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SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Heidegger's heritage: The temporal politics of authenticity, then and now

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Abstract

For a discipline as philosophically and temporally sensitive as International Relations, it is curious that Martin Heidegger, widely considered the most important philosopher of the twentieth century, has only recently begun to receive disciplinary attention. It is also noteworthy that as IR begins to grapple with right-wing extremism, it has not addressed Heidegger's fascist politics. Conducting a close reading of his account of existence in time, this article argues that from his magnum opus to his final diaries, Heidegger prefigured many existentialist discussions, but his particular conceptualisations of time, temporality, and authentic Being lent political life a dangerous edge. Scrutinising both the conceptual and practical consequences of Heidegger's thought, this article traces key tensions in his claims that, to realise true Selfhood, we must overcome social time on the road to death. This antagonism encourages overly individuated and aggressive habits of thought and action that reject the possibilities of co-existence. We can see this in how Heidegger's obsession with authenticity over time pushed him deeper into Nazism, and in the ways that his existential vernacular resounds through today's right-wing renaissance. Juxtaposing authenticity, then and now, helps draw out the distinctively temporal dynamics of Heidegger's existentialism as well as the existential politics of our time.

Keywords: Existentialism; Heidegger; Being; Time and Temporality; Right Wing; Extremism; Authenticity

Introduction

If 'there is a time for every purpose, and a season for every activity'¹ is there a time for extremism? With a right-wing renaissance grown increasingly aggressive across a number of countries, this question holds special salience for the study of politics. Add in concerns about global 'existential crises' wrought by climate change, pandemic, democratic backsliding,² and Russia's recent invasion and denial of Ukraine's right to exist, and we might ask additionally whether existential anxieties are driving more extreme times and politics.

¹ Ecclesiastes 3:1.

² Skye C. Cleary, 'Applied existentialism', *Los Angeles Review of Books* (23 April 2016), available at: <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/applied-existentialism/> accessed 23 April 2016; Carmen Lea Dege, '2020's existentialist turn', *Boston Review* (24 August 2020), available at: <http://bostonreview.net/philosophy-religion/carmen-lea-dege-2020s-existentialist-turn;> accessed 25 August 2020; Jessica F. Green, 'The existential politics of climate change', *Boston Review* (21 January 2021), available at: <http://bostonreview.net/forum/how-fix-climate/jessica-f-green-existential-politics-climate-change> accessed 22 February 2021. As Tabitha M. Benney, 'Climate change, sustainable development, and vulnerability', in Brent J. Steele and Eric A. L. (eds), *Routledge Handbook on Ethics in International Relations* (London, UK: Routledge, 2018), pp. 392–404, notes, the word 'we' does a lot of silent work in such discussions. Numerous places outwith IR's dominant imaginary have been enduring existential situations for decades.

In this contribution to the Special Issue, I argue that a conspicuous but mostly overlooked controversy, growing out of the account of time developed by Martin Heidegger, can help us better understand right-wing extremism. This is because the vision of authentic freedom *in* and *against* time on which Heidegger based his groundbreaking philosophy not only enables extremism, but encourages it – in his day, and ours. Scrutinising Heidegger’s existentialist magnum opus, *Being and Time*, and his later writings, I find strong conceptual echoes and concrete links between his thought, his politics, and right-wing extremism more broadly. Given existentialism’s historical influence and resonance with contemporary events, this suggests that our current predicaments are coloured with existentialist hues, for better and for worse. While existentialist resources can help us grapple with contemporary problems,³ we must also consider a more troubling possibility. Rather than external or given challenges that existentialism helps us negotiate, today’s extreme times might spring from existentialism itself. If so, any attempts to comprehend such issues or to grasp existentialism’s potential for International Relations (IR) must include a critical engagement with existentialism’s own concepts and logics.

Admittedly, IR does not lack for philosophical or temporal sensibilities. Yet compared with its treatment of numerous other thinkers, IR’s liaison with Heidegger’s existentialism or his account of time remains somewhat muted in several ways. First, scholars traditionally paid little express attention to Heidegger.⁴ Only in the past decade or so have some used him explicitly to theorise international anxiety, collective action, the politics of difference, and the discipline’s ‘temporal turn.’⁵ Second, despite picking up temporal themes, these treatments do not tackle Heidegger’s theory of time directly, nor do they reflect much on the practical import of his temporal politics. Third, IR has barely scratched the surface of an urgent issue in this regard, namely how durable was Heidegger’s affinity for right-wing extremism, how his personal politics interacted with his professional philosophising, and what it all means for his intellectual and political legacy. Finally, while IR now benefits from many incisive analyses of the politics of time,⁶ it has so far paid very little attention to Heidegger’s distinctive theory of time as an existential issue.

These trends take on added importance when we consider Heidegger’s immediate and enduring proximity to IR. First appearing during the ‘twenty years’ crisis⁷ between two world wars and directly involved in discussions of individual freedom, human existence, national identity, fascism, and war, his prolific writings gained such renown that many read all European thought after as mere ‘footnotes to Heidegger.’⁸ This was especially true of *Being and Time* (published in 1927, hereafter *BT*), which reinvented Anglo-European philosophy and, like existentialism more generally, set the terms and direction of discourse in the human sciences for over half a century.⁹ Heidegger’s existentialism pervaded the *zeitgeist* in which IR emerged and the theoretical resources on which it drew. Heidegger’s influence here is difficult to overstate. His work gave impetus to the

³See, for example, Bahar Rumelili, ‘[Our] age of anxiety: Existentialism and the current state of International Relations,’ *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24:4 (2021), pp. 1021–36; Brent J. Steele, ‘Nowhere to run to, nowhere to hide: Inescapable dread in the 2020s,’ *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 24:4 (2021), pp. 1037–43.

⁴See, for example, Robert Denemark and Marlin-Bennett Renée (eds), *The International Studies Encyclopedia* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), available at: <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191842665.001.0001/acref-9780191842665> accessed 1 December 2022, contains numerous entries on philosophy, but only four make any mention of Heidegger.

⁵Felix Berenskötter, ‘Reclaiming the vision thing: Constructivists as students of the future,’ *International Studies Quarterly*, 55:3 (2011), p. 664.

⁶Inter alia, see Kimberly Hutchings, *Time and World Politics: Thinking the Present* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2008); Andrew R. Hom, *International Relations and the Problem of Time* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2020); Christopher McIntosh, ‘Theorizing the temporal exception: The importance of the present for the study of war,’ *Journal of Global Security Studies*, 5:4 (2020), pp. 543–58.

⁷E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919–1939* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1939).

⁸Gary Gutting, *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy since 1960* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 50–66, spends a chapter debunking this idea.

⁹See Jonathan Webber, *Rethinking Existentialism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2020); Sarah Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2017).

wider existentialist movement that emerged in postwar Paris and quickly embedded itself across Western thought and culture. Following their friend Raymond Aron's advice, Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre explored *BT* at length, finding Heidegger challenging and fascinating in equal measure, and even travelling to Germany to imbibe his intellectual *milieu*.¹⁰ Much as IR unconsciously relies on a number of existentialist concepts, logics, and tropes,¹¹ so too does existentialism owe a significant intellectual debt to Heidegger in general and *BT* in particular.

Yet Heidegger was and remains a complicated figure. His personal embrace of Nazism confounded many, even as his scholarly work has inveigled many more. In recent years, some observers have begun to ask pointed questions about whether Heidegger 'would have endorsed Donald Trump' or if the former President in 'an American Heidegger'.¹² By contrast, IR resigns its analyses of right-wing extremism and Heidegger to separate research streams.¹³ It is, therefore, an enduring and a pressing issue how IR should relate to Heidegger's existentialism. *BT* upended philosophy by deriving novel resources for living an authentic, 'temporal' existence amid the 'vulgarity' of social alienation in modern time. Yet Heidegger's star had scarcely risen before he embraced National Socialism in 1930s Germany, and this was no personal foible divorced from scholarly labour. Much the opposite, as we will see, Heidegger explicitly invoked the temporal logic of *BT* to defend Hitler's fascist politics, remained a Nazi party member until the end of the Second World War, and never really repented beyond a few diffident disavowals, the crux of which had more to do with the Nazi's overreliance on technology than their vision of political life.

Such public casualness about Nazism is consistent with the more private thoughts that Heidegger recorded later in life, published recently in 'the Black Notebooks'.¹⁴ These journals suggest that Heidegger never felt it necessary to decouple his existential thought, or its temporal politics, from the horrors of Nazism. Heidegger had a particular politics, which he understood to comport with the primary arguments of *BT* about authenticity in time. Far from being epiphenomenal to *BT*, extremist projects could be derived directly from it, just as Heidegger's actions could be justified using its distinctive language and logic. For these reasons, any consideration of existentialism in IR must include a discussion not only of *BT*'s distinctive vision of human existence as a temporal struggle, but also of its involvement in the leading catastrophe of Heidegger's age.¹⁵ Doing so allows us to more fully grasp the intellectual consequences that moment holds for today's existential and extremist crises.

To begin this discussion, in what follows I consider Heidegger's work *as* philosophy, that is, as equal parts systematic diagnosis of the human condition and normative reflections on how to live. This comports with one of Heidegger's primary purposes, which was to theorise how human beings might find agency in each concrete, 'factual' situation (§5:38). I am therefore interested in what

¹⁰ Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café*, pp. 2–5.

¹¹ See the Introduction to this Special Issue.

¹² Malcolm Bull, 'Great again', *London Review of Books* (19 October 2016), available at: <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v38/n20/malcolm-bull/great-again> accessed 20 August 2021.

¹³ Penetrating IR treatments of the roots of right-wing movements do not focus on Heidegger or existentialism; Jean-François Drolet and Michael C. Williams, 'America first: Paleoconservatism and the ideological struggle for the American Right', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 25:1 (2020), pp. 28–50; Rita Abrahamsen et al., 'Confronting the international political sociology of the New Right', *International Political Sociology*, 14:1 (2020), pp. 94–107.

¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI: Black Notebooks 1931–1938*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016); Martin Heidegger, *Ponderings VII–XI: Black Notebooks 1938–1939*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2017). Some parts of these seem intended for publication; all shed light on Heidegger's thinking after *BT*. For overviews of the Heidegger controversy, see Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger and the Jews: The Black Notebooks* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2018); Gregory Fried and Richard (eds), *After Heidegger?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2018).

¹⁵ Even defenders of Heidegger call it 'irresponsible to ignore the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and his politics'; see Michael Wheeler, 'Martin Heidegger', in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, 2020), available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/heidegger/> accessed 20 August 2021.

emerges from the pages of *BT* itself, rather than what we might reconstruct from it or do with it by synthesising Heidegger with other thinkers and perspectives. More specifically, I highlight what sort of normative and diagnostic resources the text of *BT* develops and sends out into the world, how Heidegger applied these to his own lived experience, and what this can teach us about the politics of authenticity today.

The article develops through several steps. After summarising IR's engagement with Heidegger, it presents key arguments from *BT*, focusing on the relationship between its titular concepts and their implications for political life. It then examines the inheritance *BT* bequeathed immediately to its author as he rose to public prominence in 1930s Germany. Doing so discloses more than a few concerns about the conceptual foundations and intellectual architecture of *BT*. The penultimate section uncovers strong Heideggerian echoes in two contemporary instances of right-wing extremism couched in the existentialist vernacular. I conclude by reflecting on the consequences of Heidegger's legacy for IR and its further engagements with existentialism.

The Heidegger question in IR

Following an uptick in disciplinary interest, IR scholars are beginning to make use of key elements in *BT*. Most extensively, Louiza Odysseos deconstructs political subjectivity using a Heideggerian interpretation of Being. From the notion of lived contingency, she develops an anti-positivist and more *political* vision of social science focused on interpenetrating relations and multiple perspectives.¹⁶ Bahar Rumelili argues that Heidegger's notion of 'mood' can show how 'ages of anxiety' might support *multiple* forms of agency – both conservative and progressive.¹⁷ And Felix Berensköter foregrounds the analytical benefits of Heidegger's temporality – including speculation about how biographies combine possible futures and shared pasts to help communities manage anxiety and uncertainty.¹⁸ Likewise, others have begun to adapt Heidegger to the needs of a planetary consciousness in the face of climate change, to metatheoretical critique, and to new imaginaries of the international, per se.¹⁹

These astute engagements exhibit the richness of Heidegger's thought and advance IR's understanding of agency, anxiety, and political ontology. Yet with very few exceptions, they do not engage with Heidegger's account of time, nor do they dwell much on his Nazism. Odysseos focuses more on Being than Time, with the latter inflecting subjectivity but not really standing as an equal theoretical partner. Rumelili links the finitude of death to fear and anxiety, rather than time itself, and turns to other thinkers like Hobbes to unpack temporal agency.²⁰ Berensköter works with Heideggerian temporality most explicitly. But in focusing on temporal visions of the past and future as anxiety management tools wielded by an abstract subject, he overlooks Heidegger's account of time, per se and how this supports an overly antagonistic response to felt anxiety or existential crisis.²¹ I find much to agree with in Berensköter's phenomenology of the national self based less on *external Others* than autobiography. However, as will become clear, I think there is more to Heidegger's

¹⁶Louiza Odysseos, 'Deconstructing the modern subject: Method and possibility in Martin Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity', in Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrands (eds), *International Relations Theory and Philosophy: Interpretive Dialogues* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2010), pp. 21–22, 32; *The Subject of Coexistence: Otherness in International Relations* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

¹⁷Rumelili, '[Our] age of anxiety', pp. 1021–2; see also Bahar Rumelili, 'Integrating anxiety into International Relations theory: Hobbes, existentialism, and ontological security', *International Theory*, 12:2 (2020), pp. 257–72.

¹⁸Felix Berensköter, 'Anxiety, time, and agency', *International Theory*, 12:2 (2020), pp. 274, 286; Berensköter, 'Reclaiming the vision thing', p. 653; Felix Berensköter, 'Parameters of a national biography', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:1 (2014), pp. 269–74.

¹⁹Scott Hamilton, 'I am uncertain, but we are not: A new subjectivity of the Anthropocene', *Review of International Studies*, 45:4 (2019), p. 609; Torsten Michel, 'In Heidegger's shadow: A phenomenological critique of critical realism', *Review of International Studies*, 38:1 (2012), pp. 209–22; Gerard Van Der Ree, 'Being-in-the-world of the international', *Review of International Studies*, 41:4 (2015), pp. 781–98.

²⁰Rumelili, 'Integrating anxiety', pp. 258–61; Rumelili, '[Our] age of anxiety' does not address temporality directly.

²¹Berensköter, 'Anxiety, time, and agency'; Berensköter, 'Parameters of a national biography'.

story here, most notably the import of Heidegger's distinction between time and temporality, which Berenskötter does not address.²²

Beyond this uneven treatment of Heideggerian time, IR scholars scarcely touch on the relationship between the philosopher and his politics. Odysseos goes the furthest, spending part of a chapter summarising three dominant positions on Heidegger's Nazism and reflecting on how *BT* is 'at best politically vague, and thus open to conservative revolutionism, and at worst as determining community along nationalistic and racist lines.'²³ But this is primarily a way of framing her attempt to 'retrieve out of Heidegger's discussion an account of how community is constituted without being bound to a homogeneous totality.'²⁴ While productive, the exfiltration of Heideggerian thought from its historical context depends on bringing in other sources and intellectual inspirations to re-read *BT* in a way that prevents its potential for 'the effacement of heteronomy.'²⁵ Others in IR spare fewer words for Heidegger's politics than Odysseos,²⁶ although we can detect hints of this in Rumelili's and Berenskötter's concerns about fear, anxiety, and regressive versus progressive forms of agency.²⁷ But as with Odysseos, addressing these concerns typically depends on folding other interlocutors into the conversation – a move that implies that Heidegger's thought on its own might be unsuitable for the work of reconstruction.

Such reticence on Heidegger's politics of time means that IR has not yet considered the possibility of an intimate link between his writings on time and temporality and the allure of fascism. This matters both intrinsically for IR's growing interest in Heidegger and existentialism, and for our ability to understand our present political predicaments. The rest of this article begins to consider such a possibility. In doing so, I do not take issue with claims about our era of existential anxiety or about the creative ways in which Heidegger *might* be appropriated to progressive labours. Instead, I consider what his existentialism offers more directly – namely ways of overcoming time with authentic Being – and whether this may actually be *driving* the very politics of extremism that many interpreters of Heidegger seek to overcome. Indeed, the most worrisome part of his existentialism and the many philosophical and cultural currents it informs is *not* that others can adapt them to the call of fascism, but that such 'calls are coming from inside the building',²⁸ so to speak. To fully apprehend this, however, we first need to introduce *BT*'s key claims about temporal authenticity and existence in time.

Being and Time

Being and Time first appeared in 1927, with a planned second half left unfinished because Heidegger's academic promotion case was pending.²⁹ The book challenged philosophy on several fronts.³⁰ Reflecting Heidegger's anti-modern brand of Catholicism, it criticised liberal theology, technology, and urbanism. It defended the autonomy of philosophy against modern science. It also sought to overturn philosophy in substance and method, replacing axiomatic and arid systems of thought with rigorous reflection derived from lived experience. To accomplish this, *BT*

²²See fn. 49.

²³Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence*, pp. 159–62, 184.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 163, emphasis added.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 184.

²⁶Michel, 'In Heidegger's shadow'; Ree, 'Being-in-the-world'.

²⁷Rumelili, '[Our] age of anxiety'; Berenskötter, 'Anxiety'; Hamilton, 'I am uncertain', p. 610, fn. 19 links 'Heidegger's mistake' to 'the absolute necessity today of *critiquing* and *questioning* the philosophical basis of every political claim, but this brief note of caution mostly pertains to the impact of technology on politics.

²⁸Kevin Williamson (screenwriter), *Scream* (Dimension Films, 1996).

²⁹Michael Watts (ed.), *The Philosophy of Heidegger* (Stocksfield, UK: Acumen Publishing, 2011), p. 39. *BT* was first fully translated into English in 1962. Prior Anglophone audiences depended on enthusiast translations of highly variable German language knowledge, see George Cotkin, *Existential America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), p. 50.

³⁰Unless noted, all references cite Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1962). Where substantive meaning may vary, I include passages from Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996).

proposes to ‘make manifest what we are already familiar with’, thereby transforming not only ‘our very way of being’ but also our understanding of this.³¹ Because secularism has vitiated any necessary design for a human being, Heidegger directs speculation away from ‘ontic’ classes or empirical categories towards the more fundamental, ‘ontological’ question of Being as such (§2:24). Absent a ‘worldless, self-sufficient and masterful “I” to show humans what they ‘should become,’³² how might we go about realising our ‘essence’? Heidegger’s existentialist response is that this query can be answered only through our own becoming as a concrete, contextual, and contingent unfolding. This is why he calls the particular being that is human Being, *Dasein*, or ‘there-being’ – the specific, particular being that is there, and not elsewhere, and not everywhere.

