaningfulness is derived from concerned interpretation and is arranged into ‘structures of signification’ or ‘referential totalities’

(Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 68). Understanding thus has an important interpretive function, as Heidegger writes, “In the projecting of understanding, entities are disclosed in their possibility... When entities within-the-world are discovered along with the Being of Dasein- that is, when they have come to be understood- we say that they have *meaning*... *Meaning is the ‘upon-which’ of a projection in terms of which something becomes intelligible as something* (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 192-193).

This meaningfulness of the world, Others and the subject’s ownmost ability to be is thus derived from projective understanding, where the Being of the world, Others and the subject is interpreted in terms of being-possible, being-able or being-capable. As Heidegger writes, “To Dasein’s state of Being belongs *projection*- disclosive Being towards its potentiality-for-Being. As something that understands, Dasein *can* understand *itself* in terms of the ‘world’ and Others or in terms of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being.” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 264) And that “The kind of Being which Dasein has, as potentiality-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 the way in which it is its possibility.” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 183)

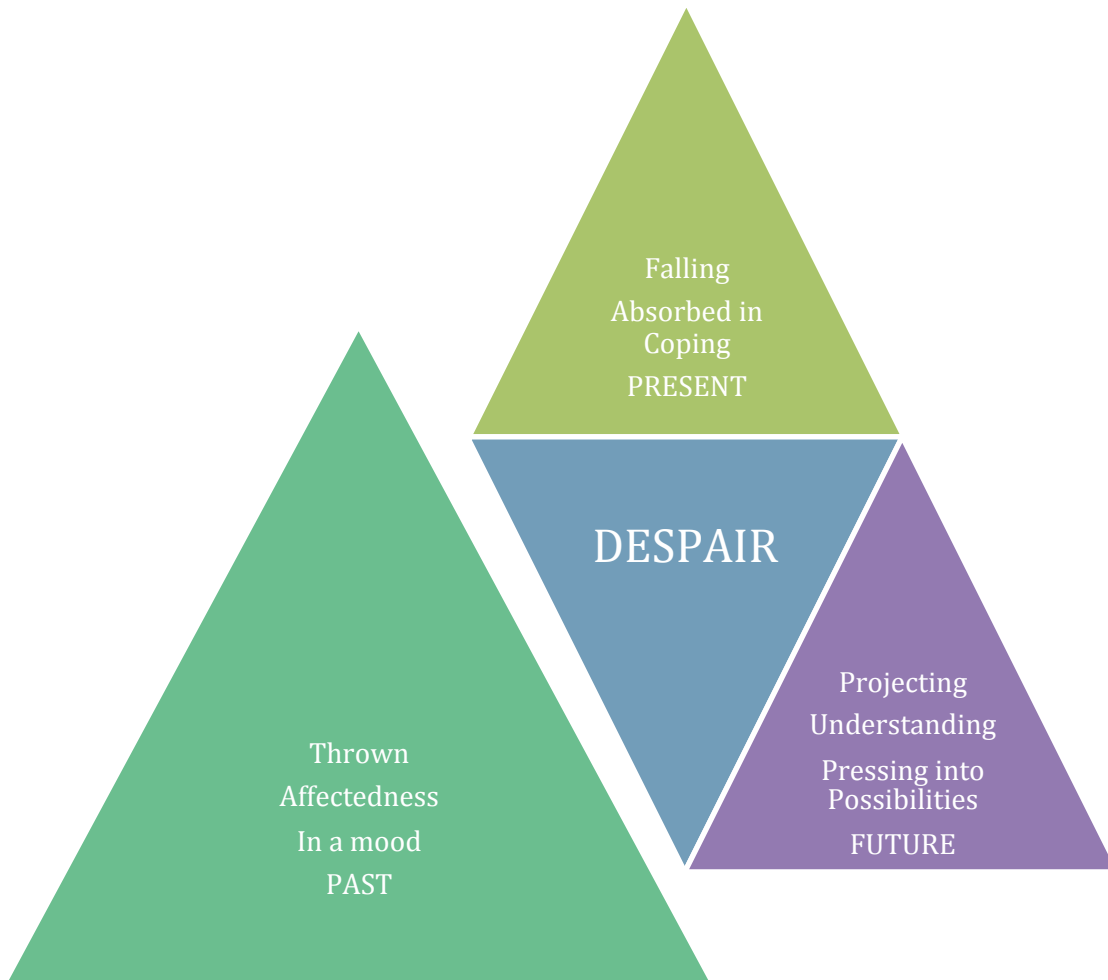
Importantly, as Richardson identifies, understanding as the reckoning of possibilities actually informs the *meaning* of thrownness- so that projection into possibilities exists *prior* to the subject’s facticity, despite being temporally ‘not-yet.’ Richardson writes, “Possibility is basic to us. It is prior to actuality, in as much as our ‘actual’ behaviour, thoughts, etc. all get their meaning only on the basis (or against the background) of our projection upon possibilities: meaning ‘flows back’ from these ends. What I’m doing depends on the person I’m trying to be in the doing.” (Richardson, J, 2012, pg 106) This means that projection into possibilities, as reflected in understanding, effectively conditions meaning of the subject’s existence, which is why Watts and Mulhall both argue that the future, articulated through projection, is the most important of Heidegger’s temporal ecstases (See Watts, M, 2011, pg 124) and (Mulhall, S, 1996, pg 160)

Perhaps the most important instantiation of the future as projection into possibilities is the subject's definitive possibility and ownmost potentiality for Being, which is Being-towards-death. Heidegger writes that "Death is Dasein's *ownmost* possibility. Being towards this possibility discloses to Dasein its *ownmost* potentiality-for-Being, in which its very Being is the issue." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 307) For Heidegger the finitude that the certitude of death affords is Dasein's most important project and that which makes existence as Being-in-the-world significant, enabling the world to matter. As will become apparent through the following sections, it is the very collapse of the possibility of death that will be the most destructive implication of the ontology of despair.

The above understanding of projection is crucial to understanding the following analysis of despair that will be the focus of the remainder of this paper. It will be argued that despair radically disrupts the ontological structure of thrown projection put forward in Heidegger's existential analytic. Specific to the above analysis of projection, it will be argued that despair dismantles and diminishes the capacity for projection into possibilities, which is reflected in the collapse of the futural self. Most important is that despair diminishes one's ownmost potentiality for Being, which is Being-towards-death. It will be argued that in despair, the projection collapses, including the temporal horizon underpinning it, and death 'becomes impossible.' This has very significant ontological implications, affecting the very structure of existence as thrown projection as Being-in-the-world itself. The following exhibits the disrupted care structure that will be the framework for the following analysis and concludes the preparatory analysis, enabling the remainder of the paper to analyse this radical disruption to thrown projection that occurs in the phenomenon of despair.

## Figure 2: Disruption to the care structure in despair





# SECTION ONE

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## The Phenomenology Of Despair

Paradise Lost

The dismal situation waste and wild:  
A dungeon horrible on all sides round  
As one great furnace flamed; yet from those flames  
No light; but rather darkness visible  
Served only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
That comes to all, but torture without end  
Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed  
With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.

John Milton

(Milton, J, 1821, pg 5)

As was iterated in the introduction, this Section on the phenomenology of despair will concentrate on the Thrownness of despair. This will involve a phenomenological analysis of the mood of despair and the unique way in which it affectively conditions the world as mattering (or ceasing to matter) to the subject. This section will begin with an analysis of Garrett and then Steinbock's definitions of despair as being a 'loss of the ground of hope,' which is understood as 'lived impossibility as such.' This definition of despair will then be applied to a Heideggerian analysis of Freud's work 'Mourning and Melancholia,' which is a

significant essay examining the phenomena of melancholia, of which despair is an important component. Freud's work will be appropriated to a Heideggerian hermeneutic ontology through the work of Kristeva and Foucault who both examine the impact that melancholia has upon Heidegger's Being-in-the-world as thrown projection. To deepen the analysis of the thrownness of despair, this section will also draw upon the work of Radden and her analyses of melancholia and major depression within the philosophy of psychiatry and also the work of many other thinkers, writers, poets and philosophers who have reflected upon the meaning of despair.

In 'The Problem of Despair' (Garrett, R, 1994), Garrett differentiates between three 'varieties' of despair, which vary in depth depending on the degree to which they condition the way things can 'matter' to the subject, enabling things to either appear as significant through openness, or subject to exclusion through closedness. The first variety that Garrett explicates is despair over some 'particular project or undertaking.' This despair involves a "belief that something is not worth pursuing, a belief that something is hopeless, either because it lacks sufficient value or because it is not sufficiently possible." (Garrett, R, 1994, pg 73) Because of its specificity to a particular project or state of affairs, this variety of despair is called '*project-specific despair*.'

The second variety of despair that Garrett explicates involves despair over the hopelessness and meaninglessness of the subjects' entire life. As Garrett writes, "they have come to believe their entire life from beginning to end is a futile, meaningless gesture, an undertaking without any positive worth or good. Logically, it follows that they also believe that all particular undertakings and projects *within* their lives are also futile. For if a person's life as a whole is futile and worthless, then so are various specific projects in that life." (Garrett, R, 1994, pg 74) Because it encompasses the subject's entire life, including all their projects, this variety of despair is called '*personal despair*'.

The third and concluding variety of despair that Garrett explicates involves despair that as Ratcliffe writes, "is a more encompassing predicament that involves a sense of all life being bereft of meaning." (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C, pg 11) This variety of despair integrates project-specific despair and personal despair, drawing them into the

“grand conclusion that not simply their own life but everyone’s life is, as a whole, futile, then we have genuine *philosophical despair*.” (Garrett, R, 1994, pg 74) Philosophical despair is thus despair over the meaninglessness and unintelligibility of existence, determining that no life is worth living. It is the most fundamental and deep revelation of the mood of despair, since the first two varieties presuppose its conditioning of the subject’s world as mattering to it. Philosophical despair is a deep ‘ground mood’ that fundamentally structures the possibilities (or impossibilities) for either signification (or the collapse of signification or ‘asymbolia’) within the subject’s world. Thus it utterly overwhelming and ubiquitous in its affective conditioning of the world. It is Garrett’s ‘philosophical despair,’ where despair is understood to be an all-consuming ‘ground mood,’ that is the focus of this paper.

