

An Investigation of the  
Nature and Rôle  
of Historicity in the thought of  
Dilthey and Heidegger

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## **Introduction**

The question of the meaning, methods and philosophical manifestations of history is currently rife with contention. The problem that I will address in an exposition of the thought of Wilhelm Dilthey and Martin Heidegger, centers around the intersubjectivity of an historical world. Specifically, there are two interconnected issues. First, since all knowledge occurs to a person from within his or her historical age how can any person in any age make truth claims? In order to answer this concern we must understand the essence and rôle of history. Yet how can we come to an individual understanding of what history is when the meanings that we use are themselves historically enveloped?

But can we, we who are well aware of the knowledge that archaeology has dredged up from old texts or even from 'living' monuments of past ages, really neglect to notice these artifacts that exist within and enrich our world? Charges of wilful blindness would arise if any attempt were made to suggest that certain things of our world did not come down to us from the past. Thus it appears more important

to determine what this 'past' is and therefore how history operates than to simply derail the possibility for historical understanding.

Wilhelm Dilthey, the great German historicist from the 19th century, did not question the existence of historical artifacts as from the past, but in treating knowledge as one such artifact placed the onus on knowledge to show itself as true, or meaningful, in light of the fact that other historical periods relied on different facts and generated different truths or meanings. The problem for him was not just determining what the rôle of history is, but moreover to discover how knowledge could make any claim as true knowledge. As he stated, there is a problem of "historical anarchy"!

Martin Heidegger picked up these two strands of Dilthey's thought and wanted to answer the problem of truth and meaning in order to solve the problem of historicism. This problem underscored, perhaps for the first time, that societal presuppositions about the past and present of their era are not immutable. Penetrating to the core of the *raison d'être* of the age was an historical reflection about the past which was now conceived as separated both temporally and attitudinally from the present. But further than this, Heidegger's focus on asking the question of the meaning of Being meant that history must be ontologically explicated not merely ontically treated. Heidegger hopes to remove barriers to a genuine ontology by

including history into an assessment of previous philosophical systems. He does this in order that the question of Being be more fully explicated, which necessarily for him includes the question of the Being of history.

One approach to the question of what history is, given the information that we get from historical knowledge, is whether such knowledge can be formalized into a science. Additionally, we can approach the question of what the essence and rôle of history is by revealing its underlying characteristics, that is, by focussing on historicity. Thus we will begin with an expository look at Dilthey's conception of history and historicity. We will then explore these issues first in Heidegger's Being and Time, then in the third chapter his middle and later works. Finally, we shall examine how Heidegger's conception may reflect a development in the conception of historicity over Dilthey's historicism, and what such a conception means for a contemporary historical understanding.

The problem of existing in a common world which is perceived only individually has been philosophically addressed in many forms. Escaping a pure subjectivist interpretation of 'reality' has occupied Western thinkers not only in order to discover metaphysical truths, but also to provide a foundation for politics and ethics. Many thinkers accept a solipsistic view as inevitable and reject attempts at justifying truth in an intersubjective world. The problem of historicity raises similar problems. We

exist in a common historical age, presumably, yet are only aware of the historicity of the age through our own individual thoughts. Thus the question arises, do we actually exist within a common history or do we merely individually interpret this as communal? What is the reality of history, individual or communal?

Dilthey answers this question by asserting a 'reality' to the historical age thus overcoming solipsism by encasing individual human experience within the historical horizon of the age. This however does nothing to address the epistemological concern over the discoverability of truth. Heidegger, on the other hand, rejects a metaphysical construal of history and seeks to ground history first within the ontology of Dasein, and second, within the so called "sending" of Being. Thus there can be no solipsism for Heidegger because Dasein's Being is necessarily "co-historical", Being-with-Others, and furthermore, this historical-Being-in-the-world-with-Others is the horizon of Being over which truth can appear. Heidegger's solution to the problem of solipsism appears to satisfy that the world is not just a subjective idealist creation and also that one need not appeal to any universal measures of truth or presumed eternal verities. Thus in elucidating Heidegger's notion of history I will also confront the issues of Dasein's Being-alongside-things as well as the Being of Dasein as Being-in-the-world so that Dasein's historicity is explicated *vis-a-vis* the "sending of Being" (*die Schicken des Seins*).