However, this response raises the follow-on question: what does it *mean* for a human being to *be*? *BT*’s answer begins by distinguishing *Dasein* from other beings in two reflexive ways. First, humans are unique in asking about ‘modes of Being ... which we, the inquirers, are ourselves’ (*BT* §2:26–27). Only a human Being ‘reveals “itself to itself” through questions like ‘What does it mean for me to be?’ or ‘what does my being require?’³³ Second, only human beings *contemplate* death. Other creatures possess instinctual fear but do not dwell on their demise or apprehend how it is simultaneously certain, pending, and unpredictable. These distinctive facts give human Being an intrinsically temporal quality. Phenomenologically, *Dasein* apprehends or feels “the very temporal intentional movement of *finding oneself experiencing experience*.”³⁴ Existentially, in contemplating its inevitable death, *Dasein* grasps its ‘primordial’ temporal orientation as ‘futural’ (§65:372–73) – the only *necessary* aspect of its existence is its eventual non-existence.

Humans are not born with such capacities. Rather, by the time they begin reflecting on the meaning of death (§38), humans are already immersed in concrete social contexts. In Heidegger’s words, we are ‘thrown’ into the moment when we first apprehend our own ‘being-towards-death’ – that natural, inexorable, yet undirected passage towards nothingness (§29:174; §50:293–96). Anticipating a vibrant existentialist trope,³⁵ he describes this as ‘awakening’ to the difference between mere survival and lived existence (§58:332, §65:378). Survival expresses a common, instinctive desire not to die. Going far beyond such biological stimulus, existential death is the *nullity* that marks *Dasein* as finite. And because everyone dies at a different point and none can share their experience of dying or being dead as they can lived experiences, death also marks *Dasein*’s most distinctive or ‘ownmost’ possibility – namely its ‘impossibility’ (its ceasing to exist, see §50 and §53). In death, every being becomes singular, for its experience of this moment cannot be passed on or transmitted.³⁶ Death marks the only moment at which our existence *must necessarily* be uniquely our *own*.

Prior to death, the situation human beings are thrown into is rife with alienating and indistinct pursuits – that humdrum of daily ‘getting by’ or ‘going on’ in which they barely notice the familiar, experientially ‘near’ world that envelops and guides them. This is the realm not only of ready-made (or ‘ready-to-hand’, §15:99) tools but also all other people, those beings with which *Dasein* co-exists (*mitsein*). Such people constitute *Das Man*, or ‘the They’ (IV:149–50), which provides not only Being’s social setting but also – through ‘public roles, standards, or conventions’³⁷ – a baseline norm or way of life. *Das Man* embodies extant and historical modes of coexistence, through which we

³¹ Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being in the World: Commentary on Heidegger’s ‘Being and Time’, Division 1* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), p. 8.

³² Odysseos, ‘Deconstructing the modern subject’, p. 30.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

³⁵ See Jean-Philippe Deranty, ‘Existential aesthetics’, in Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Wheeler, ‘Martin Heidegger’.

³⁶ In *BT*, others might witness our death, but that is their experience of *another* dying, not death as such. Heidegger calls these ‘empirical’ deaths of ‘beings’ or creatures to distinguish them from *Dasein*’s one and only demise (§52:301–02); see Berenskötter, ‘Anxiety’, pp. 275–6.

³⁷ Andreas Nohr, ‘Beyond Westphalia: Rethinking fundamental ontology in IR’, *E-International Relations* (2012), available at: {www.e-ir.info/2012/07/05/beyond-westphalia-rethinking-fundamental-ontology-in-ir/} accessed 25 September 2021.

might understand ourselves as such or against which we can distinguish our *selves*.³⁸ This is *Dasein*'s 'tradition', 'historical heritage', or its 'fate' as made by others.³⁹ In our 'thrown' existence, then, 'we mostly are partakers and placeholders in ... the "They"'.⁴⁰ Yet this heritage also alienates *Dasein* insofar as 'everyday' *Das Man* is preoccupied with '[i]dle talk, curiosity, and ambiguity' (§38:219).⁴¹ 'Everyday' signals banal, ordinary, and anonymous. A *Dasein* 'absorbed' in the concerns of 'the They' has 'fallen' into that 'world', becoming 'lost in the publicness of the "they"' (§38:220).⁴²

Such a being is 'inauthentic', a 'Being-in-the-world ... completely fascinated by the "world" and by ... Others in the "they"', 'absorbed' in that 'world' instead of contemplating its own distinctiveness (§38:220). Heidegger calls this a 'kind of not-Being', and it represents an existential failing inasmuch as 'Dasein maintains itself for the most part' in precisely this 'fallen' way of life (*ibid.*). Here he deliberately mirrors the ultimate non-being of death with ordinary social anonymity. Finding itself thrown into *Das Man*'s situation, inauthentic being simply accepts this and lets itself be carried along, passively *awaiting* death without thinking much about what a more meaningful existence ahead of non-existence might require. For Heidegger, this passive passage towards death constitutes the temporal problem of a being 'in time' (§65:375).

Awakening to such thrownness and fallenness brings with it anxiety (§40:233), or 'dread' (§30:182).⁴³ Anxiety pesters us as 'uncanny' feelings that things do not hang together as neatly as we presume, that we are intrinsically 'abandoned' to 'The Nothing' of social alienation and ultimate death, and with 'nothing more we can hold onto ... we slip away from ourselves'.⁴⁴ However, if *Dasein* can somehow confront this anxiety without flinching, it may forge an 'audacious Being' resolved to choose and act for itself. This potential inheres to anxiety, for even if we do not grasp the first chance for audaciousness, 'anxiety sleeps, but its breath trembles'.⁴⁵

In choosing audacious Being, *Dasein* begins to become *authentic*. It 'resolutely' realises its 'ownmost potentiality for-Being-its-Self' instead of passively accepting 'lostness in the "they"' (§62:354). This is no longer a Being floating along towards death. Rather, authentic *Dasein* embraces its Being-towards-death by intentionally and purposefully getting 'ahead-of-itself' (§44c:271) or actively choosing how to live until the end, no matter when it comes. Authentic *Dasein* decides to make the most of this span, so that the *contingent* distinctiveness of its lived existence might become worthy of the *necessary* singularity of its demise. Heidegger calls this 'anticipatory resoluteness' to capture the sense of *Dasein* apprehending mortality and making the courageous choice to rise above the quotidian concerns of 'the They' and become 'liberated for its uttermost possibility of existence' (§61:350), which is 'Being-a-whole' in an 'existentiell way' (§61:350). As a process of lived becoming rather than fixed essence, existential Being is always provisional. Yet in resolute, free action that distinguishes its life ahead of death, authentic Being transcends death by temporarily 'suspending' anxiety about it and by forging a symbolic completeness within anonymous social situations.⁴⁶

³⁸ Steven Crowell, 'Existentialism', in Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Nohr, 'Beyond Westphalia'.

⁴¹ *BT* refers to 'idle talk' and 'curiosity' over one hundred times. As we will see, these terms relate directly to Heidegger's account of ordinary time.

⁴² Stambaugh (trans.), *BT*, p. 164: 'falling prey'. Macquarrie and Robinson, §38:221 highlight a 'temptation towards falling' into 'the way things have been publicly interpreted'.

⁴³ On anxiety in IR, see Berensköter, 'Anxiety'; Rumelili, 'Integrating anxiety'; Andrew R. Hom and Brent J. Steele, 'Anxiety, time, and ontological security's third-image potential', *International Theory*, 12:2 (2020), pp. 322–36.

⁴⁴ Martin Heidegger, 'What is metaphysics?' [original version], in Dieter Thomä (ed.), Alexander Moore and Gregory Fried (trans.), *Philosophy Today*, 62:3 (2018), p. 739.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, 'What is metaphysics?', p. 741. In anxious moments, '[a]n extraordinary shudder [runs] through the marrow' of society; Rumelili, '[Our] age of anxiety', p. 1020.

⁴⁶ See Berensköter, 'Anxiety', p. 286; Ty Solomon, 'Time and subjectivity in world politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, 58:4 (2014), pp. 671–81; Karl Löwith, 'The political implications of Heidegger's existentialism', *New German Critique*, 45 (1988), pp. 121–3 describes this as a 'freedom-for-death' realised by making choices as if our demise is imminent; on *BT* §51, see also Wheeler, 'Martin Heidegger'.

Temporal authenticity against time

Dasein's existential challenges flow from its relation to time. Heidegger begins *BT* asserting that 'the central problematic of all ontology is rooted in the phenomenon of time', that 'Being itself' is 'made visible in its "temporal" character', and that 'Being cannot be grasped except by taking time into consideration' (§5:40).⁴⁷ Crucially, "temporal" can no longer mean simply "being in time" but must take on meaning 'in a positive sense' (*ibid.*). The key distinction here rests on the difference between 'primordial temporality' and the 'vulgar' or 'ordinary conception of time' (§65; §81).⁴⁸ The former provides authentic *Dasein's* way of solving or confronting the latter. Primordial temporality is no mere succession of instants or homogeneous dimension along which biological life passes. Rather, it takes the form of an 'ecstatic' unity (§65:377–78), a self-comprehension or synoptic vision by which Being 'grasps' its life experiences 'together' as a coherent whole.⁴⁹ Ecstatic temporality requires embracing and seizing creative possibilities to reconfigure the natural passage of survival in time – from 'before', through the knife-edge 'now', to an unfathomable 'later' – into an intelligible whole composed of meaningful past, present, and future experiences.

Emerging through free deliberations and actions, this temporal whole holds vital existential potential. If death poses the all-encompassing instant when Being literally comes to Nothing, then authentic *Dasein's* purpose beforehand is to unite its many lived experiences with a decisiveness and distinctiveness worthy of life-and-death commitment.⁵⁰ Heidegger calls this 'ecstatic' based on the Greek ἑκστασις, for 'standing outside' or 'alongside',⁵¹ which captures the way that *Dasein's* unified temporal whole escapes or transcends vulgar time while still being empirically located within it (§65:377).