To further understand what this (philosophical) despair is, it is revealing to, like Ratcliffe, compare Garrett’s analysis of the varieties of despair with Steinbock’s work in ‘The Phenomenology of Despair.’ (Steinbock, A, 2007) Here Steinbock discusses several different experiences that controvert hope, namely:

‘disappointment...hopelessness, and despair’ (Steinbock, A, 2007, pg 435). It is deeply reminiscent of Garrett’s three varieties of despair. For Steinbock, disappointment involves the diminishing of a specific hope in the immediate present, where “disappointment...is the cancellation or non-fulfillment of a previous hope. The experience of a disappointed hope *must* follow upon the actual experience of hope” (Steinbock, A, 2007, pg 441). Yet hopelessness is more comprehensive, involving the destruction of future-directed projections; meaning that desired outcomes seem impossible and undesired outcomes seem inexorable. As Steinbock writes, “Hopelessness is not a cancellation of the specific hope, but the immediate and direct experience of the impossibility of the event *as* impossible.”

Importantly, hopelessness “speaks to the futural horizon of possibility with respect to that experience.” (Steinbock, A, 2007, pg 442) Crucially though, in hopelessness, the possibility of hope is not dissolved as the ‘ground of hope’ remains unaffected. Hope remains intelligible and the projective capacity for hopefulness remains intact, which is what enables it to be experienced as a negation in hopelessness.

Phenomenologically distinct from disappointment and hopelessness, Steinbock’s conception of despair is that it is a loss of the *ground* of hope, meaning the possibility

of hope itself has been dissolved. The imagining, desiring, or projection of hope becomes unintelligible and meaningless as the subject is abandoned to the groundlessness that is the impossibility of the ground of hope. As Steinbock expounds, “As in the case of hopelessness, despair lives impossibility as such. But whereas in hopelessness, the impossibility pertained to the specific event (while the ground of hope was cancelled in this particular instance, but generally still functional), in despair it is directly the ground of hope itself that is experienced as impossible.” (Steinbock, A, 2007, pg 449)

Critically for Steinbock, the subject’s capacity to meaningfully project into the future is utterly diminished and they are condemned to ‘immanence,’ to the weightlessness of the present. Through the dissolution of the ground of hope the world cannot meaningfully matter and there are no significant possibilities or intelligible projects to strive towards. Despair is then an experience of fundamental detachment and alienation from hope, which means utter isolation from meaningful projects and significant possibilities, as the future is entirely dismantled. Despair is thus an irrevocable exile into the groundlessness of impossibility as such. Steinbock’s despair is congruent with Garrett’s philosophical despair and it is this all-consuming, groundlessness of impossibility as such, that will be the focus of this paper.

Freud’s influential work ‘Mourning and Melancholia,’ (Freud, S, 2005) analyses the indications exhibited in a diagnosis of melancholia. He writes, “Melancholia is mentally characterized by a profoundly painful depression, a loss of interest in the outside world, the loss of the ability to love, the inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction of the sense of self expressed in self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment.” (Freud, S, 2005, pg 74) As Freud determines, melancholia exhibits ubiquitous, sorrowful despair, the withdrawal of the subject from their absorption in the intelligible world, the withdrawal of the subject from meaningful relations with others; a loss of the capacity for projection through striving, desire or imagination and a destructive self-reviling.

For Freud, the destructive ambivalence of the subject towards themselves and the world is reflective of fact that they are mourning the traumatic loss of a loved object, which they have internalised. Understanding this complex internal disruption to the

psyche is very important in a psychoanalytic understanding of melancholia but is less significant for a Heideggerian analysis, as Heidegger's emphasis is on the way the *world*, within which Being is situated, is radically reconfigured through moods like despair. Thus an analysis of the disrupted psyche will not be taken up here, including an explanation of the fifth indication of melancholia. This section will instead focus on the aspects of Freud's analysis that reflect upon the deconstruction of the way the world can matter to the melancholic subject.

In expatiating the phenomenology of despair and how it affectively conditions the structure of Being, it is critical to take each of Freud's indicators of melancholia and discuss their resonance with other writers' and thinkers' reflections on despair. This analysis will be interpreted through the framework of a Heideggerian hermeneutic ontology, which is profoundly evident in the work of Kristeva and Foucault. This interpretation, elaborated on by many writers and thinkers who have contemplated the appearance of despair will enable a comprehensive phenomenology of despair, which will then enable the subsequent analysis into its ontological structure.

Returning to Freud, his first indication of melancholy, the idea of a 'profoundly painful depression,' is understood by Kristeva to be uttered through a dissonant, disconsolate sadness and relentless sorrow. She writes in her seminal work on melancholy entitled 'The Black Sun,' (Kristeva, J, 1989) that "Sadness is the fundamental mood of depression...sorrow is the major outward sign that gives away the desperate person." (Kristeva, J, 1989, pg 21) For Kristeva, the depressed person is utterly consumed by the affect of desolation, which is the weighty distress of pervasive sorrow. This idea is also reflected in Radden's work in 'The Nature of Melancholy: From Aristotle to Kristeva' (Radden, J, 2000), where she also emphasizes this sorrowful affect of profoundly painful depression which is understood as being "fear and sadness without cause" (Radden, J, 2000, pg 282-283), characterised by "distrust, doubt, diffidence and despair" (Radden, J, 2000, pg 10), meaning that as Kraepelin observes, "the patient's heart is heavy, nothing can permanently rouse his interest, nothing gives him pleasure...one disappointment and disillusionment follows another." (Kraepelin, E in Radden, J, 2000, pg 261-262)

Redfield Jamison writes very evocatively of manic depression in her work 'An Unquiet Mind,' (Redfield Jamison, K, 2011), writing that "Profound melancholia is a day-in, day out, night-in, night-out, almost arterial level of agony. It is a pitiless, unrelenting pain that affords no window of hope, no alternative to a grim and brackish existence, and no respite from the cold undercurrents of thought and feeling that dominate the horribly restless nights of despair." (Redfield Jamison, K, 2011, pg 38) The agony of this anguish is also expressed by Styron in 'Darkness Visible,' (his influential, experiential account of major depression) where he writes that "Depression is a disorder of mood, so mysteriously painful and elusive in the way it becomes known to the self- to the mediating intellect- as to verge close to being beyond description. It thus remains nearly incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it in its extreme mode." (Styron, W, 2004, pg 5)

Perhaps most profound though, is Coleridge's poeticised rendering of Freud's first indication of melancholy; that profoundly painful depression is experienced through relentless sorrow, which he writes of so adeptly in 'Dejection: An Ode,' that despair is:

"A grief without pang, void, dark, and drear,  
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,  
Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,  
In word, or sigh, or tear."  
(Coleridge, S. T, 1997, pg 308)

Thus Freud's profoundly painful depression is understood comparably as the utterly consuming affectedness of sadness, of unrelenting sorrow, as a disconsolate anguish that is agonizingly painful and seemingly interminable.

Kristeva also emphasizes the importance of Freud's second indication of melancholia, that of 'a loss of interest in the outside world.' For Kristeva this loss of interest is experienced as a radical loss of meaningfulness and intelligibility in the world, which collapses into relative arbitrariness, leaving the melancholic subject disenchanting and confused by its absurdity. Thus for the melancholic subject the world collapses into 'nihilistic asymbolia' (Kristeva, J, 1989, pg 9). She writes that "persons in despair

become hyperlucid by *nullifying negation*. A signifying sequence, necessarily an arbitrary one, will appear to them as heavily, violently arbitrary. They will think it absurd; it will have no meaning. No word, no object in reality, will be likely to have a coherent concatenation that will also be suitable to a meaning or a referent. The arbitrary sequence perceived by depressive persons as absurd is coextensive with a loss of reference.” (Kristeva, J, 1989, pg 51) The implications of this loss of reference are profound. For Kristeva, “if the meaning of life is lost, life can easily be lost: when meaning shatters, life no longer matters.” (Kristeva, J, 1989, pg 6)

In his important work ‘Mental Illness and Psychology’ (Foucault, M, 1976) Foucault also reflects on the radical deconstruction of the meaningfulness and intelligibility of the world, where the mentally ill subject is withdrawn from their absorption in the world and disenchanted, experiencing it as utterly absurd. Foucault is often contrasted with Heidegger, but Foucault’s structuralist emphasis on the way the *world* is disrupted in mental illness rather than just subjective consciousness is actually remarkably reminiscent of Heidegger’s anti-Cartesian emphasis on Being: as always situated as Being-in-the-world. In addition, the language Foucault uses to describe these disruptions is decidedly Heideggerian. He writes that “The transparent space in which each object has its geographical place and in which perspectives are articulated one upon another is replaced by an opaque space in which objects are mingled together, move forward and away in an immediate mobility, are displaced without movement and finally fuse into a perspectiveless horizon...objects have lost their cohesion and space has lost its coherence.” (Foucault, M, 1976, pg 52)

This idea is reflected in Sartre’s existentialist work ‘Nausea’ (Sartre, 2000) where rather than being meaningfully integrated into projects, objects suddenly disconcert the author as he begins to see them as arbitrary and superfluous to existence, he writes “*Superfluous*, that was the only connexion I could establish between those trees, those gates, those pebbles...And *I*- weak, languid, obscene, digesting, tossing about dismal thoughts- *I too was superfluous*” (Sartre, J.P, 2000, pg 182-184).

Jonathan Franzen also evokes this feeling of disconnect and estrangement very insightfully. Writing in his essays ‘How to be alone,’ (Franzen, J, 2004), he states that “Depression presents itself as a realism regarding the rottenness of the world in



general and the rottenness of your life in particular. But the realism is merely a mask for depression's actual essence, which is an overwhelming estrangement from humanity. The more persuaded you are of your unique access to the rottenness, the more afraid you become of engaging with the world; and the less you engage with the world, the more perfidiously happy-faced the rest of humanity seems for continuing to engage with it." (Franzen, J, 2004, pg 87) The meaningfulness of the world collapses into itself and it seems to be entirely lacking in significance, opaque and flattened out, radically alienating and estranging the subject.