## Chapter 1

In announcing the age of historical consciousness, Wilhelm Dilthey forewarns of an impending crisis. His bold declaration of the coming of a new way of thinking also heralds in a new opportunity. The state of historical thinking that existed a mere hundred and fifty years before Dilthey did not indicate the depth to which knowledge, both in its possibility and certainty, could be challenged. A new world replete with promise and problems had indeed emerged.

Previous to his century, historical questioning centered around a teleological Christian theology which placed God's plan at the center of both discussion and methodology. Even the rediscovered classical thinking of the ancient Greeks did not consider man outside of his 'natural' place within the *polis*. Arising out of this milieu

Voltaire coined the phrase 'philosophy of history' and stimulated a rationalistic discussion based upon an individualistic and de-Christianized conception of history. Previous to this, was Vico's philosophy of history which set nations in the center of history but failed to establish an historical method for the analysis of the complete human condition.

Dilthey's critical theory of history emerged out of the backdrop of the speculative philosophies of history of Herder and Hegel and the positivistic empirical history of Ranke. Kant's idealism with its *a priori* principles did not recognize humankind's inalienable historical immersion. Today it is unthinkable to claim a complete understanding of the human condition in isolation from past claims of such complete knowledge. All action and all thought have roots in an earlier period, emerging out of an historical template of previous thought and action. Recognizing the human struggle within this historico-existential immersion, Dilthey formulated the question of history as it relates to humanity: "Here we touch on the most fundamental fact of the human sciences: the historicity of psychic life as it is manifested in every system of culture produced by man. How is the sameness of our human nature, as expressed in uniformities, related to its variability, its historical character?"<sup>1</sup> Historical reason

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<sup>1</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Die Einbildungskraft des Dichters: Baudsteine für eine Poetik" (1887) from Gesammelte Schriften vol.VI pps. 103-241, quoted from "The Imagination of the Poet: Elements of

had thus arrived on the philosophical scene, and all previous claims to knowledge must answer Dilthey's challenge.

Dilthey produced such a large and varied corpus of work that disagreements as to his central thought still remain. His 100,000 pages are generally not regarded as consisting of a single focused thesis or a single approach, instead his work develops, revealing a multifaceted approach arising out of his understanding of the hermeneutic process. Accordingly, the intention of this chapter is to cover points specifically relating to his theory of history and not to investigate either his methodology or philosophic works as a whole. At this point it should be made clear that although it is now correct to label a critical analysis of history a 'critical philosophy of history', Dilthey did not see his critique of historical reason in this light. Nor did he think that the synthesis of many sciences on the basis of historical accounts could ultimately lead to a 'speculative philosophy of history'. Thus this chapter will look at Dilthey's historical project as a theory of the restrictiveness of historical thought and not as a philosophy of history. First to be examined will be his idea of the connection and difference between the natural sciences and "human studies". Secondly, his

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a Poetics" trans. Louis Agosta & Rudolf A. Makkreel, in Poetry and Experience, from Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works vol.V, eds. Rudolf A.Makkreel & Frithjof Rodi (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) p. 35.



conception of the "objective mind" will be treated. Finally we must ask, given Dilthey's experiential approach to historical knowledge, what avenues are open for a philosophy of history.