In addition to its lifespan-comprehensive quality, Heidegger also finds ecstatic potential in *each* free decision, choice, or action, which may forge a shorter unity communicating the 'primordial truth of existence' (§62:355). In every resolute action, *Dasein becomes* 'Being-revealed' (§62:355). Consonant with the 'futural' quality of Being-towards-death, Heidegger also insists that in each discrete action or project it is the future, not the past, that matters most: 'The Situation cannot be calculated in advance or presented like something present-at-hand which is waiting for someone to grasp it. It merely gets disclosed in a free resolving which has not been determined beforehand' but instead realises its greatest potential in the way that *Dasein* commits to the decision, come what may (§62:355). It is this resolve – not planning, deliberation, or reflection – that turns free individual action into an ecstatic temporal unity revelatory of 'Being-a-whole' (§61:349–54 and §66:380; §45:277). Authentic *Dasein* embraces existence, unavoidably bookended by death, through choosing actions and pathways that reinterpret its history and then committing to them so staunchly as to make it fully 'present in the process of having been' (§65:374). This closes *Dasein's* temporal

⁴⁷Stambaugh (trans.), *BT*, p. 17: 'Being is in each instance comprehensible ...'. On ontological vs ontic variants of time, see Macquarrie and Robinson (trans.), *BT*, §5:39.

⁴⁸From 'vulgäre', Macquarrie and Robinson (trans.), *BT*, §59:355, fn. 1.

⁴⁹See Hom, *International Relations*, p. 62; and Stambaugh (trans.), *BT*, p. 17. Berenskötter, 'Reclaiming the vision thing' and 'Parameters of a national biography', shows how Heidegger's temporality combines past and future in the service of meaningful present action. However, our readings of Heidegger differ significantly on the issue of *time*. Berenskötter, 'Parameters', pp. 271–4 bases his discussion of biographical temporality on the same sections of *BT* I use here, but he does not engage Heidegger's distinction between temporality and time. Rather, his Heideggerian subject is temporal simply because it is limited to 'a timespan between birth and death' and the future is uncertain, Berenskötter, 'Parameters', p. 268. While the Self's relation to the world matters, nowhere does he grapple with Heidegger's description of vulgar social time or how it is a part of the world into which *Dasein* finds itself thrown and which it must overcome to realise ontological authenticity. This way of reading Heidegger makes it easy to overlook the temporal sources of his antagonistic politics. For 'if we follow Heidegger' only so far as to conclude that 'the orientation towards the future and the desire to understand "it" is the most significant element of (coming into) being in the world', Berenskötter, 'Parameters', p. 272, then we can think of Heideggerian Being as simply struggling to knit lived experiences between birth and death into a meaningful whole. That is an important part of the story, but leaves out the corollary that what stands in the way of (or threatens to derail) true Being is *Das Man's* vulgar time.

⁵⁰On time and completeness, see Solomon, 'Time and subjectivity'.

⁵¹Macquarrie and Robinson, *BT*, §65:377, fn. 2, suggest Heidegger was also 'keenly aware of its close connection with the root-meaning of the word "existence"':

and hermeneutic circle, authorising its past, which is no longer prologue or determinate but rather *bound* to present action directed towards future possibilities (§43a:247; §80:470).

Heidegger's problem with time

In *BT*, time acts as authentic Being's key antagonist. In contrast with primordial temporality, ordinary or vulgar time marks the immersive time of the world around us. It is 'derivative' of *Das Man's* idle involvements and society's dependence on 'proximal', ready-to-hand modes of public coordination (§80:374–79), such as modern time reckoning techniques. In a lengthy discussion mixing history and theory, Heidegger links standardised clocks to the idea of time as a 'pure sequence of "nows" without beginning and without end', and without meaningful differences (§80:377). Instantaneous nows 'level off' primordial temporality on an endless continuum (§65:377–79) – a being 'in time' merely 'occurs and runs its course' (§65:375), more like a creature surviving than a properly temporal subject existing.⁵²

Heidegger is not the first thinker to describe modern clock time as a ceaseless and pitiless accumulation of homogeneous instants.⁵³ His distinctive philosophical move is to theorise modern clock time not as an emergent sociohistorical phenomenon or a political project⁵⁴ but rather as a matter of fallen being 'discovering' the clock to 'giv[e] itself time', that is, to number its 'regular recurrences' or count its days as a 'multiplicity of "nows"' – 'encountered on each occasion and at any time for everyone as "now and now and now"' (§80:464–66, 470). Such nows are always everywhere the same. They do not avail of existential possibility or authentic temporality (§81:475 emphasis added). Instead, they embed inattentive beings in an alienation that seems stable only because 'everything is running smoothly',⁵⁵ like clockwork. Vulgar time's 'tick tick tick' is analogous to *Das Man's* idle chatter. Heidegger charges that this 'sequences of "nows" which are constantly "present-at-hand", simultaneously passing away and coming along' marks 'the "course of time"' that will carry us passively to our death if we do not resist its anonymising influence (§80:470, §81:474). Thus, when he describes Being 'placed before the entirety of beings *in every moment*', Heidegger pits *Dasein* against *Das Man*, with the latter epitomising those idle, anonymous nows they have discovered and come to depend upon.⁵⁶ If it does not exercise care for itself, *Dasein* will not only be consumed by society, it will also (then) be whisked along the river of time towards death by clockwork social strictures and quotidian concerns.

Despite promising to rethink both Being and Time from the ground up, Heidegger here deploys a modern variation of a perennial theme – the 'problem of time', a tradition of conceptualising time as a part of existence that inextricably *confronts* human beings and must be *overcome*.⁵⁷ *BT* provides a twist on this by ontologically distinguishing primordial temporality from vulgar time, but the latter still divorces humans from their greatest potential and purpose – namely, the ability to freely choose a more authentic life unto death. Vulgar, modern time strips *Dasein* of 'all security and standing' and exposes how 'all traditional truths and contents of life have lost substance'.⁵⁸ 'In time' in *BT* describes a *Dasein* 'abandoned to itself' and alienated by everything around it.⁵⁹ And in casting anonymous existence in vulgar time as the symbolic partner of nullifying death, Heidegger sets *Dasein* the ontological imperative of surmounting time's dissolution through resolute actions and self-understandings symbolic of a more authentic (primordial) temporal unity. This inclines his whole philosophical edifice towards the performance of transcendent temporality

⁵² Stambaugh (trans.), *BT*, p. 301: 'occurs and elapses'.

⁵³ See Andrew R. Hom, 'Hegemonic metronome: The ascendancy of Western standard time', *Review of International Studies*, 36:4 (2010), pp. 1145–70.

⁵⁴ See Hom, 'Hegemonic metronome'; Hom, *International Relations*, pp. 55–62.

⁵⁵ Nohr, 'Beyond Westphalia'.

⁵⁶ Heidegger, 'What is metaphysics?', p. 738 emphasis added; see also Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI*, p. 362.

⁵⁷ Hom, *International Relations*, pp. 1–26.

⁵⁸ Löwith, 'Political implications', p. 123.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

in decisive – possibly destructive but always resolute – individual, and discrete actions. In such events, *Dasein* ‘temporalizes’ (§65:329), rescuing itself from the scrap heap of instantaneity by creating a *whole* that allows it to ‘*be* in the Moment of vision for “*its time*” and, further, to ‘choose itself as its own “hero”’ (§74:437).

Heroic *Dasein* ‘must forge its own path between now and death’, designated as a matter of ‘primordial historizing, which lies in authentic resoluteness’ – that is, choosing to live ‘*free for death*, in a possibility which it has inherited and yet has chosen’ (§74:435 emphasis added). What Heidegger means by this is that, upon recognising its mortal finitude *and* the strictures of its social situatedness, authentic *Dasein* should creatively appropriate the latter to construct more distinctive and autonomous paths to the former. This ‘snatches one back from the endless multiplicity of possibilities’⁶⁰ embodied by vulgar time’s homogeneous instants and their dispersive qualities of ‘comfortableness, shirking, and taking things lightly’ (ibid.). Such Self-recovery is a labour of freedom that must necessarily take place in a concrete social situation, but it is also a striving that finds ‘unshakable joy’ in dispensing with the “‘incidentals” of the world and the They, in favour of what really matters to one’s true Self (§62:357–58). Here, then, is authentic and ecstatically temporal *Dasein*: *in* the world, but resolutely no longer *of* it insofar as it now chooses *for* itself and thereby chooses its Self, per se, as a unity existing ‘alongside’ *Das Man* and its vulgar time. Because this project is so important, in embracing resoluteness as a pathway to authentic temporalities – both small and large – *Dasein* need not worry about fallibility. While an anticipatorily resolute Being may occasionally need to “take it back”, this is not for the sake of expressing remorse or admitting mistakes, but rather to allow Being to get beyond such situations so that it might continue resolutely ‘repeating itself’ for the sake of preserving its emerging ownmost freedom (§54:314; §62:355). Retraction is for self-retrieval rather than redress, all in service of ‘authentic resoluteness’ and the primordial temporality it forges in and against vulgar time (§62:355).

The metaphysical stakes of Being versus time

This way of theorising freedom as a practical process might have marked a step towards regrounding philosophy in the common vulnerability of finite existence, absent traditional baselines like infinitude and eternity. However, *BT* also seeks to get beyond humble, reflective existence, with important consequences for realising Being in and against Time. Inasmuch as it involves first principles, fundamental truths, and primeval phenomena, Heidegger’s temporal Being is metaphysical. We ‘*must* presuppose’ Being and truth, that both ‘*must be*’ (§44:257, §44c:271). The ‘question of Being’ holds ‘ontological priority’, stipulating ‘essential’ characteristics of existence (§65:375–76). The foundational meaning of this Being is temporality (see §3:38; §65:374; §70:418). And that temporality has an ecstatic unitary form manifesting ‘primordial’ truth (e.g., §65:378). Such temporality poses a practical challenge for *Dasein*, but metaphysical speculation underwrites its didactic means of discovery and creation. *BT* also elevates human beings, as the protagonist of their own story but also as creators and carriers of ultimate meaning. This is a metaphysical recipe for a highly personalised or individuated temporality, which leaves little room for the times of others or for the mixing and mingling of purpose and action that an intersubjective, pluri-temporal experience might involve.⁶¹

Moreover, by making vulgar social time *Dasein*’s antagonist, Heidegger sends Being’s engagement with concrete situations into hypertrophy. He loads the mundane starting point – lived moments⁶² – with weighty questions of primordial truth, of *essential* existence. Heidegger’s existentialism begins, like most, with the radical claim that ‘existence precedes essence’, but it never stops seeking essence or foundational truth to ground finite life in something greater or more

⁶⁰Stambaugh (trans.), *BT*, p. 351: ‘tears one back’.