It is important here to acknowledge the disquieting ambivalence that exists within the phenomenon of despair, which Franzen evokes here very insightfully. Despair is at once something in which the subject is threatened, afflicted or overwhelmed *by* the world, whilst at the same time something in which the subject is radically detached, alienated or estranged *from* the world. This ambivalence is certainly reminiscent of Freud's understanding of melancholia and for him would be characteristic of a fragmented, disrupted psyche that has interiorized the mourning of a lost love object.

Foucault subsequently reflects upon Freud's third indication of melancholia, whereby the subject "loses the capacity to love." For Foucault the world of 'Being-with,' is where the subject, having been immersed in the world with others, is now withdrawn into an opaque and confusing Otherness. He writes that "the world becomes depopulated and filled with strangers. Dialogue is dismantled. This is called the symbolic derealisation of others"... which is "the feeling of strangeness when confronted by other's language, systems of expression, bodies; thus difficulty in attaining any certainty about others existence." (Foucault, M, 1976, pg 53) Thus the subject's radical alienation from the world extends to a comprehensive alienation from others. Love is in no way a possibility when the Being-with feels fundamentally estranged into Otherness. So much so that the subject feels uncertain even about the Other's very existence. This idea is evoked by Redfield Jamison where she writes that "Madness... most certainly can, and often does, kill love through its mistrustfulness, unrelenting pessimism, discontents, erratic behavior and especially through its savage mood" (Redfield Jamison, K, 2011, pg 174). This further emphasises the subject's slippage into fraught isolation, wherein despair both being-in-the-world and being-

with others seem disquietingly threatening, gradually becoming less and less meaningful, less and less intelligible.

Freud's fourth indication of melancholia, that the melancholic subject experiences the 'inhibition of any kind of performance' *necessarily* extends from the collapse of the meaningfulness and intelligibility of the world and the subject's withdrawal from their absorption in it. This collapse necessitates that meaningful projects, realised through striving towards possibilities are completely redundant in a world that has become unintelligible in its absurdity. The entire world appears to be broken, and decidedly unready-to-hand so that the subject cannot construct meanings and thus cannot strive towards projects, which importantly for Heidegger, are what makes life meaningful. As Foucault writes, in mental illness "The meaning of 'utensility' has disappeared in space" as 'the world of 'ready to hand' becomes merely a world of 'present at hand.' (Foucault, M, 1976, pg 52) In this way the world is no longer coherent because signification has collapsed, which means that the subject can no longer project through Understanding or press forward into possibilities. And thus because meaning has collapsed, life itself (which for Heidegger is constituted by possibilities and striving towards projects) necessarily collapses.

In his autobiography, John Stuart Mill describes this collapse of the capacity to press forward into possibilities as the collapse of the "end," which as constituted by the projects towards which he comports himself, is the foundation upon which the meaningfulness of his life depended. He writes that "All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for." (Mill, J.S, 2007, pg 104) Without possibilities to strive towards through projection, life completely loses its significance.

The inability to strive towards possibilities through meaningful projects resonates profoundly with Steinbock's idea of despair as lived impossibility as such, which for him is the definitive characteristic of despair. For Steinbock, the withdrawal from one's absorption in the world and the collapse of meaningfulness and significance necessitates an inability to press forward into possibilities and to strive towards meaningful projects. In this way the shattering of meaning necessitates the radical

diminishing of life itself so that the subject necessarily becomes lived impossibility as such, or thrown impossibility. For Garrett this constitutes philosophical despair, which amidst the meaninglessness and absurdity of existence, necessarily concludes that no life is worth living.

Thus, in analyzing Freud's interpretation of melancholia, its appropriation by Kristeva and its extension into mental illnesses (such as major depressive disorder) by Foucault and many other writers, all of which have been interpreted through a Heideggerian hermeneutic ontology, the phenomenology of despair is evidenced as the following: Firstly, an overwhelming mood of anguish, sorrow, despondency and dejection which is the mourning of the loss of the internalised love-object; Secondly, it involves withdrawal from the world in which the subject used to be immersed, as it collapsed into meaninglessness and unintelligibility; Thirdly it also involves withdrawal from meaningful engagement in Being-with, loss of the capacity to love; Fourthly withdrawal from the striving towards meaningful projects and lastly, it involves a self-reviling, sometimes manifesting in self-destruction, often combined with an expectation of punishment which is deemed to be deserved.

## SECTION TWO

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### **The Phenomenology Of Despair Mapped Onto Heideggerian Anxiety**

Dejection An Ode

But now afflictions bow me down to earth:  
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth,  
But oh! Each visitation  
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,  
My shaping spirit of Imagination

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(Coleridge, S. T, 1997, pg 309)

The first section of this paper concentrated on giving an interpretation of the phenomenology of despair as it is situated in thrownness. It is now important to begin to discern a conceptual framework for the way this phenomenology of despair is structured ontologically as thrown impossibility. As has been discussed, Heidegger's work on attunement or affectedness in *Being and Time* is one of the very few philosophical interpretations to analyse the ontological structure of mood. Heidegger's critically important analysis, which explicitly reveals anxiety as one of Dasein's fundamental ground moods, will be drawn upon as a conceptual framework through which to uncover the existential ontological structure of despair. To conduct this analysis, this section of the paper will attempt to demonstrate that there is a significant correlation between the phenomenology of despair ascertained in the first

section of the paper and Heidegger's analysis of anxiety, which sketches its ontological structure.

It is the contention of this paper that despair is an aspect of Heideggerian anxiety that becomes evident only within a 'negative existential reduction,' as opposed to a 'positive existential reduction' which (as will be discussed) is a crucial distinction found in the work of Dreyfus. It will become apparent that in working out how despair is evident within the negative existential reduction of Heideggerian anxiety, the conceptual framework for the ontological structure of despair will also become apparent, as Heidegger's work on anxiety attempts to uncover the existential ontological structure of mood. It is thus the contention of this paper that Heidegger's analysis of mood, in particular of anxiety, enables the conceptual structure through which to understand the ontological structure of despair. This is because firstly, Heidegger's critique of mood is one of the few philosophical treatments of the existential ontological structure of mood and secondly, because despair is itself an aspect of anxiety.

### **Correlation between the phenomenology of despair explicated in Section One and Heideggerian Anxiety**

Several writers, specifically Blattner (Blattner, W, 2006) and Ratcliffe (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C), have drawn an important correlation between both major depression and Heideggerian anxiety. However whilst they both identify significant similarities between this 'affective disorder' and Heideggerian anxiety, they are fairly unsystematic and thus inconclusive in their findings, making their assessments somewhat speculative. It is the contention of this paper that there is a deficit in the critical analyses regarding the important correlations between affective disorders and Heideggerian anxiety, and this paper will attempt to go some way in rectifying this through concentrating on despair (as is found in major depressive disorder) as being an aspect of Heideggerian anxiety, evident within a 'negative existential reduction.'

Blattner observes of major depressive disorder that as the meaningfulness of the world fades away, and the subject withdraws from it, they can often experience the diminishing of desire and/or pleasure, defined as anhedonia or flattened affect (See Blattner, W, 2006, pg 141). He writes that this anhedonia resulting from the meaninglessness of the world can mean that the subject is radically detached and alienated, feeling decidedly not-at-home and bewildered, concluding that “some of the core phenomena of what Heidegger calls ‘anxiety’ are characteristic of what we today call *depression*.” (Blattner, W, 2006, pg 139-142) In the condition of major depression “one withdraws into isolation, loses interest in the world around one, stops taking pleasure in everyday life and loses motivation to carry on.” (Blattner, W, 2006, pg 142) Blattner determines that Heidegger’s analysis of anxiety fits this model of major depression quite well, specifically where “the world has nothing to offer, and neither do others; one cannot understand oneself anymore; and one feels uncanny and not-at-home.” (Blattner, W, 2006, pg 142)

Thus, for Blattner, major depressive disorder is like Heideggerian anxiety in that it involves the radical collapse of the meaningfulness and intelligibility of the world so that the subject’s capacity to press forward into possibilities through projection is thoroughly diminished. The subject is drawn back from their absorption in the world, which disintegrates and collapses into itself. Amidst isolation, the subject experiences the world as completely lacking significance. This is an opaque and darkened experience, where the subject is alienated from the world and thus from Being-in-the-world, and is unable to constitute themselves or relate meaningfully with the world, or with others in the world. This moment where the world collapses into itself, seen in both major depressive disorder and Heideggerian anxiety, is distressing in its bleakness and incertitude. As Blattner writes, “Anxiety, as Heidegger describes it, is a complete collapse of the structure of meaning in which one lives. In anxiety one does not constitute oneself, because one cannot. In a sense, one is unable to exist.” (Blattner, W, 2006, pg 139-140)

Ratcliffe also draws a comparison between Heideggerian anxiety and contemporary psychiatry’s understanding of major depression. He follows Blattner in recognizing that both conditions involve the ‘total insignificance of the world,’ (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C, pg 18) and that there are “certainly similarities between many

people's experience of depression and what Heidegger calls anxiety," writing that "Severe depression can involve a radical transformation of the ordinarily taken-for-granted sense of belonging to a world, where the usual sense of things as practically significant is gone from experience. In addition, both depression and Heideggerian anxiety involve not only a loss of possibilities but also a conspicuous awareness that something has been lost." (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C, pg 18)

Thus both Blattner and Ratcliffe draw important correlations between major depression and anxiety and Heideggerian anxiety. Problematically though, whilst major depression is reflected in the subject's radical withdrawal from their absorption in the world, the collapse of the world into apparent meaninglessness and the feeling of being not-at-home (which are all very crucial components of Heideggerian anxiety) major depression and anxiety do not resonate with other important aspects of Heideggerian anxiety: like its revelatory capacity for disclosing Being-in-the-world and for enabling the subject to authentically pursue their own-most possibilities, projecting meaningfully within the world. Major depression seems opaque and confusing, and appears to have a severely diminished capacity for meaningful projection and the pressing forward into authentic possibilities that the projective component of Heideggerian anxiety significantly affords. Ratcliffe acknowledges that major depression is unlikely to have this revelatory capacity, affording great insight into Being-in-the-world, but interestingly that *recovering* from major depression may well have this capacity. (See Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C, pg 15)

In examining Blattner and Ratcliffe's correlations between affective disorders and Heideggerian anxiety, it becomes apparent that their conclusions, whilst insightful, are quite speculative. Whilst some aspects of Heideggerian anxiety are reminiscent of major depression and anxiety disorders (namely the radical withdrawal from absorption in the world and the collapse of meaningfulness so that the subject feels not-at-home) other aspects, such as the insightful, revelatory capacity, where the subject projects forward into authentic possibilities, are not. Exactly how major depression or anxiety maps onto the structure of Heideggerian anxiety remains relatively unclear in the current critical literature.