Despite the fact that human acts are particular whereas sciences deal with the general, Dilthey thinks that the sciences of humans (*Geisteswissenschaften*) are possible. In fact, history as one of the human sciences fulfils an important rôle retelling human deeds in a way that satisfies the human spirit. Dilthey's project to elevate and philosophically justify this knowledge, posited that historians provide a unique knowledge of human living not provided by science or by art. In order to substantiate this claim he first needed to determine the object of historical science. The well determined object of the natural sciences, since the time of Aristotle and Plato, was considered the unchangeable universal. Indeed, scientific thinking along these lines allowed the modern era incredible success in predicting events and controlling the environment: true knowledge became scientific knowledge in many people's minds. Historical information did not provide such incontrovertible proof of its power, leaving its legitimacy in jeopardy: Henry Ford's famous quote, "History is more or less bunk",<sup>2</sup> expresses the prevailing attitude of the times.

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<sup>2</sup>Dictionary of Quotations 3rd ed., (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979) c.v Henry Ford.

Dilthey's notion of the sciences of the spirit, or "Human Studies" (*Geisteswissenschaften*), had much to demonstrate in order that they be seen to possess the ability to provide knowledge. Dilthey began by differentiating the categories of scientific thought which involve such things as concepts of substance and force (which are irrelevant to human studies), from categories of human studies which involve categories of meaning, values, significance and purpose.<sup>3</sup>

According to Theodore Plantinga,<sup>4</sup> early in his career Dilthey divided the studies between "sciences of the external world" and "sciences of *Geist*". However, this fuzzy distinction was as unsatisfactory as that between universals and particulars. Plantinga suggests that Dilthey could not accept Rickert's method of differentiating between a generalizing or universalizing way of looking at things in conjunction with a value theory. This method could not escape a subjectivist and therefore inadequate distinction between the sciences.

The categories of the human studies, Dilthey came to think, rely not on the

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<sup>3</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Plan der Fortsetzung zum aufbau der Geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften" (1910) from *Gesammelte Schriften* vol.VII pps. 191-220, quoted from "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies" in *W. Dilthey Selected Writings*, ed. & trans. H.P.Rickman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) p. 212.

<sup>4</sup>Theodore Plantinga, *Historical Understanding in the Thought of Wilhelm Dilthey*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) pps. 24-30.

content of the study nor on the approach to analyzing the data, but on the way that humans experience the subject-matter. Following this approach Dilthey came to use the word *Erlebnis*, which has its roots in *Leben* - life - to characterize the objects of history. *Erlebnis*, or life-experience, is an inner experience involving the entire mind and is not just a sensory experience or outside learning (*Erfahrung*). Plantinga quotes Dilthey from his treatise of 1894 "Ideas Concerning a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology":

Now the *Geisteswissenschaften* are distinguished from the natural sciences first of all by the fact that the latter have as their object facts that enter consciousness from without, as phenomena, and as given singly, whereas the facts of the former sciences enter consciousness in an originary way from within, as a reality and as a living coherence. From this it follows that the coherence of nature presented by a combination of hypotheses. For the *Geisteswissenschaften*, by contrast, it follows that the coherence of mental life, as something originally given, is everywhere their basis. We explain nature, but we understand mental life.<sup>5</sup>

Here we have a secure basis on which to distinguish between the sciences and their respective categories. Knowledge based on the natural sciences is supplemented by

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<sup>5</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "*Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie*" from *Gesammelte Schriften* vol.V pps. 143-4, trans. T.Plantinga, quoted in Plantinga, Historical Understanding p. 33.

a unity that we provide; it receives its coherence from us. Knowledge based on the human studies does not rely on a coherence from outside but the connections are immediately given, that is, without mediation. Arriving at a conclusion on the nature of the object of historical study, we see a fundamental difference between the "explanation" of the natural sciences and the "description" of the human studies.

This difference between explanation and description is detailed in Dilthey's psychology. Without reference to psychology Dilthey thinks that the human studies would lack the coherence of a system. His contention was that the materialist psychology of his time can never really explain the human experience without grounding both the explanation and the experience in a broader metaphysical context. We can not fully describe what an island is, without for example, also describing what water is, and thus how the one defines the boundaries of the other. Psychology for Dilthey is descriptive psychology. No longer a natural science it has moved from explaining human actions to describing the whole mental life. Intelligence, emotional life and acts of will, which are linked together in consciousness can be studied only in relation to the products of the outer historical world. Laws, myths and language, reveal composite connections already existent in the human that can be apprehended and reveal their meaning without masking the experience by artificial and ambiguously defined categories.