⁶¹See Hutchings, *Time and World Politics*; McIntosh, ‘Theorizing the temporal exception’.

⁶²By which Heidegger would ‘(dis)solve’ *other* philosophical problems); see Dreyfus, *Being in the World*, p. 7.

endurable.⁶³ Being's confrontation with time emanates in low settings but plays for the highest metaphysical stakes. Each moment of a life becomes potentially 'all-consuming', capable of putting us 'under strain',⁶⁴ and requiring an essentialising solution epitomised by bold individual action.

Metaphysical stakes reduce possibility. While in much of *BT* existential situations appear as extended moments when resolute Being might choose from multiple possible futures in a creative and productive way, Heidegger occasionally lets slip the all-or-nothing dichotomy inherent in every choice. *Dasein's* 'potentiality-for-Being ... is free either for authenticity or for inauthenticity' (§45:275).⁶⁵ Either humans choose to realise their metaphysical potential against the vagaries of time, or they resign themselves to the mere survival or persistence of those herd beasts not naturally imbued with primordial authenticity or temporalising power.

Temporal Being, alone

Furthermore, by describing death 'as the possibility which is non-relational' (§62:354) and primordial temporality as an ecstatic unity, *BT's* metaphysical register negates Being's relational context and potential.⁶⁶ An authentically existential life must match the singularity and import of our ownmost death, that 'moment at which all my *relations to others* disappear'⁶⁷ (see §50 and §53). During life, death is literally for other people, something at most witnessed by those who do not die and as such belonging to the *They* and thus to no *one*. To exist as distinctively as we must die, then, means living without recourse to social relations or community, which offer no genuine possibilities but instead only the 'inauthentic they-self' that would 'disburden' Being of its productive angst and replace this with idleness and triviality (§61:351; §27:165). Heidegger here refers to *Dasein's* 'call of conscience', which expresses not just any restless need to respond productively or responsibly to anxious, anonymous, and finite situations, but a particular drive that relentlessly '*individualises*' *Dasein* so that Being might burrow beneath the surface of social life with 'unwavering precision ... down to its *ownmost* potentiality-for-Being' (§62:354 emphasis added).⁶⁸ Just as there can be no I in they, so too there can be no primordial temporality in vulgar time – authentic *Dasein* must forge this amidst time in a way that places it 'outside of' and against time.⁶⁹

This structure of action holds even when situations shift from mundane to dramatic. As Heidegger wrote to his former student, Karl Löwith, 'one must – in a [time of] radical disintegration ... convince oneself firmly of "the one thing that matters"' without the aid of others.⁷⁰ Another way of characterising this is that authentic choice 'depends on an ability to "tell time" – that is, to sense the imperatives of *one's* factual situation' and to act upon them with atomistic resolve rather than collective solidarity.⁷¹

All this makes sense within Heidegger's system insofar as vulgar time associates closely with the void posed by *Das Man*. 'In holding itself in a relation to beings, *Dasein* holds itself *out into the Nothing*. In this way, *Dasein* accomplishes a surmounting of beings as a whole –'.⁷² Temporal authenticity, then, readily becomes a matter of public contradistinction, a performatively staunch confrontation with 'the Nothing' of those dispersed concerns and anonymous times

⁶³This comports with Heidegger's intention that *BT* reassert philosophy's preeminence among knowledge genres; see Wheeler, 'Martin Heidegger'.

⁶⁴Heidegger, 'What is metaphysics?', p. 734.

⁶⁵Similarly, Heidegger, *BT*, §44b:268 reads Aristotle as speculating about a Being that can 'either uncover [truth] or cover [it] up'.

⁶⁶This is why progressive readings of Heidegger like Odysseos, 'Deconstructing the modern subject'; *The Subject of Coexistence*, must work hard to reconstruct relationality in *BT*.

⁶⁷Wheeler, 'Martin Heidegger' emphasis added.

⁶⁸Stambaugh (trans.), *BT*, p. 283, translates 'precision' as 'trenchancy'.

⁶⁹Nor is there room for time to work differently for others or manifest heterogeneously, see Hutchings, *Time and World Politics*.

⁷⁰In Löwith, 'Political implications', p. 119.

⁷¹See Crowell, 'Existentialism', §4.1.

⁷²Heidegger, 'What is metaphysics?', p. 742.

found in overcrowded, modern society. And in choosing and acting in this way, authentic Being ‘*exemplif[ies] a standard for others as well*.’⁷³

Yet however much internal coherence *BT* may achieve, it leaves very little room for social life as a meaningful mode of existence in its own right, or for compromise, provisional steps, the sense of a work in progress. Instead, Heidegger elevates individuated actions, authorised by their agent’s resolve rather than their practical content, over all concerns of the They. As we will see soon enough, loading such existential choices with metaphysical value encourages violent antagonisms. We will also see that, by singling out a *Dasein* that forges an ecstatic temporality which sets a standard for the crowd, Heidegger paves the bridge from individual Being to collective identity with demagoguery.

To illustrate this, the rest of this article examines two fraught historical moments when the politics of temporal authenticity brought extremist alternatives to the fore. The first moment shows how *Dasein*’s authenticity corrupted its own theorist and subordinated the possibilities of existential community to the figure of a singularly *ecstatic* leader. The second shows how easily *Dasein*’s existence corrupts authenticity itself by attaching *existentiell bona fides* to a radical individualism which privileges Selfish caprice, distrusts Others, cultivates loud reticence, and revels in spasmodic violence as metaphysically meaningful and politically heroic.

The politics of authenticity, then

The first moment involves Heidegger’s infamous embrace of National Socialism in the early 1930s, fast on the heels of *BT*’s publication. Heidegger’s Nazism raises a number of troubling and well-covered issues,⁷⁴ but one that has gone relatively unnoticed is how it flows from *BT*’s politics of time. To see this, we can observe how Heidegger transposed *BT*’s philosophical arguments about temporal existence into the immediate historical context of Weimar Germany.

Admittedly, with rampant inflation and crushing war debts, widespread unemployment and social dislocation, and a simmering ‘stabbed in the back’ myth about the end of the Great War, Weimar was full of existential concerns. But Heidegger did more than merely reflect the times. Into this *zeitgeist* he injected a metaphysical discourse of existential freedom struggling against social time, with the express purpose of lending philosophical support to the project of German national rebirth in National Socialism’s cult of personality. He characterised Nazism as a ‘reawakening’ of the spirit harkening back to the dawn of Western civilisation in ancient Greece,⁷⁵ one that would rescue modernity from the nihilism and alienation of societies organised by common conventions and vulgarities like standardised time.

Most notably, Heidegger laid the potential of *Dasein*’s authentic renewal – of holding itself out into the nothingness of modern life in a way that ‘surmounted’ others and set a standard for them to follow – at the feet of the singular, factual icon of the national ‘Over-self’ – *der Führer*, Adolf Hitler.⁷⁶ It is worth pausing here to consider how closely Hitler might have exemplified a standard of authentic Being to Heidegger. Hitler’s rise to power unfolded through flagrant actions like the Beer Hall Putsch, the Night of the Long Knives, *Kristallnacht*, or the Reichstag Fire, all of which leveraged insecurity, malice, and violence. His ascension featured an unapologetic iconography of German greatness capped by rousing public speeches delivered from podiums jutting out over huge crowds. Hitler called the masses to national renewal in oratorical performances where unflinching animus, rapturous exaltations, and frothy exhortations frequently crescendoed to an *ecstatic* frenzy. He also spoke in the vernacular of Heidegger’s existentialism. Hitler decried Germany’s negated ‘freedom’ during a time of ‘disintegration of the unity of spirit and will of our Volk’; he railed at

⁷³ Crowell, ‘Existentialism’, emphasis added.

⁷⁴ See *inter alia* Di Cesare, *Heidegger and the Jews*; Fried and Polt (eds), *After Heidegger?*

⁷⁵ See Stephen Michelman, *The A to Z of Existentialism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), pp. 176–7; Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI*, pp. 45, 48, 80–1.