Therefore, this section will subsequently attempt to redress this speculative and vague correlation between major depression, as exhibited through despair, and Heideggerian anxiety in order to demonstrate the way Heideggerian anxiety *does* provide a conceptual framework for understanding the ontological structure of despair when it is understood to be an aspect within Dreyfus's 'negative existential reduction,' which will be analysed below. Being able to discern the phenomenological resemblance between the despair of major depression and melancholia and Heideggerian anxiety is very important as it is through Heidegger's analysis of mood, of which anxiety is his critical example, that the ontological structure of mood in general, and despair in particular becomes apparent.

In his insightful and influential analysis of affectedness in Division 1 of Heidegger's 'Being and Time' (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 168), Dreyfus describes two moments of Heideggerian anxiety, where the first moment is grounded in thrownness or affectedness and the second moment is grounded in projection or understanding. The first moment, the thrownness of anxiety, is understood as a 'negative existential reduction,' whilst the second moment, the projection of anxiety, is understood as a 'positive existential reduction.' The thrownness of anxiety is understood by Dreyfus as a 'negative existential reduction' because it sees the subject being withdrawn from their absorption in the world; meaningfulness and significance collapse and they experience an unsettling disquiet. This is the moment where anxiety emerges and the subject feels utterly bewildered, existing *prior* to authenticity or inauthenticity. Subsequently, the projection component of anxiety is understood by Dreyfus as a 'positive existential reduction' because through the collapse of meaningfulness and withdrawal from absorption in the world, the subject is drawn out of their inauthentic fallenness and the ontological structure of existence as Being-in-the-world as thrown projection lights up. This moment of understanding is insightful and revelatory of Being and enables the subject to be liberated from fear, to individuate their existence and to authentically strive towards their own-most possibilities, the most significant of which is Being-towards-death.

It is the contention of this paper that despair is the *sustaining* of the first moment of anxiety, in its negative existential reduction and the decided *failure* of the second moment to eventuate so that bewilderment unravels into despondency as the subject is

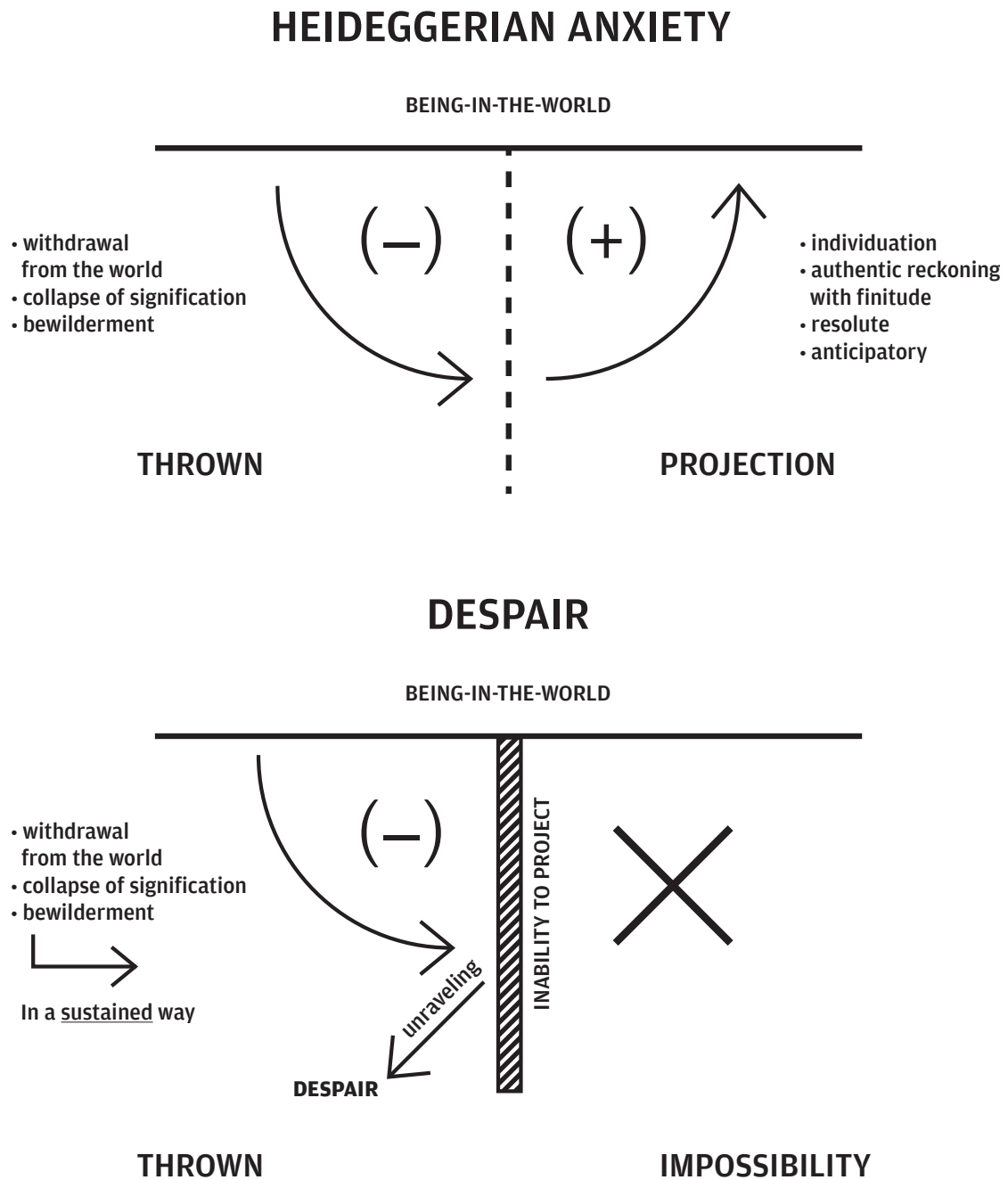


unable to press into possibilities and unable to project forward into their ownmost potentiality for being, the most significant of which is death. Thus despair as ‘thrown impossibility’ will be seen to be the sustaining of a negative existential reduction of anxiety and the failure of the positive existential reduction to be actualised. The comparison between despair and Heideggerian anxiety is very important because it emphasises the radical disruption to the subject’s ontological structure as Being-in-the-world as thrown projection that occurs amidst despair. It is because Blattner and Ratcliffe fail to make this distinction between the two moments of Heideggerian anxiety that their understanding of depression maps unevenly onto anxiety. When Dreyfus’s distinction between a positive and negative existential reduction is implemented into this comparison, it becomes evident that despair is consistent with the sustained negative existential reduction of anxiety and the decided failure of the positive existential reduction to eventuate. Dreyfus’ analysis does not extend Heideggerian anxiety to discuss despair, but it is felt that his distinction between the positive and negative existential reductions constructs the necessary conditions for an argument that despair is an aspect of Heideggerian anxiety. The following will explicate Dreyfus’s analysis of Heideggerian anxiety and the way despair maps onto his distinction between the positive and negative existential reduction, which will afford important insight into the ontological structure of despair.

The following diagram illustrates how this comparative analysis will proceed:

Figure 3: Heideggerian Anxiety and Despair: A comparative study:

Heideggerian Anxiety and Despair: A comparative study



## The thrownness of Heideggerian anxiety as a negative existential reduction

Importantly for Heidegger, mood is not a subjective, interior, psychic phenomena, but rather a way of conditioning the possibilities of things mattering to Dasein, as was explained in the introduction to this paper. This means that Heidegger's analysis of anxiety concentrates on the radical dismantling of the meaningfulness and intelligibility of the world, which thus affects Dasein's fundamental condition of Being-in-the-world. Mood is a pre-objective, pre-subjective phenomenon in Heidegger's anti-Cartesian analysis, it is neither interior nor exterior. This is why Heidegger is intent on revealing the way anxiety radically disrupts the structures of significance and referential totalities that arrange the subject's situatedness *within the world*.