A fundamental comparison between *Geisteswissenschaften* and the natural sciences is that in the natural sciences there is a hierarchy of sciences: mathematics is at the top, followed by physics and chemistry which are dependent on the levels above etc.... This is not the case in the human studies. Here explanation according to fixed relations gives way, without losing expressive power, to description based on the mutual dependence of all parts. The relationship between eternal truths, lived experience and historical understanding are bound up together. When the whole is dependent on the particular and the particular is dependent on the whole, the unravelling process of discovery takes time and effort:

The knowledge of the whole of historical and social reality...realizes itself gradually in a system of truths, based on epistemological reflection, wherein, on the basis of the theory of man, the special theories of social reality are built up, and these are applied in a true progressive historical reality which is bound up in the interactions of individuals...World history, in so far as it is not beyond human power altogether, would form the colophon of the whole of the human studies.<sup>6</sup>

According to Dilthey, the human studies comprise many individual unitary

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<sup>6</sup>Wilhem Dilthey "Übersicht Über den Zusammenhang der Einzel Wissenschaften des Geites, in Welcher die Notwendigkeit einer Grundlegenden Wissenschaft Dargetan Wird" from Gesammelte Schriften vol.I pps. 92-5, quoted in H.A. Hodges, The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952) pps. 191-92.

disciplines, including history, economics, law, politics and psychology and the study of religion, literature, poetry, architecture, music and philosophic world views and systems. Since history, in its very nature, is an aspect in each of the other human studies, history and the totality of human studies together form a twin-star of study, each dependent on the 'gravity' of the other for stability and cohesion; each of "these can be talked about and described and theories can be developed about them; but they always refer to the same fact...the human-social-historical reality... the study of history and the systematic human studies, are, throughout, dependent on each other and form a solid whole".<sup>7</sup> Specifically, Dilthey sees that the human studies are based on the historicity of humans' *Erlebnis* and as such are woven into a common sphere which he calls the "objectification of life".<sup>8</sup> Thus Dilthey argues that the *Erlebnis*, apprehending directly the outer historical world, is a direct reflection of the connections within both the outer world and inner experience. We discover the nature of the outer world by close attention to the inner experience of that outer world.

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<sup>7</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies" (1910) from *Gesammelte Schriften* vol.VII p. 191, in H.P.Rickman, ed. & trans., Dilthey: Pattern and Meaning in History (New York: Harper, 1962) p. 68.

<sup>8</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies" (1910) from *Gesammelte Schriften* vol.VII pps. 130-66, included in Rickman, Selected Writings, p. 191.

Dilthey's idea of the objectification of life needs some clarification. Although "it surrounds us constantly" it is not to be considered a metaphysical idea nor a mysterious mystical sphere. Rather it represents the totality of the culture in which we as humans reside and out of which we project our existence. We are at home in this "historical and understood realm" comprised of things as diverse as the "distribution of trees in a park, the arrangement of houses in a street, the functional tool of an artisan, the sentence pronounced in the courtroom".<sup>9</sup> The mind creates facts and can only understand what it has created, thus the totality of that which it understands, in and through lived-experience, is the objectification of life - the zenith and completion of the human studies.

It is only with personal experience that one can come to an understanding of the subject matter of the human studies, the objectification of life. Dilthey asserts that there are two classes of truth, experiencing and understanding. The mutual dependence of the two classes of truth promotes a widening of experience in response to understanding and a widening of understanding in response to experience: "The progressive widening-out requires ever new general truths for the comprehension of this world of specific events. At the same time, the extension of the historical horizon

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

makes the formation of ever more general and fruitful concepts possible."<sup>10</sup> Via this process of ever expanding and unfolding layers of understanding and possible experience, humans become aware of themselves and others. The facts thus created, because they are man-made and historical, open up the possibility of arriving at a full appreciation and description of the human experience. Unlike inflexible and schematic explanations of the physical world which tend to constrict and confine human experience into their categories, historical understanding allows, in fact encourages, a personal responsibility within the *Erlebnis*. Thus from this we can see that an individual's lived experience can never be fully defined because ultimately it depends upon an individual's participation until the moment of death.