⁷⁶ In terms of *Dasein*’s standard-setting, ‘*führer*’ means ‘leader’ but also ‘guide’.

how the ‘unity of the nation vanishes and dissolves in a muddle of political and egotistical opinions, economic interests and differences in Weltanschauung [philosophy or worldview]’; and he referred to a nation filled with ‘burdensome care.’⁷⁷ He framed the present day as a particularly auspicious moment in ‘a two-thousand-year-old inheritance.’⁷⁸ He celebrated the Nazi party’s success as rising ‘to the helm of the Reich, to leadership of the nation and its destiny’⁷⁹ so that the German Volk could ‘overcome the problems of these times’ rather than ‘succumb to them.’⁸⁰ He told ordinary Germans it was a ‘great blessing to be alive at this time and this hour’ but also that in such ‘a critical hour, one man of action weighs more than one thousand sophisticated weaklings.’⁸¹ These examples show how little interpretive effort was required to map the figure of Hitler onto the ideal of an authentic Being, exemplifying a primordial temporal unity that could solve Germany’s problem of time and set a standard for the masses.⁸² It is not surprising, then, that Heidegger came to view Hitler as the ‘grounded’ of Germany’s ‘abyss’ and restorer of its ‘sacredness.’⁸³

In doing so, he realised a dangerous potential embedded in *BT*’s conceptual framework, skipping over the possibility of intersubjective social responses to postwar anxiety and transposing the “capacity-for-Being-a-whole” of individual authentic existence ... to the “totality” of the authentic state.⁸⁴ As authentic, this could not just be any state, either. For a collective to *Be*, it could not do so by embracing difference or pluralism, which too readily dispersed subjectivity and diluted the collective commitment that mirrors individual resolve. Instead, a homogeneous *volk* guided by an unapologetic demagogue exemplified the utmost possibilities of temporal Being, and the philosophical question of ‘how should I act and live with others’ became a more flippant political spur: ‘who are “we” to be?’⁸⁵ The answer lay in the standard set by a lone, resolute figure. Or, as Heidegger maintained long after the Second World War, ‘We have to strive to grasp the whole only on the basis of the few’⁸⁶ – whether this be the renascent German whole on the basis of Hitler, or the future of Europe on the basis of the Third Reich.

Heidegger recognised that such arguments directly impacted the democratic politics of his day. This was a feature, not a bug. In 1933, his rectorship at Freiburg University began by emphasising the ‘Self-assertion of the German University.’⁸⁷ Soon after, he exhorted students to support Nazism and Hitler as the embodiment of German renewal. In the student newspaper, he reduced national elections and the referendum on leaving the League of Nations to a single ‘free decision’ of whether ‘the entire people ... wants its own existence’ or not.⁸⁸ There were not votes for or against

⁷⁷ Adolf Hitler, ‘First Radio Address’ (1 February 1933), available at: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hitler-s-first-radio-address> accessed 13 October 2022.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Adolf Hitler, ‘Speech to the Nazi Party in Munich’ (24 February 1941), available at: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/adolf-hitler-speech-by-chancellor-hitler-to-the-nazi-party-in-munich-february-1941> accessed 13 October 2022.

⁸⁰ Hitler, ‘First Radio Address.’

⁸¹ Adolf Hitler, ‘Address to the Reichstag on the Anniversary of Coming to Power’ (30 January 1939), available at: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/hitler-s-address-to-the-reichstag-on-the-anniversary-of-coming-to-power> accessed 13 October 2022. Notably, the Reichstag President, Hermann Göring, responded to Hitler’s speech by referring to his most loyal supporters as ‘Your comrades of the first hour ... willing to follow your lead loyally as one united whole.’

⁸² For a related exploration of time in Nazism, which does not scrutinise the Heidegger link, see Christopher Clark, *Time and Power: Visions of History in German Politics, from the Thirty Years’ War to the Third Reich* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

⁸³ Hannah Arendt, ‘What is existenz philosophy?’, in *Complete Works, vol. 3-Sechs Essays 1948* (2019), p. 17, available at: https://hannah-arendt-edition.net/vol_text.html?id=/3p_III-007-WhatIsExistenzPhilosophy.xml accessed 1 December 2022; see Wheeler, ‘Martin Heidegger.’

⁸⁴ Löwith, ‘Political implications’, pp. 122–3.

⁸⁵ Crowell, ‘Existentialism.’

⁸⁶ Heidegger, *Ponderings II-VI*, p. 88.

⁸⁷ Martin Heidegger, ‘The self-assertion of the German University’, in Hermann Heidegger (ed.) and Karsten Harries (trans.), *The Review of Metaphysics*, 38:3 (1985), pp. 467–502. This rectoral address welcomed a new student law instituting a strictly hierarchical *Führerprinzip*, with Heidegger at the top; Heidegger, pp. 475–6.

⁸⁸ Martin Heidegger, ‘Electoral appeal’, *Freiburger Studentenzeitung* (10 November 1933), reproduced in Löwith, ‘The political implications’, pp. 128–30.

particular policies or laws, but metaphysical either-or choices, which could signify a resolute, singular, and whole German identity or relegate them to just more idle chattering. Unsurprisingly, since he identified these ‘choices’ with Hitler, Heidegger also found them redolent of *Dasein*’s ecstatic temporality, lauding how they appropriated the past but also forged a new future through a single Self-contained and Self-disclosing act: ‘This election simply cannot be compared to all other previous elections. What is unique about this election is the simple greatness of the decision that is to be executed.’⁸⁹ As such, it offered a chamber in which German resolve should ‘strike up and resound’, an ‘event in itself’ through which Germany would ‘choose its future.’⁹⁰ Facing such an ‘incomparabl[e] ... hour’ and ‘epochal opportunity’, there could be ‘no vacillation and no hesitation’ – voters could defy Hitler and slip into the dispersed time of crisis confronting European *Das Man*, or they could unite destiny with the future in the ‘simple and ultimate’ act of voting for the *Führer*’s wishes, which represented a complete whole bearing ‘millennia before itself.’⁹¹ For Heidegger, democratic participation contained little organic possibility, precisely because it was loaded with metaphysical stakes. Voting was not a means of constructing community, establishing ways of coexisting, or resolving conflicts. It was ‘the most basic demand of all Being’, a chance to ‘preserve and save its own essence’ by aligning the many that might become a whole with a singular, steadfast figurehead.⁹²

During this period, Heidegger regularly ‘transpose[d] historical existentialism to contemporary German reality, ... positing existential and ontological categories at a specific historical “moment”, in a way that suggest[ed] that their philosophical intentions *a priori* go hand in hand with the political situation.’⁹³ This lent the Weimar crisis the highest existential import. He also helped the Nazis canonise a student who had been executed for sabotaging postwar French occupiers. Heidegger’s ‘Schlageter speech’ transformed the student into an existential martyr whose single resolute act made his life worthy of death: ‘*Alone*, drawing on his own inner strength, he had to place before his soul an image of the *future awakening* of the Volk to honor and greatness *so that he could die believing in this future*.’⁹⁴ The Freiburg martyr thus devoted his death – and through its distinctiveness, his life – to the ecstatic temporal unity of Hitler, for ‘The *Führer* alone is the German present and future reality.’⁹⁵

In 1930s Weimar, Heidegger’s existentialist question of ‘Who am I to become’ almost immediately became an issue of ‘who are “we” to be?’, with Hitler alone providing the answer. Though crafted with great care over many years, *BT*’s arguments shifted seamlessly from individual questions to national ideals.⁹⁶ And where such a move might have opened Heidegger to criticism about a lack of social relations or community, he pre-empted this by championing a singular Being’s ability to ‘tell time’, to sense the ‘demands’ of a concrete moment and embrace these resolutely as a ‘Self-choosing’ but also a standard for all would-be Selves, individual and collective alike.⁹⁷ The Weimar ‘They’ was ‘irresolute or inauthentic’, whereas Hitler was ‘recalling the German people back to their “ownmost” possibility – i.e., a way for Germany to constitute itself authentically as an alternative to the political models of the Soviet Union and the United States.’⁹⁸ As Heidegger noted repeatedly, national ‘rebirth’ premised on this standard would necessarily involve ‘strangeness, darkness, [and] insecurity’⁹⁹ because ‘force—submission and breaking and downgoing are the signs of being’,

⁸⁹ Heidegger, ‘Electoral appeal’.

⁹⁰ Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI*, p. 80; Heidegger, ‘Electoral appeal’.

⁹¹ Heidegger, ‘Electoral appeal’; Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI*, p. 88.

⁹² Heidegger, ‘Electoral appeal’.

⁹³ Löwith, ‘Political implications’, pp. 124–5.

⁹⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger, ‘Student address’, *Freiburger Studentenzeitung* (11 November 1933), in Löwith, ‘The political implications’, p. 130.

⁹⁶ Crowell, ‘Existentialism’.

⁹⁷ See Michelman, *The A to Z*.

⁹⁸ Crowell, ‘Existentialism’.

⁹⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 43, which originated as a summer 1935 Freiburg lecture course.

and so ‘will[ing] ourselves’ successfully would entail danger and violence ‘without regard to consequences.’¹⁰⁰ Courageous, committed, violent action, based on a reading of the times, with the essence of the nation at stake, and devoid of any space for consequential ethics – this was indeed a ‘radicalisation’ of ‘the question of Being’ (§15), but not in the ontological sense Heidegger claimed. Rather, it expressed the political stakes of metaphysicalising temporal challenges and attaching these to the idea of a national Self that realises “ultimate greatness” by ‘expend[ing] itself without regard to consequences.’¹⁰¹ Years later, reflecting on his Freiburg tenure, Heidegger concluded that what led him to embrace Nazism was ‘thinking purely “metaphysically”’ about Germany’s temporal ‘possibility of a transition to another beginning.’¹⁰² Conspicuously, he expressed regret mostly over underestimating the alienating effects of technology or the renewed influence of Christianity, rather than about Nazism, per se, or how *BT*’s antagonism between Being and time provided a ready-to-hand valourisation of Hitler’s project.

The politics of authenticity, now

The second moment is unfolding currently across a number of countries. Why juxtapose these twenty-first-century situations against Heidegger’s age? First, much as he encountered a nationwide existential crisis almost immediately after *BT* appeared, a number of observers suggest we are now confronting a global existential present full of anxiety, dread, and questions about life, death, and human freedom’s capacity to negotiate urgent problems.¹⁰³ Second, thanks to a century of inroads in multiple knowledge genres, existentialism is today part of the furniture of intellectual and cultural life in many societies, including its temporal antinomy between social alienation and individual authenticity.¹⁰⁴ This is particularly so in societies where right-wing extremists are waxing through the tactical culture of white power and its violent expression in mass casualty attacks.¹⁰⁵ Taken together, these considerations open up questions about whether our current predicaments manifest more than just general existential affinities with *BT*’s historical context, and, more specifically, whether its discourse of authenticity in and against time might be fomenting or exacerbating our current crises rather than helping to resolve them.