In §40 of *Being and Time*, in order to extend and refine his analysis of mood, Heidegger writes on 'Anxiety,' where he expounds the idea that "The Basic state of mind of Anxiety [is] a distinctive way in which Dasein is disclosed" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 228). Anxiety for Heidegger is a distinctive way in which Dasein is situated in affectedness, and thus discloses Dasein as thrown Being-in-the-world and very specifically conditions the way in which the world can matter to Dasein. Specifically, 'the thrownness of anxiety is a moment of indistinct existential disquiet or dissonance wrought from an indeterminate threat.' In this moment the subject is pulled back from their everyday fallenness, from their absorption in the world, and experiences profound incertitude about their Being as Being-in-the-world. Critically for Heidegger, anxiety is objectless, in that, in the face of which the subject is anxious is not any particular entity within the world. Rather the subject is oppressed by the world as such, where "that which threatens is nowhere," (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 231) because "Being-in-the-world itself is that in the face of which anxiety is anxious." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 232)

In anxiety, it is the fundamental condition of Being, as that which is always already immersed in an intelligible and meaningful world where one is required to strive towards projected possibilities, that threatens. As Mulhall writes, "In anxiety, Dasein

is anxious about itself: not about some concrete existentiell possibility, but about the fact that its Being is Being-possible, that its existence necessarily involves projecting itself upon one or other possibility.” (Mulhall, S, 2005, pg 111) This fundamental capacity for the projection of possibilities is severely diminished in anxiety. As Blattner writes, “In anxiety we cannot press forward into possibilities, because we cannot understand ourselves in terms of the world. Anxiety discloses possibilities as irrelevant or insignificant.” (Blattner, W, 2006, pg 141)

As Blattner suggests, when the subject becomes anxious about their own being as Being-in-the-world, the structures of signification and referential totalities, which are the structures of meaningfulness and intelligibility cohering and arranging the world, concurrently begin to ‘sink away.’ The subject’s immersion in the everyday world is radically disrupted so that they experience it as unintelligible and meaningless. As Heidegger writes, “Anxiety brings [Dasein] back from its absorption in the ‘world.’ Everyday familiarity collapses,” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 233) and as it “collapses into itself; the world has the character of completely lacking significance.” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 231) This ‘lack of significance’ constitutes an utterly inclusive equipmental breakdown, so that the entire world of the ‘ready-to-hand’ becomes decidedly ‘unready-to-hand’ and the subject completely withdraws.

This collapse of meaningfulness in the world is a profoundly discomfoting and disorienting experience called ‘Uncanniness’ which is the dissonant feeling of being ‘Not at Home.’ Heidegger writes that “In anxiety one feels ‘unsettled.’ Here the peculiar indefiniteness of that amidst which Dasein finds itself in anxiety comes primarily to expression: ‘the nothing and nowhere.’ But here ‘unsettledness’ also means ‘not-being-at-home.’” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 233) Thus in this thrownness of anxiety, the subject experiences a threatening disquiet and dissonance as they feel not-at-home, alienated and alone. This sense of bewilderment and uncanniness constitutes the thrownness of anxiety as the subject finds themselves withdrawn from their absorption in the world, which collapses into itself, making it meaningless and unintelligible. This disconnection and dissonance between Being and the world is the way the subject is affected, attuned or situated within anxiety, constituting thrownness.

For Dreyfus, the above describes the first moment of anxiety in its negative existential reduction. This can be seen to correlate significantly with the phenomenology of despair as explicated in the first section. The phenomenology of despair was determined to be lived impossibility as such which is realised firstly, as an overwhelming mood of anguish, sorrow, despondency and dejection; whilst secondly, it involves withdrawal from the world in which the subject used to be immersed as it has collapsed into meaninglessness and unintelligibility; thirdly it also involves withdrawal from meaningful engagement in Being-with, loss of the capacity to love; fourthly withdrawal from the striving towards meaningful projects and lastly, it involves a self-reviling sometimes manifesting in self-destruction.

These components of the phenomenology of despair can be seen to be significantly contiguous with Heideggerian anxiety in its negative existential reduction. Specifically it is evident in the withdrawal from the subjects' absorption in the world amidst the collapse of the meaningfulness and significance of the world so that there is a disquieting dissonance between the subject and the world, and the subject and other subjects. Through this collapse of intelligibility, the subjects' ontological structure of Being-in-the-world as thrown projection is radically disrupted in both the phenomenology of despair and the negative existential reduction of anxiety. They are unable to strive authentically towards projects and are thus utterly bewildered, disoriented amidst a nihilistic asymbolia. The inability to project into possibilities is the result of the withdrawal from the world and the collapse of meaningfulness and is the most important ontological implication of despair and Heideggerian anxiety in its negative existential reduction.

It is felt that the sustained experience of this bewilderment in Heideggerian anxiety can unravel into despondency or despair when the second moment of anxiety fails to be realised and the subject falls back on the negative existential reduction. The positive existential reduction of anxiety will be shown below to be the authentic actualisation of the subject's capacity to press forward into possibilities, strive towards projects and realise their ownmost potentiality-for-being which is Being-towards-death and a reckoning with their radical finitude. Crucially, the phenomenology of despair revealed that despair is necessarily lived impossibility as

such and the loss of the capacity to project, to press forward into possibilities is perhaps its most definitive feature.

This means that when the positive existential reduction of anxiety fails to be realised, the subject is thrown *impossibility*, confined to a disquieting ambivalence, which unravels into a sorrowful reckoning with the meaninglessness of existence. The most significant ontological implication of this is that death itself becomes impossible. As will be shown below, this means that life becomes impossible and the subject is condemned to an irrevocable exile of literally interminable discontent where suicide becomes an understandable attempt to clutch death back from its impossibility. The following will explicate the positive existential reduction of anxiety, which is collapsed in despair and thus renders the subject to be thrown impossibility, which will be shown to have very important ontological implications.

### **The projection of Heideggerian anxiety as a positive existential reduction**

As noted above, for Dreyfus, the second moment of Heideggerian anxiety is a positive existential reduction and is the moment where the subject accepts anxiety and (through resoluteness) individuates their ownmost Being as Being-in-the-world and projects themselves meaningfully into possibilities. Anxiety in its positive existential reduction is the insightful and revelatory moment of anxiety, which discloses the subject as ‘thrown projection’ and as Being-in-the-world. Crucially it is because the subject has withdrawn from their absorption in the world, which has ‘flattened out’ through meaninglessness and unintelligibility, that the world ‘obtrudes’ and thus the whole structure of the subject’s Being is ‘lit up.’ As Heidegger writes “In the dark there is emphatically ‘nothing’ to see, though the very world itself is *still* ‘there’, and ‘there’ *more obtrusively*.” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 234)

Dreyfus explains that the obtrusion of the world through the darkness is like an ordinary equipmental breakdown, where a tool for a project becomes un-ready-to-hand, yet this obtrusion involves a 'total disturbance.' He writes that "Rather than revealing some part of the workshop world from the inside, it reveals the whole world as if from the outside. It reveals the groundlessness of the world and of Dasein's being-in-the-world." (Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 179) Like a broken piece of equipment lights up the whole structure of signification and referential totality, anxiety is insightfully revelatory of the subject's being as Being-in-the-world and of its structure as being thrown projection. Anxiety discloses this structure of thrown projection by reflexively lighting up the world the subject was previously absorbed in, from a perspective that is outside. Heidegger writes earlier in Being and Time of the revelatory capacity of this equipmental breakdown, determining that "When we notice what is unavailable, that which is available enters the mode of obtrusiveness," (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 103) and "When something is found missing...circumspection comes up against emptiness, and now sees for the first time what the missing article was available *with*, and *what* it was available *for*." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 105) The subject's withdrawal from their absorption in the world thus reflexively lights up the existential structure of their Being which in falling was covered over.

Because it lights up the subject's structure as thrown projection that is Being-in-the-world, anxiety subject to a positive existential reduction is thus where the subject can meaningfully project their ownmost potential for being through pressing forward into their possibilities, expressing their freedom through authentic individuation as Being-towards-death. As Heidegger writes, "Anxiety throws Dasein back upon that which it is anxious about- its authentic potentiality for Being-in-the-world. Anxiety individualizes Dasein for its ownmost Being-in-the-world, which as something understands, projects itself essentially upon possibilities. Therefore, with that which it is anxious about, anxiety discloses Dasein as *Being-possible*...Anxiety makes manifest in Dasein its *Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being- that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself. Anxiety brings Dasein face to face with its *Being-free-for (propensio in...)* the authenticity of its Being..." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 232)

Critically, anxiety's disclosing of Dasein as Being-possible is realised most significantly in Dasein's taking hold of itself in relation to Being-towards-death. It is this reckoning with finitude that is both anxiety's most important revelation and a necessary prerequisite for an authentic existence. Heidegger determines that death must be faced as a *possibility*, and (as was discussed in the introduction) that "anxiety uncovers death as that *possibility which is one's ownmost, which is non-relational, and which is not to be outstripped.*" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 294) Heidegger determines that anxiety (in a positive existential reduction) enables a reckoning with one's radical finitude, which means grasping one's mortality through comporting oneself authentically towards death, which he calls 'anticipation.' For Heidegger, authentic being-towards-death is to comport oneself towards it without either "fleeing it or covering it up" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 298).

Taking hold of death as one's ownmost possibility means an authentic reckoning with one's radical finitude imposed by death, which in turn enables an authentic reckoning with *life* and all of one's other projects and possibilities. Authentic Being-towards-death through anticipation *individualises* the subject so that through realising their finitude, they realise their "impassioned freedom towards death" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 311) and take responsibility for their life. As one's ownmost possibility, that is non-relational and cannot be outstripped, Heidegger writes that "Death does not just 'belong' to one's own Dasein in an undifferentiated way; death *lays claim* to it as an *individual* Dasein. The non-relational character of death, as understood in anticipation, individualises Dasein down to itself." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 308) Reckoning with death as one's ownmost possibility that cannot be transferred onto another, individualises the self and is an utterly necessary component of an authentic life. As Heidegger writes, "Anticipation turns out to be the possibility of understanding one's *ownmost* and uttermost potentiality-for-Being- that is to say, the possibility of *authentic existence.*" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 307) Mulhall insightfully reflects on this idea in the context of Heidegger's existential analytic when he writes that "Being-towards-death is essentially a matter of Being-towards-life; it is a matter of relating (or failing to relate) to one's life as utterly, primordially mortal" (Mulhall, S, 2005, pg 129).



As has been uncovered, anxiety in its positive existential reduction enables the subject to project authentically towards their ownmost potentiality-for-Being, which means reckoning with their radical finitude and comporting themselves authentically towards death. It is this reckoning through anticipation that enables an authentic Being-towards-life. Anxiety in a positive existential reduction is thus insightful and revelatory of the subject's Being as thrown projection and Being-in-the-world, as a subject whose Being is an issue for them, where their projects and possibilities, of which death is their ownmost, are always contextualised by a radical finitude. Through this moment, as Dreyfus identifies, the subject is liberated from fear as they have *accepted* anxiety so that it becomes a constructive means for engaging authentically with death and thus with life.