Dilthey also refers to the objectification of life as an "objective mind". This objective mind he explicitly distinguishes from Hegel's 'objective mind'. Whereas Hegel's idealist program constructed "communities from the universal, rational will...Hegel constructed metaphysically; we analyze the given...we must start from the reality of life"<sup>11</sup> Dilthey recognized the fragility of a system based upon the sometimes illusionary and suffering dark instincts of man. However, in the human studies based upon his psychology of description, truth or meaning must start from

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 190.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 194.



an historical reality. Thus the objective mind can not, in the interest of fairness and integrity to the human condition, exclude the more ephemeral aspects of life - art, religion and philosophy.

Individuals and communities form this "outer realm of mind" and "whatever characteristics of its own the mind puts into expressions today, are, tomorrow, if they persist, history".<sup>12</sup> History is an unfolding, an accumulation of meanings in which even the philosophical schools of rationality and empiricism are but reflections of the state of the objectification of life at any given moment. Humankind's position within the objective mind is a profound yet tenuous connection to a nebulous dynamic reality:

In the objective mind, past ages, in which the great, total forces of history have taken shape, are contemporary reality. The individual, as bearer and representative of the great feature interwoven in him, enjoys and grasps the history in which they arose. He understands history because he himself is a historical being.<sup>13</sup>

Here we see Dilthey placing humans into the fabric of history, both as a product and a creator of history. Specifically it is the products of the mind, as well as of past and

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 195.

present ages, that constitute the historical world.

Using the objectification of life itself as "an additional basis for the human studies", experience and understanding of it "disclose the mind-constructed world".<sup>14</sup> The mind-constructed world is gradually comprehended as a synthesis and cooperation of interdependent systems of interactions. The mind's dynamic structure contains, what Dilthey calls, an immanent teleological character. This innate character creates values and determines the importance of concepts which will then provide the basis for communal interaction. Thus the mind's self-interaction as transcending itself towards some purpose infuses the historical world with value.

Combinations of individual viewpoints form the units of the human studies which are then 'woven into' nations and ages. Yet it is from behind this horizon of a national or temporal unity of action that human actions arise: "The common practices of an epoch become the norm for the activities of individuals who live in it".<sup>15</sup> It is here, within the mind-constructed world, that Dilthey raises the question of a possible philosophy of history:

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 191-5.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

So the direct relationship between life with its values and purposes and history is replaced by scholarly concern with general validity. We must seek the inherent relationship between productive power, values, purposes, meaning and significance within the historical system of interactions. Only on the basis of such objective history do these questions arise: is prediction of the future possible and, if so, how far?<sup>16</sup>

What is specifically sought is that which constitutes the dynamism within the mental life. Dilthey thinks that in any given historical age there exists a unified conception, or an inner core, around which experience and understanding reflect upon and are reflected by. Knowledge of specific events and general truths, Dilthey claims "develop" within this historical age. But what is the nature of this development process? Can we escape the flux and mutual dependence of understanding and experience to grasp this development itself? Thus the question arises, which ultimately remains unanswered by Dilthey: how does the inherent relationship develop?