White power and paramilitary authenticity

Existential themes suffuse the rise of the white power movement. Much as Great War veterans returned to an aimless, anxious life in Germany and filled it with commitment to ‘whatever unruly cause’ might reward their military skillset,¹⁰⁶ US Vietnam War veterans ritualised stories of existential crisis in the jungle: ‘constant danger, gore, and horror’ coupled with ‘loss, frustration, and doubt.’¹⁰⁷ To make matters worse, in their view, the political class and public opinion denied them the freedom to fight with the consequences-free resolve necessary to defeat a racialised enemy.¹⁰⁸ Raging against such fickle strictures, veterans like Louis Beam determined to ‘bring the war home’

¹⁰⁰ Heidegger, *Ponderings II-VI*, p. 312; Heidegger, ‘Self-assertion’, p. 480; Löwith, ‘Political implications’, p. 130.

¹⁰¹ Löwith, ‘Political implications’, p. 130, which quotes from Heidegger’s Freiburg inaugural; later reproduced as Martin Heidegger, *What Is Metaphysics?* (Jovian Press, 2018); see also Heidegger, ‘What is metaphysics?’

¹⁰² Heidegger, *Ponderings VII-XI*, p. 318.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Bull, ‘Great again’; Rumelili, ‘[Our] age of anxiety’; Dege, ‘2020’s existentialist turn’; Eileen M. Hunt, ‘The last woman’, *Nanovic Institute* (30 July 2021), available at: <https://nanovic.nd.edu/news/the-last-woman/> accessed 31 July 2021; Steele, ‘Nowhere to run’.

¹⁰⁴ See, for example, Peter F. Drucker, ‘The unfashionable Kierkegaard’, *The Sewanee Review*, 57:4 (1949), pp. 587–602; see also Cotkin, *Existential America*, pp. 75–9.

¹⁰⁵ Existential confrontations with time also show up in toxic masculinity, misogynist violence, and conspiratorial thinking, which I hope to analyse in a larger project.

¹⁰⁶ Löwith, ‘Political implications’, p. 128.

¹⁰⁷ Kathleen Belew, *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), pp. 3, 21.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–3.

to US soil, targeting non-whites to ‘awaken’ a ‘sympathetic white public’ to the existential stakes of America’s supposed malaise.¹⁰⁹ This discourse knit various Anglo-European and Christian identity groups into the contemporary white power movement, which combines racist ideology with paramilitary consumerism. Gun culture, war films, recreational tactical training, and magazines like *Soldier of Fortune*, all find enthusiastic audiences in white power, and these material trappings in turn lend the veneer of deep commitment and meaning to white power’s ‘armchair and weekend warriors.’¹¹⁰ In the twenty-first century, ‘forever war’ veterans have often accelerated the trend.¹¹¹

Such tactical ‘training’ symbols, along with a fuzzy notion of ‘preparedness’ for struggle against various ‘existential threats’, spread from veterans to a general populace in thrall to a mass-marketed and relentlessly individuated brand of ‘freedom.’¹¹² While nominally about meeting a future threat or privation, the way that ‘preppers’ adopt skills, jargon, and accoutrements also performs ‘real’ commitment without content. White power’s tactical culture embraces these simulacra of authenticity as solutions to those murky anxieties about economic parity, demographic replacement, or normative anachronism which encrust the movement’s core racial hatred and disdain. Taken together, these supposed ‘injustices’ evoke Heidegger’s link between the ultimate nullity of death and the alienation produced in each socially shared present. They pit the ‘authentic’ (white) individual against the debilitating dynamics of the (multiracial) masses. When white power apologists frame such confrontations in the discourse of ‘existential angst’, then, they tap into *existentialist* logics that go far beyond basic questions of survival.¹¹³

Furthermore, today’s white power movement links authentic preparedness to ‘telling the time’ in the way it encourages those feeling disquieted by societal change to convince themselves of ‘the one thing that matters’¹¹⁴ and to pursue this single-mindedly – in this case, race war. As the ‘White Genocide Manifesto’ claims, arguments from ‘Nature’s Laws, *common sense and current circumstances*’¹¹⁵ call racists to action rather than restraint, for prevailing demographic and social dynamics from the 1970s onward show that instead of waiting for any Christian Identitarian ‘rapture’ or other sort of divine intervention, ‘the faithful would be tasked with ridding the world of the unfaithful, the world’s nonwhite and Jewish population.’¹¹⁶ On this view, every committed individual knows within themselves that only resolute action here and now can forge a future more conducive to white supremacy. Indeed, white power’s ‘fourteen words’ slogan – ‘*We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children*’¹¹⁷ – propounds the temporal, existentialist logic of a free subject acting resolutely to actualise the future in a way that preserves a vision of authentic identity.

Mass casualties and ‘lone wolves’

These currents coalesce in prominent mass casualty events, replete with tropes reminiscent of Heidegger’s existentialism. Before he killed 77 adults and children in his home country, the 2011

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 112.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 28.

¹¹¹Van Jackson, ‘The liberal internationalist origins of right-wing insurrection’, *Inkstick Media* (11 January 2021), available at: {<https://inkstickmedia.com/the-liberal-internationalist-origins-of-right-wing-insurrection/>} accessed 3 March 2021.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Sara Kamali, *Homegrown Hate: Why White Nationalists and Militant Islamists Are Waging War against the United States* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2021), p. 156.

¹¹⁴Löwith, ‘Political implications’, p. 119; refer to text preceding fn. 70.

¹¹⁵In Foundation for Defense of Democracies (hereafter FDD), ‘Anders Breivik and The Turner Diaries’ (25 July 2011), available at: {<http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2011/07/24/jonathan-kay-on-breiviks-norwegian-massacre-and-the-turner-diaries-how-a-2011-crisis/>} accessed 27 July 2021, emphasis added.

¹¹⁶Belew, *Bring the War Home*, p. 6.

¹¹⁷On the slogan, see George Michael, ‘David Lane and the fourteen words’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 10:1 (2009), pp. 43–61.

Oslo attacker wrote that ‘the root of Europe’s problems is the lack of cultural self-confidence (nationalism).’¹¹⁸ The 2015 Charleston church shooter wrote that ‘White culture is world culture’ before attacking a traditionally African-American church.¹¹⁹ The 2019 Christchurch mosque shooter recognised ‘America’, New Zealand, and Australia as the last hope for ‘an idealized “white homeland”’, praised Donald Trump as a ‘symbol of renewed white identity and common purpose’, and then livestreamed his killing spree.¹²⁰ In each case, claims of a particular group’s special authenticity – which must be jealously guarded and violently protected – occupied the forefront. Such attacks also exemplify a contemporary variant of existentialist iconography – the ‘lone wolf’. This creative fiction holds great tactical appeal, partly because, compared with larger groups, proponents believe that individual attacks are harder to detect or prevent.¹²¹ But the allure is also clearly existential.

The ‘lone wolf’ embodies autonomous and resolute action undeterred by worldly norms or idle concerns. In an essay that first broached lone actor attacks to the white power movement, Louis Beam introduced the ‘lone wolf’ as defender of ‘the liberty of the folk’ against federal intrusions and mainstream mores.¹²² As in 1930s Weimar, government and society filled the role of *Das Man*. Beam described white power lone actors in existentialist terms: ‘this struggle is rapidly becoming a matter of individual action, each of its participants making a private decision in the quietness of his heart to resist: to resist by any means necessary.’¹²³ While many less-committed others might offer empty promises or loud vitriol, for the resolved individual, ‘It is enough to know what one himself will do.’¹²⁴

‘Lone wolf’ proponents directly link freedom and alienation to shocking violence. Already feeling abandoned by society, lone attackers learn to embrace social alienation as a space of absolute choice unfettered by normative expectations or ‘condemnatory rhetoric.’¹²⁵ The ‘abandonment of “why” empowers a singular narrative focus on “what” and “how” – the necessity of immediate,

¹¹⁸Factbox: Excerpts from 1,500-page Norway killer manifesto, *Reuters* (24 July 2011), available at: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-norway-manifesto-factbox-idUSTRE76N14J20110724> accessed 22 August 2021. To avoid contributing to their posthumous notoriety, I identify lone actors only by year and target community rather than by name. For a similar approach, see the *RTV Dataset 1990–2021* (C-Rex, University of Oslo, 2022), available at: <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/rtv-dataset/> accessed 16 November 2022, which uses lone actor identification numbers. My thanks to Anna Meier for this example.

¹¹⁹Keegan Hanks, ‘Dylann Roof May Have Been A Regular Commenter At Neo-Nazi Website The Daily Stormer’, Southern Poverty Law Center (22 June 2015), available at: <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2015/06/21/dylann-roof-may-have-been-regular-commenter-neo-nazi-website-daily-stormer> accessed 21 August 2021.

¹²⁰Jane Coaston, ‘The New Zealand shooter’s manifesto shows how white nationalist rhetoric spreads’, *Vox* (15 March 2019), available at: <https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/3/15/18267163/new-zealand-shooting-christchurch-white-nationalism-racism-language> accessed 2 August 2021; Michael Koziol, ‘Christchurch shooter’s manifesto reveals an obsession with white supremacy over Muslims’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (15 March 2019), available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/world/oceania/christchurch-shooter-s-manifesto-reveals-an-obsession-with-white-supremacy-over-muslims-20190315-p514ko.html> accessed 2 August 2021.