Importantly, it is the contention of this paper that in despair, the subject falls back upon the negative existential reduction of Heideggerian anxiety: as this second moment, anxiety's positive existential reduction utterly collapses. The most significant implication of this collapse is thus the loss of the capacity to strive towards projects, to press forward into possibilities, most significantly one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being, that of Being-towards-death. As was shown above, the most significant possibility is death, and thus the collapse of possibilities necessarily means that death itself becomes impossible. This has very important ontological implications because projection into Being-towards-death is what enables the subject to engage authentically with life. Thrown impossibility thus means that through the impossibility of death, life itself becomes impossible. This is what demonstrating the contiguousness between despair and Heideggerian anxiety in its negative existential reduction reveals about the radical disruption to the subjects' ontological structure.

Demonstrating that despair is reflected in Heideggerian anxiety only within its negative existential reduction is a crucial difference between this paper and the work of Blattner and Ratcliffe who have not made this distinction, making their comparisons between 'major depression' and anxiety less conclusive. Failing to make the distinction between the positive and negative existential reduction when comparing Heideggerian anxiety with despair (or major depression or melancholia) risks aligning despair with the projective, revelatory insights of a positive reduction of anxiety, with which it could not be more dissimilar. As was discussed, anxiety in a

positive existential reduction is insightful and revelatory of Being, enabling an authentic reckoning with one's mortality conditioned by death, through anticipation. However, anxiety in a negative existential reduction instead dismantles the possibility of death, meaning that the subject cannot reckon with their radical finitude, which as was discussed earlier, means that they cannot engage authentically with their projects in life.

Having drawn the above insights about the ontological structure of despair, the following and final section of this paper, Section Three, will now demonstrate how this condition of thrown impossibility is reflected in a radically disrupted *temporal structure* where the collapse of the capacity to project can be seen to map onto the collapse of the futural ecstasis. This will be important in order to ground the above analysis in Heidegger's temporal structure of 'care,' which is for him what fundamentally coheres and coordinates the ontological structure of existence.

## SECTION THREE

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### **The phenomenology of despair mapped onto the temporality of Heidegger's care structure**

When I lie talking all alone,  
Recounting what I have ill done,  
My thoughts on men then tyrannise,  
Fear and sorrow me surprise,  
Whether I tarry still or go,  
Methinks the time moves very slow.

Robert Burton

(Burton, R, 2001, pg 11)

As the Introduction and Sections One and Two of this paper have shown, the condition of despair has been explicated as 'Thrown Impossibility,' where despair is lived impossibility as such and renders the subject unable to project forward into meaningful possibilities and one's ownmost potentiality-for-Being, the most significant of which is death. This means the subject is confined to their sorrowful affectedness in thrownness and experiences profound disenchantment and bewilderment, known as 'uncanniness,' so that existence seems meaningless and unintelligible. Section Three of this paper will now attempt to map this concept of thrown impossibility onto the ontological structure that Heidegger explicates through his analysis of 'care,' which is crucially grounded in *temporality*. This will be done through demonstrating how the 'thrown impossibility' of despair is made ontologically meaningful and intelligible through understanding it in terms of a radically disrupted temporal structure.

This section will attempt to understand thrown impossibility temporally by examining the Heideggerian analyses of Kristeva and Foucault who look at the disruption to temporality that happens in melancholia (and mental illness more generally) and by examining the work on ‘melancholic time’ in the philosophy of psychiatry by Ratcliffe and Wyllie. In this way despair as lived impossibility with the collapse of the capacity to project forward into possibilities will be shown to map onto a collapse of the futural ecstasis, which eventuates in the complete collapse of the entire temporal horizon so that the subject becomes detached from time altogether. It will be argued in conclusion that the diminished capacity to project, as instigated through a collapse of the temporal structure, means that subjects in despair cannot transcend the immanence of their thrownness and cannot project towards their ownmost possibility that is non-relational and cannot be outstripped, *that of death*. It will be argued that death itself becomes impossible which makes life unbearable because the suffering is infinite. In the midst of bewilderment, Being-towards-death becomes impossible and the finitude death affords is precluded; meaning that life itself becomes meaningless and unintelligible. Thus this Section will conclude with the contention that despair radically alters one’s existential structure of thrown projection which is underpinned by a collapse in temporality. Meaning that the ontological structure of subjects in despair is radically disrupted. This is a realisation that has not yet been properly understood and could have critical implications for understanding melancholic depression in the philosophy of psychiatry, psychoanalysis, psychology and psychiatry itself.

### Heidegger’s care structure

For Heidegger, the structure that unifies Dasein’s ontological condition of Being-in-the-world as thrown projection is the care structure. ‘Care,’ or ‘Sorge’ in the German, is the “formal existential totality of Dasein’s ontological structural whole,” (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 237) and structures Dasein’s existence as fundamentally a being whose Being is an issue for it, and as Being-in-the-world as fallen and thrown projecting. As Heidegger writes “Dasein exists as an entity for which, in its Being, that Being is itself an *issue*. Essentially ahead of itself, it has projected itself upon its

potentiality-for-Being *before* going on to any mere consideration of itself. In its projection it reveals itself as something which is thrown. It has been thrownfully abandoned to the 'world', and falls into it concernfully. As care- that is, as existing in the unity of the projection which has been fallingly thrown- this entity has been disclosed as a 'there.'" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 458)

Crucially for Heidegger, the care structure, as Being-already in (thrown), Being-amidst (falling) and Being-ahead-of-itself (projection), which was expatiated in the introduction, is mapped onto a *temporal structure* where the Being in a mood of thrownness is understood as the past, the Being absorbed in coping of falling is understood as the immanent present and the pressing into possibilities of projection is understood as the future (See Table 9 in Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 240). For Heidegger the care structure must be interpreted as the temporal horizon conditioning the ontological structure of Dasein. As he writes "We have defined Dasein's being as 'care.' The ontological sense of 'care' is temporality...The unity of significance- that is, the ontological make-up of the world- must then likewise be grounded in temporality. The existential-temporal condition for the possibility of the world lies in the fact that temporality, as an ecstatical unity, has something like a horizon... The horizon of temporality as a whole determines that on the basis of which factually existing entities are essentially disclosed...Having its ground in the horizontal unity of ecstatical temporality, the world is transcendent." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 416- 417)

Thus the care structure is understood as the *temporal horizon* that conditions Being as Being-in-the-world as thrown projection and enabling the subject to transcend their immanent present. This means that the concepts of thrown projection drawn from Heidegger's existential analytic (and expatiated in the Introduction and Sections One and Two) must be understood as being underpinned by temporality. Therefore this Section will attempt to map those findings onto a temporal structure. According to Watts' analysis of 'Dasein's primordial temporality' in his comprehensive work 'The Philosophy of Heidegger,' (Watts, M, 2011) Being-a-self for Heidegger is a 'process of realisation,' an unfolding happening that can *only* be explored and understood in terms of time. For Dasein, 'to be' is always 'to be temporal.' (Watts, M, 2011, pg 116) Watts sees the transcendence of the care structure as "the state or locus by which or from which Dasein can reflect on the totality of human existence." (Watts, M,

2011, pg 126) In this way the care structure, as grounded in temporality, is that which conditions Dasein's self-reflexive reflections upon its Being, which is an issue for it. The care structure, as thrown projection grounded in temporality *is* this concerned reflecting upon the meaning of Being.

Crucially for Heidegger, temporality is not an objective or independent chronological arrangement which he sees as the traditional and 'fallen' conception of time derived from Aristotle; but is instead constructed as the subject takes their Being as an issue for them through care. Heidegger understands Aristotelian temporality as privileging the present as that which informs the meaningfulness and significance of Being and experience. He writes that "Thus for the ordinary understanding of time, time shows itself as a sequence of 'nows' which are constantly 'present-at-hand,' simultaneously passing away and coming along. Time is understood as a succession, as a 'flowing stream' of 'nows,' as the 'course of time.'" (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 474) For Heidegger this represents an inauthentic understanding of time, conceived amidst the everyday understanding of falling.

Alternatively, in the unifying schematic of the care structure, Heidegger understands temporality as always constituted by the compound construct of the three temporal ecstases of past, present and future. Importantly as Richardson identifies, for Heidegger, "future, past and present are not sectors on a time-line along which I move... Rather than segments of a single time-line, we should think of the three ecstases as three separate dimensions of our experience, three quite different axes along which we 'reach out' in time, each in a distinctive way. The ecstases are, as it were, movements in these different dimensions, movements that accomplish meaning." (Richardson, J, 2012, pg 181) In this way, the temporal structure of care, as a tripartite construct, is that which *gives meaning* to Being because it is the means through which Dasein apprehends the intelligibility and significance of its experience through the self-reflexive reflections of intentionality.

Importantly, Heidegger's authentic reckoning with temporality gives priority to the futural ecstasis as that which conditions the past and in turn the present. He writes that "the future has a priority in the ecstatical unity of originary and authentic temporality." (Heidegger, M , 2008, pg 378) The future reflects Dasein's capacity for

understanding as understood through the pressing forward into possibilities of projection and Being-ahead-of-itself (See Dreyfus, H, 1991, pg 240) Unlike traditional theories of time where time is a sequence of 'nows,' so that the future is understood as the indefinite and incomprehensible 'not yet,' Heidegger sees Being as being *constituted* by possibilities and thus constituted by the future. He writes that "Any Dasein has, as Dasein, already projected itself; and as long as it is, it is projecting. As long as it is, Dasein has always understood itself and always will understand itself in terms of its possibilities...As projecting, understanding is the kind of Being of Dasein in which it *is* its possibilities as possibilities." (Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 185) For Heidegger it is the future, as realised through pressing forward into possibilities, that constructs and reconfigures the past, and the future and the past which together condition the present. Together they constitute the care structure, which as has been shown, is Dasein's transcendent temporal horizon.

### **How the temporal horizon of the care structure is radically deconstructed in despair**

In drawing upon Heidegger's existential analytic for the inquiry of this paper, it follows that to fully grasp the ontological significance of despair as thrown impossibility, it must be mapped onto the temporal horizon of Heidegger's care structure. This is because for Heidegger it is temporality which unifies Dasein and informs the meaningfulness and significance of Being. It is felt that this analysis will enable comprehension of the ontological meaning and significance of despair as the diminishing of the capacity for projection into possibilities: which can be seen as the collapse of the futural self containing one's ownmost possibility, that of death. The impossibility of death in despair can thus be seen to be reflected in the collapse and dissolution of the subject's temporal horizon, which means through the collapse of one's comprehension of finitude, *life itself* becomes meaningless and unintelligible. As the future collapses, the impossibility of death 'flows back,' so that the past (and then the present) are unintelligible. They are no longer conditioned by the finitude of the subject's mortality.

As was analysed in Section One, Kristeva's work 'Black Sun' (Kristeva, J, 1989) implicitly draws on the conceptual framework of Heidegger's existential analytic in order to examine how the ontological structure of Being is radically altered in the experiences of melancholia and major depression. Underlying her analyses of the way melancholia radically alters Being-in-the-world and diminishes the capacity for understanding through projection is an important recognition of the way temporality itself is profoundly disrupted. She writes that "As the time in which we live is the time of our discourse, the alien, retarded or vanishing speech of melancholy people leads them to live within a skewed time sense." (Kristeva, J, 1989, pg 60) And that the melancholic sense of time, "does not pass by, is not ruled by a before or after, is not directed from the past toward a goal" and is "massive, weighty and traumatic. A moment blocks the horizon of depressive temporality or *rather removes any horizon, any perspective...no revolution is possible, there is no future.*" (Kristeva, 1989, pg 60)

Kristeva's analysis affords a significant insight into the temporality of despair as thrown impossibility. Inherently responding to Heidegger, she critically emphasises that for the melancholic subject, neither inauthentic temporality (time ruled by a before and after) nor authentic temporality (time directed towards a goal) are comprehensible. Rather, temporality itself is deconstructed and the temporal horizon of the care structure (which for Heidegger is responsible for the meaningfulness and intelligibility of Being) is dismantled. The future has collapsed and the meaning of Being as Being-in-the-world and thrown projection is utterly diminished. In this way her work begins to show how understanding despair as thrown impossibility is crucially underpinned by the structure of temporality; which in despair sees the futural self dissolving.

Like Kristeva, Foucault integrates a Heideggerian existential analytic into his work on melancholia (and mental illness more generally). As was analysed in Section One, his work examines the radical disruption that mental illness inflicts upon the structure of Being as Being-in-the-world and thrown projection. And, like Kristeva, Foucault also reflects upon the radical disruptions to a subject's 'spatio-temporal' constitution within the experience of mental illness. Foucault writes that in mental illness, "time becomes significantly altered, as does space." (Foucault, M, 1976, pg 51) Specifically he writes that in mania, "time is rendered instantaneous by fragmentation; and,



lacking any opening onto the past and future, it spins around on its axis, proceeding either by leaps or by repetitions.” (Foucault, M, 1976, pg 51) And in mental illness more generally he writes that, “This morbid existence is also marked by a very particular style of abandoning the world, by losing its fundamental temporality, the subject alienates that existence in the world in which his freedom bursts forth; being unable to possess its meaning, he abandons himself to events; in *this fragmented, futureless time*, in that incoherent space, one sees the mark of a disintegration that abandons the subject to the world as to an external fate.” (Foucault, M, 1976, pg 56)

For Foucault, this radical disruption to temporality is also reflected in a radical disruption to the spatio-geographical world. He writes that “the transparent space in which each object has its geographical place and in which perspectives are articulated one upon another is replaced by an opaque space in which objects are mingled together, move forward and away in an immediate mobility, are displaced without movement, and finally fuse in a *perspectiveless horizon*.” (Foucault, M, 1976, pg 52) Crucially, like Kristeva, Foucault determines that mental illness involves the collapse of the temporal and spatial horizon so that space collapses and time becomes fragmented and importantly futureless.

This has profound implications for interpreting Heidegger’s existential analytic and the care structure which is the means through which subject’s can self-reflexively and concernfully reflect upon the meaning of Being. The collapse of temporality and the radical diminishing of the subjects’ futural self means that the meaning of Being itself also collapses. The thrown impossibility of despair engenders a radical fragmentation and deconstruction of the ontological structure of existence. Without an intact temporal structure affording a perspectival horizon, subjects in the midst of despair cannot transcend the present-at-hand and are condemned to an immanent present that is ‘weighty and traumatic’ and fraught with suffering and despondency. The collapse of projection into possibilities that was discussed in Sections One and Two is thus mapped onto the collapse of the future. This radical demise of Heidegger’s most important temporal ecstases necessarily means the collapse of one’s ownmost possibility that is non-relational and cannot be outstripped- that of death. Death itself becomes impossible and the subject cannot comprehend their finitude. This then

‘flows back’ and makes life itself utterly incomprehensible: it unravels into a perspectiveless darkness, indefinite and interminable.

These important insights about disrupted temporality in the work of Kristeva and Foucault can be integrated with some interesting contemporary research being undertaken in the philosophy of psychiatry, particularly by Ratcliffe and Wyllie. These thinkers both emphasise that melancholic depression involves the collapse of the futural ecstasis and the unraveling and collapse of the temporal horizon so that the subject becomes ‘detached’ and ‘desynchronised’ from time altogether. Ratcliffe, who draws upon Heidegger’s existential analytic throughout his work, writes that “People suffering from depression frequently complain that their experience of time has changed, sometimes describing it as a slowing down or a cessation of time,” (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C, pg 19) so that “The possibility of anything appearing as practically significant is gone from experience, as is the possibility of certain significant kinds of interpersonal connectedness. The world therefore offers ‘nothing’ and one’s sense of the future is correspondingly altered...Without meaningful transitions from future to past, awareness of the difference between them is eroded. Hence the overall structure of temporal experience is changed.” (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming C, pg 19) These insights importantly resonate with those of Kristeva and Foucault, who likewise recognise a radical diminishing of the future and a subsequent collapse of the entire temporal horizon.

This idea of melancholia involving a radical detachment or ‘desynchronisation’ from time is reflected in Ratcliffe’s empirical research, specifically his 2011 web-based questionnaire study that he conducted with colleagues Smith and Shand, (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming A, pg 1), the findings from which will be written up in the forthcoming paper ‘Varieties in Temporal Experience in Depression’ (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming A). The questionnaire he conducted asked of patients who had experienced depression ‘When you are depressed, does time seem different to you?’ Some responses to this innovative study were as follows:

- ‘When depressed, time seems to slow down, and to a certain point can become irrelevant. It is easy to lose track of days without realising it.’

- ‘I just feel very detached from time, it simply didn’t matter.’
- ‘When I am depressed I don’t seem to notice time, it just doesn’t matter to me, it all seems to blend into a mass of nothing... Time loses significance.’ (Ratcliffe, M, forthcoming A, pg 2)

These responses are consistent with the idea that in melancholic depression or despair the futural ecstasis is utterly diminished and the subject becomes detached from time as the temporal horizon collapses, unraveling to become perspectiveless, indefinite and thus irrelevant. Time (and thus existence) completely loses meaningfulness and significance, becoming entirely unintelligible.

In ‘Lived Time and Psychopathology’ (Wyllie, M, 2006) Wyllie also reflects on this ‘desynchronisation’ that occurs when temporality collapses, describing it as a kind of “schizoidism,” a fundamental dissonance between the melancholic subject and time. For Wyllie the schizoidism that occurs in melancholic depression involves the future seeming impossible, the complete collapse of temporality and a radical detachment from time. In schizoidism, temporality becomes a perspectiveless horizon, which he refers to as a “negative eternity,” an unraveling, untethered suffering that is unbearable *because* it is infinite. He writes that “for these ‘immortal’ persons suffering from advanced states of melancholia, *their suffering may be unbearable and infinite, and it is unbearable because it is infinite...* Suffering without temporality is suffering that will not end.” (Wyllie, M, 2006, pg 182) In this collapse of temporality, the future becomes completely non-existent and the subject is consigned to lived impossibility as such, or through the Heideggerian analytic, thrown impossibility. In despair, subjects are immortals in a bleak existence that is unraveling indefinitely towards nothingness. Wrenched out from the synchrony of lived implicit time they live instead in a desynchronised, explicit temporality in which the future seems impossible causing time to completely collapse. The analyses from Sections One and Two determined that despair is lived impossibility and that it involves the radical diminishing of the capacity for projecting forward into possibilities. This can now be seen to be underpinned by a collapse of the future and an unraveling into a complete collapse of temporality and a detachment from time itself.

What is crucial about Wyllie's analysis is that he begins to discern some of the ontological implications of this collapse of temporality that occurs in melancholic depression or despair. Wyllie effectively draws together the analyses put forward in Sections One and Two of this paper- that despair is lived impossibility with a diminished capacity for projection- with the analysis in this Section and recognises that thrown impossibility is underpinned ontologically by a collapse in the temporal structure of existence. Like Heidegger, Wyllie determines that the future is the most significant temporal ecstasis, the collapse of which has radically destructive effects upon the ontological structure of the subject as thrown projection. Then he alludes to the fact that it is the collapse of the future in temporality that underpins the collapse of the capacity for projecting forward into possibilities. Through this realisation, Wyllie reflects that in conditioning the melancholic subject as thrown impossibility, the subject cannot project towards their ownmost possibility that is non-relational and cannot be outstripped- that of death. In despair, death itself becomes impossible, as does authentic Being-towards-death. It is this realisation- that the most significant implication of thrown impossibility is that death itself becomes impossible and thus life becomes unbearable- which makes Wyllie's analysis so important.