¹²¹The Neo-Nazi James Mason, quoted in Zack Beauchamp, ‘An online subculture celebrating the Charleston church shooter appears to be inspiring copycat plots’, *Vox* (7 February 2019), available at: <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/2/7/18215634/dylann-roof-charleston-church-shooter-bowl-gang> accessed 2 August 2021. I hereafter refer to the perpetrators of such attacks as ‘lone actors’, following Bart Schuurman, Lasse Lindekilde, Stefan Malthaner, Francis O’Connor, Paul Gill, and Noémie Bouhana, ‘End of the lone wolf: The typology that should not have been’, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 42:8 (2019), pp. 771–8, who summarise extensive evidence that supposed ‘lone wolves’ are neither especially solitary nor especially cunning, as the symbolism would suggest. I place quotation marks around all instances of ‘lone wolf’ to denote the stylised creation of white power extremists. My thanks to Anna Meier for discussions about this issue of nomenclature.

¹²²Louis Beam, ‘Leaderless resistance’, *The Seditonist* (February 1992), available at: <http://www.louisbeam.com/leaderless.htm> accessed 3 August 2021.

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Paul Joosse, ‘Leaderless resistance and the loneliness of lone wolves: Exploring the rhetorical dynamics of lone actor violence’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29:1 (2017), p. 54.

violent action and concrete suggestions about how to go about it.¹²⁶ The 2011 Oslo attacker put his finger on this link by evoking authentic *Dasein*'s need to look only forward, with little concern for consequences or *Das Man*'s qualms and even less for 'taking back': 'Do not apologi[se], make excuses or express regret for you are acting in self-defense or in a preemptive manner ... Some innocents will die in our operations as they are simply at the wrong place at the wrong time. Get used (to) the idea.'¹²⁷ On this view, innocents are collateral corners of the They.

Resolve to commit shocking, singular violence distinguishes the 'lone wolf' from contemporary variants of *Das Man*: "the Blob",¹²⁸ those who 'play "let's pretend" or who are "groupies"',¹²⁹ 'the fainthearts and hobbyists – the "talkers"',¹³⁰ or simply 'the white masses'.¹³¹ These descriptions recall Heidegger's despair that passive groups of people are little more than 'a gigantic jellyfish, wallowing around in the world in order ... to be washed up on the shore of nothingness'.¹³² Moreover, this logic of hyper-individualised violence on behalf of the 'the freedom of the folk' echoes Heidegger in Freiburg, deploying *BT*'s jargon to champion authentic commitment as radical free action by an individual, 'Alone, drawing on his own inner strength', killing and dying for the sake of the 'future awakening of the Volk to honor and greatness'.

'Lone wolves' transcend the vagaries of the Blob's social time through their individual actions' ability to unite opportunity and resolve in an ecstatic temporal event. 'Those idealists truly committed to the cause of freedom will act when they feel the time is ripe'.¹³³ On this view, white folk have been facing existential threats for years, so the temporality of white supremacist violence is *always already* resonant and fulsome – in every moment, 'the hour for action is now'.¹³⁴ In white power dramatisations like *The Turner Diaries*, telling the time thusly and committing and preparing to act upon it induces an existential 'dizziness' or 'headiness that comes with the freedom to create' a new future through biting action.¹³⁵ As the narrator recalls, after bombing a government building, 'we gaped with a mixture of horror and elation' at the sublime devastation they had wrought.¹³⁶ The substantive content here concerns white supremacy's renewal, but the form follows the familiar existential pattern of realising authentic Being through provocative, individual action unmoored from societal consequences. Destructive transgression lends such acts an 'eventfulness' – the quality of a discrete temporal whole binding past and future in a meaningful present¹³⁷ – reminiscent of both Heidegger's *ecstasis* and the promise of cultural renewal (§65:373–74). As the 2011 Oslo attacker put it, 'Now our lives truly belong only to the Order. Today I was, in a sense, born again'.¹³⁸ And should the attacker join the body count, their infamous death marks a booming bookend. It exemplifies living-free-for-death, insures against the threat of future alienation in posthumous anonymity, and manifests in this singular final act their true self – a coherent whole 'stretched

¹²⁶J. M. Berger, 'How "The Turner Diaries" changed white nationalism', *The Atlantic* (16 September 2016), available at: {<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/how-the-turner-diaries-changed-white-nationalism/500039/>} accessed 4 August 2021.

¹²⁷'Factbox'.

¹²⁸The Neo-Nazi Harold Covington, quoted in Joosse, 'Leaderless resistance and the loneliness of lone wolves', p. 67.

¹²⁹Beam, 'Leaderless resistance'.

¹³⁰Cynthia Rose (ed.), 'The Turner Diaries', in *American Decades Primary Sources, vol. 10, 1990–1999* (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2004), p. 336.

¹³¹Right-wing extremist Alex Curtis, quoted in Jason Burke, 'The myth of the "lone wolf" terrorist', *The Guardian* (30 March 2017), available at: {<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/mar/30/myth-lone-wolf-terrorist>} accessed 5 August 2021.

¹³²Heidegger, *Ponderings II–VI*, p. 143.

¹³³Beam, 'Leaderless resistance'.

¹³⁴See Berger, 'How "The Turner Diaries" changed white nationalism'; FDD, 'Anders Breivik and The Turner Diaries'.

¹³⁵Cotkin, *Existential America*, p. 6; see Flynn, *Existentialism*, p. 59.

¹³⁶*The Turner Diaries* (1978), reprinted by the Anti-Defamation League (5 February 2017), available at: {<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/turner-diaries>} accessed 7 September 2021.

¹³⁷See Christopher McIntosh, 'A "continuing, imminent" threat: The temporal frameworks enabling political violence in the US War on Terrorism', *International Relations*, 36:4 (2022), p. 577, who shows how notions of 'wartime' frame some political violence as events in a war, but not others.

¹³⁸FDD, 'Anders Breivik and The Turner Diaries'.

between birth and death’ that rejects the vulgar ‘indefinite series of “nows”¹³⁹ of life with *Das Man*. ‘Lone wolf’ logic promises that vicious actions will make the perpetrator ‘beginning and end’, an undeniable symbol of that ‘eternity [in which] each individual is unique.’¹⁴⁰ According to this way of thinking, living, and dying, someone acting on conviction of the one thing only that matters accomplishes a dual objective. First, they transform their own extended lifespan into a holistic existence. Second, by the ‘temporalising’ standard of authenticity (§65:377) their murder-suicide sets, they help renew or secure a future for authentically white folk.

Conclusion

Heidegger’s influence on Western thought and culture cannot be denied, and has been well documented. Yet, previous deliberations about Heidegger downplay how his impact might be part of the problems that many existentialist treatments seek to solve. If IR is to engage more fully with Heidegger, we cannot ignore the ways in which his proposal that authentic *Dasein* transcend vulgar time with ecstatic temporality immediately helped him embrace Nazism in the 1930s. Nor can we ignore how loudly Heideggerian themes resonate in today’s racist and fascist renaissances, where white power groups and lone actors deploy the discourse of unbridled freedom as a shield against existential anxiety and wield eventful violence as a cudgel against imagined grievances and threats.

The consequences of the Heidegger affair – how the existential logic of authenticity enabled its creator to embrace an ideology of violent domination – become more pressing when they reverberate in the weaponisation of authenticity today. It is no coincidence that, in addition to slaughtering black churchgoers, the 2015 Charleston church shooter proposed that a ‘mass awakening’ of authentically white civilisation required that ‘we ... somehow turn every jew [*sic*] blue.’¹⁴¹ Nor is it coincidental that when confronting particularly anxious moments, existentialist logics indicated to both Heidegger and contemporary racists that their particular present is loaded with metaphysical import, that they alone can reinterpret an idealised past, and that ‘force—submission and breaking and downgoing’ – is the path forward for all who would will themselves to a reborn or reawakened Self.

Heidegger is by no means the first philosopher to pit humanity against time.¹⁴² But his singular solution, full of aggression, individuated choice, and metaphysical meaning, stands apart from other proposals emphasising the *polis* or democracy, theology, science, or pure rationality.¹⁴³ While IR has begun to explore Heidegger over the past two decades, it has not yet grappled fully with the temporal or political consequences of his vision of authentic Being in and against vulgar social time. It should. This is partly because the political implications of Heidegger’s life and thought matter as such and as vital historical context if he is to become a more explicit part of IR’s intellectual heritage. But perhaps more importantly, IR should also confront the violent excesses of authentic temporality in Heidegger precisely because they echo so strongly in contemporary events. In the first instance, the sociopolitical tensions in Heidegger’s account of Being and time inflected the possibilities he derived for authentic existence in ways that suborned Nazism and subordinated free society. Reading Heidegger on time more closely helps explain Heidegger in Weimar. In the second instance, Heidegger helps explain twenty-first-century problems by shedding light on the tropes and logics informing today’s right-wing extremists. Crucially, this diagnostic dividend comes from the fact that the intellectual and cultural heritage that *BT* bequeathed plays a leading role in contemporary extremism. We are only just beginning to apprehend the full consequences

¹³⁹ Michelman, *The A to Z of Existentialism*.

¹⁴⁰ Drucker, ‘The unfashionable Kierkegaard’, p. 590.

¹⁴¹ Charleston Church Shooter, ‘Manifesto’, *The Last Rhodesian* (9 February 2015), p. 4; see Scott Neuman, ‘Photos of Dylann Roof, racist manifesto surface on website’, *NPR* (20 June 2015), available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/06/20/416024920/photos-possible-manifesto-of-dylann-roof-surface-on-website> accessed 7 August 2021.

¹⁴² See John G. Gunnell, *Political Philosophy and Time: Plato and the Origins of Political Vision* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

¹⁴³ See Hom, *International Relations*, pp. 17–18.

of Heidegger's existential solution to temporal dispersion. For those committed to understanding the politics of right-wing extremism, a crucial part of this will be reckoning head-on with what it means to forge true Being in and against time, and with the dangerous roads that those claiming the mantle of existential authenticity have taken us down, then and now.

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