Critically, Wyllie discerns that this 'infinite' that melancholic temporality affords means that the subject in despair is 'immortal,' death itself has become impossible and this 'flows back' to make life itself utterly unbearable in its meaninglessness and unintelligibility. With the collapse of the temporal horizon comes the collapse of one's ownmost authentic possibility, that of Being-towards death. Life becomes unbearable because death becomes impossible. As Wyllie writes "This sense of a deterministic and static future results in hopelessness and despair; without temporal movement the experience from the individual's first-person perspective becomes eternal suffering." (Wyllie, M, 2006, pg 184) Denied of the finitude crucial to understanding the meaningfulness and significance of existence, *suicide* becomes a desperate, inauthentic attempt to clutch death back. Wyllie writes that

"The future is the most important temporal modality when considering melancholia because the future is experienced as an expansive world-view that includes the productivity of past acts of living... The future is the dimension toward which hope is directed. Therefore, a closing off of the future may be

attended by a loss of hope... The experience of hopelessness can produce a sense of 'endless suffering,' so that suicide may be considered as one possible way of ending this perpetual suffering." (Wyllie, M, 2006, pg 180)

Here Wyllie demonstrates that without a future towards which possibilities might be hopefully projected, life itself, and the meaning of Being that underpins it, becomes utterly unintelligible. This is because in the Heideggerian existential analytic, the future is by far the most significant temporal ecstasis- conditioning the past which together condition the present. The collapse of the future that occurs in despair has profoundly destructive implications for the meaning of Being and the ontological structure of melancholic subjects. Without being able to project forward into possibilities, the most significant of which is death, subjects in despair are caught in a static inertia, existing prior to authenticity or inauthenticity- bewildered and uncanny in a distressingly sustained way. They are unable to transcend the immediate and are instead condemned to an immanent present, fraught with unbearable suffering- unbearable because it is infinite.

In his work on the 'finite future' of Heideggerian temporality, (McCumber, J, 2011) McCumber determines that it is the idea of *finitude* and the *inevitability of death* as that which conditions life that is the distinctive concept in Heidegger's understanding of temporality. This finitude afforded by authentic Being-towards-death through anticipation is what makes life meaningful, significant and intelligible according to McCumber's reading of Heidegger, which very much accords with Mulhall's reading analysed earlier in Section Two. McCumber recalls that for Aristotle, the *telos* of a human being is flourishing, whereby the subject works towards their natural form in a process of coming-to-be, which is reason. He then argues that Heidegger replaces the Aristotelian *telos* of human flourishing with that of death and that for Heidegger, the '*telos* of a human being is death itself' (McCumber, J, 2011, pg 173). Death is Dasein's ownmost potentiality-for-being which is universal, non-relational and cannot be outstripped. Importantly for Heidegger, it is the finitude that death affords that frees the subject to reckon with the meaningfulness and significance of life. Without death, life is unintelligible. When death is impossible, life is unbearable because existence is meaningless. As Heidegger writes, "When, by anticipation, one becomes free *for* one's own death, one is liberated from one's lostness in those possibilities

which may accidentally thrust themselves upon one; and one is liberated in such a way that for the first time one can authentically understand and choose among the factual possibilities lying ahead of that possibility which is not to be outstripped.”

(Heidegger, M, 2008, pg 308)

Thus without the possibility of death, the subject is ‘lost’ in a perspectiveless horizon which unravels indefinitely into nothingness. Without the condition of finitude, one cannot apprehend life authentically (or inauthentically) but is condemned to the infinite suffering of the immanent present. Thrown impossibility is thus mapped onto a radically disrupted temporality, the most significant implication of which is the impossibility of death, which effectively makes life unintelligible. As McCumber writes, “The authentic experience of death, then, is commitment to the life we are leading now. And this commitment, finally, is authenticity. Our death thus structures our present to its very core... We have a future, are *essentially* futural beings, because we are going to die. And we live coherent lives, rather than merely drifting, for the same reason. Death, as the ‘end of Dasein,’ thus performs the same function that a *telos* does for Aristotle: it organises our lives around our basic commitments, or at least provides the impetus for us to do so.” (McCumber, J, 2011, pg 175)

Thus (as McCumber refers to here) life without death is an incoherent drifting into meaninglessness and unintelligibility. It is the contention of this paper that the collapse of the future, the slowing down of time and the eventual collapse of the entire temporal structure that characterises despair underpins lived impossibility as such which is understood as thrown impossibility, where the capacity for projecting forward into possibilities is completely dismantled. This experience is an extension of Heideggerian anxiety in its negative existential reduction and is constituted by a disillusioning bewilderment known as uncanniness. The most significant implications of these radical disruptions to the ontological structure of Being that occur in despair are that the collapse of possibilities means the collapse of one’s ownmost possibility (that is non-relational and cannot be outstripped), that of death. In despair, death becomes impossible and because the future is the most important of the temporal ecstases, life itself becomes utterly meaningless and unintelligible. Despair is unbearable because it is infinite, and suicide is an understandable yet desperate attempt to clutch death back from its unraveling into nothingness.

Life is meaningless without death because it is finitude that constitutes the *telos* of the human condition. Despair can thus be seen to be a definitive covering over and concealing of Being, through the deconstruction of its existential structure of thrown projection. Thrown impossibility is then characterised by a profound ontological disruption where Being-in-the-world as thrown projection is dismantled, the consequences of which are destructive; effectively condemnation to seemingly infinite sorrow.

# CONCLUSION

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Mad World

All around me are familiar faces  
Worn out places, worn out faces  
Bright and early for their daily races  
Going nowhere, going nowhere  
And their tears are filling up their glasses  
No expression, no expression  
Hide my head I want to drown my sorrow  
No tomorrow, no tomorrow  
And I find it kind of funny  
I find it kind of sad  
The dreams in which I'm dying  
Are the best I've ever had  
I find it hard to tell you  
'Cos I find it hard to take  
When people run in circles  
It's a very, very  
Mad World

(Tears for Fears, 1982, Track 1)

This paper has analysed the existential ontological structure of despair through sketching an existential cartography of the phenomenon of disconsolate sorrow. Through analysing the work of Steinbock, Freud, Kristeva, Foucault and others, it has determined that despair involves an overwhelming atmosphere of sorrow, a withdrawal from the world, a withdrawal from Being-with Others, the collapse of structures of signification (so that the world sinks away) and the diminishing of the capacity to project into possibilities. Significantly, these phenomena of despair have



been shown to be contiguous with Heideggerian anxiety in its negative existential reduction. Both are constituted by a collapse of signification, a withdrawal from the world and an overwhelming experience of bewilderment: which in the former, unravels into despair. Through this comparison, it was subsequently ascertained that the phenomenon of despair is constituted by the ontological structure of thrown impossibility: where the capacity for projecting into possibilities, for striving towards projects, is negated.

It has been the unique contention of this paper that the most destructive implication of thrown impossibility is that the ability to project towards one's ownmost possibility, that which cannot be outstripped, that of death, is radically diminished. It was argued that authentic Being-towards-death is what makes life itself meaningful and intelligible, but that in despair, death becomes impossible, making life itself impossible. The collapse of Being-towards-death was shown to be underpinned by a collapse of the temporal structure of care, which involved the collapse of the future and then a comprehensive detachment from time altogether in an experience of radical desynchronisation. In this sorrowful experience, suicide can be understood as a desperate, inauthentic attempt to clutch death back, to reinstate it as a definitive possibility.

This analysis of the ontological structure of despair has significant and important implications for conventional psychiatry. An ontological analysis of phenomena of despair affords significant insight into the melancholic depression experienced by subjects encountered in psychiatry, through beginning to explicate its existential *meaning* or significance. The physicalist, objectivist, scientific analysis of the 'medical model,' and the pharmacological and psychotherapeutic interventions it recommends are certainly important to understanding and 'treating' melancholic depression and alleviating suffering. However, it is felt that these diagnostic assessments and therapeutic interventions risk reducing the study of despair to an *explanation* of somatic symptomology, which is confined to its presentation in the immanent present.

Alternatively, an existential ontological philosophical analysis necessitates that the subject is understood as always already Being-in-the-world as thrown projection

where mood is something that assails from neither without or within and constructs an atmosphere in which one is fundamentally conditioned so that the world can matter. This ontological analysis crucially attempts to *transcend* the immanent present through understanding the subject as being fundamentally conditioned by the possibilities of the future and then the situatedness of the past, which together construct the present. Importantly an ontological analysis attempts phenomenological thick *description* rather than explanation. Neglecting the ontological condition of the subject in despair risks treating the subject as a 'present-at-hand' object that (like an animal) will merely *perish* rather than an existential Being who will necessarily endure *death*. Failing to understand this distinction represents a failure to reckon with the situated subjectivity conditioning the human condition.

Without this kind of philosophical analysis, the meaning or significance of despair as it is experienced within the human condition risks being neglected by psychiatry, so that those suffering with 'darkness visible,' having 'stepped into the avalanche,' are left to speculate as to what feeling 'empty,' 'hollow,' 'weighty,' 'detached,' 'numb,' 'suffocating' or like a 'shadow' who has 'already died' might actually *mean*. It is hoped that this paper will go some way towards redressing this neglect by contending that an understanding of despair must be underpinned by the realisation that humans are Beings for whom Being is an issue, that self reflexive contemplation of the meaning of Being is fundamental to the human condition, and that by definition, the meaning of Being is seen to reside within the ontological. With this in mind, a study of the meaning of despair must involve a reckoning with the ontological if it is to be understood in the context of what it means to be human. The stirring potential of ontological analysis in the context of psychiatry is only just starting to be realised.

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<sup>i</sup> Having read Ratcliffe's work *Feelings of Being: Phenomenology, Psychiatry and the Sense of Reality* I was impressed by his application of a Heideggerian existential analytic to the philosophy of psychiatry, in particular to major depression as this is quite a unique and innovative way of understanding mood disorders. At the time I was attempting to discern the relation of major depression to Heideggerian anxiety and wrote to him at Durham University in February 2012 with several questions regarding this relation. He forwarded me several forthcoming papers that he had been working on which are listed here as forthcoming A, forthcoming B etc. They proved to be of much assistance in my research.



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