Dilthey's methodological analysis of history begins with an analysis from an individual human study by singling out concrete connections within that particular discipline. Using this type of analysis as a basis, a systematic view of all the human

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

studies and of history itself becomes possible. H.A. Hodges points to two relations that a scientific examination of historical and social life must investigate: "the relations between one state of society and another which comes before or after it in time, i.e. the laws of historical change; and the relations between the different branches of social life and activity at any one moment in time".<sup>17</sup> Hodges continues, expressing Dilthey's opinion, that "such comprehensive formulae are beyond our contrivance". Dilthey argued that overarching theories, that is a philosophy of history, covering multiple disciplines within the human studies, were not within his purview because they were not plausible. Yet Dilthey repeatedly speaks about regularities and generalizations, an "inherent relationship", and so we should think of this goal of discovering general truths as a distant, if unstated, dream. The fundamental problem in arriving at these general truths is that the unit of history is the "psycho-physical person"<sup>18</sup> whose experiences as lived-experiences cannot be measured nor are they ultimately subsumed under the explanatory categories of the natural sciences: those of unity and multiplicity, whole and part, synthesis and interaction. Because every experience is an inner experience and reflects only

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<sup>17</sup>H.A.Hodges, Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, p. 188.

<sup>18</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies" quoted in Rickman Selected Writings, p. 201.

individual mental states, attitudes and relations, each generalization made is an individual generalization and thus not really a generalization at all! Dilthey, predominantly concerned with the comprehension of individuality, must reconcile the fact that even though individuals have differences they nevertheless share common features. Dilthey remains adamant that because of the nature of historical persons, general laws are impossible: "Every change of situation changes life as a whole. Similarly the whole of life is active in any expression which we comprehend. This is why neither experience nor understanding present us with homogeneous systems in which laws of change can be discovered".<sup>19</sup> On this point Dilthey seems to have overstated the point. Although every moment is indeed a totally new world, it is not a new world in every way, at least we do not experience each new moment as a completely new world. Thus we can see this as a warning to simplistic philosophies of history which do not take into consideration the dynamic reality of the world.

In his rôle as a literary historian, Dilthey concretely describes his theory of the mind-constructed world, showing a world of individual minds individually creating:

When memory, life-experience, and its intellectual content are used to raise the relations of life, value, and significance to the level of the typical; when an

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

event is made the bearer and symbol of something universal; and when ends or values become ideals, what is expressed in this universal content of the literary world is not knowledge of reality, but the most vivid experience of the interconnectedness of our existential relation in the meaning of life.<sup>20</sup>

The literary world for Dilthey represents a sub-system of the human studies as a whole. From out of the literary and artistic world comes a description of the historical spirit or the "spirit of the age".

Despite differences between various disciplines of the human studies there are sometimes parallels, as is the case where both the political world of statesmen and transcendent world of the poets live in an historical situation that contains "a multiplicity of particular facts".<sup>21</sup> For the statesman, distributions of water, land, mountains, and original variations of human beings are forged into a purposive unity; whereas the artist joins together life, thought and the striving of life. Dilthey credits a genius of an age with understanding and representing the "nexus" of an age and by means of a creative power produces unity out of the multiplicity of facts. This model

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<sup>20</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Goethe and the Poetic Imagination" from *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung* (1910) trans. Christopher Rodie, in *Poetry and Experience*, p. 238.

<sup>21</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Imagination of the Poet" from *Poetry and Experience*, p. 161.

relating facts together into a whole, if successful will "always become[.] the model for many others [relationships]".<sup>22</sup> Thus it appears that the process of generating "reciprocities and affinities" between various disparate facts in one discipline throws open possibilities for unity in other areas. A unified historical spirit is comprised of models of unity and these models of unity then widen-out the boundaries of the historical spirit which then, through a genius, generates new models and so on.... In the mind-constructed world, Dilthey has in fact pointed out a possible general law describing, in experience, a method how the inherent relationship develops.

Here we should review the position of Dilthey. Firstly he distinguishes sharply between the agendas of the natural sciences and the human sciences. While basing the human sciences in the empirical or 'existential' world, secondly he distinguishes two types of psychological knowledge that are received from the two sciences: explanation comes from the natural sciences, description from the human sciences. This indicates that meaning arises only out of the lived experience of humans while the strictly empirical information that we get from the hard sciences explains but gives no meaning or understanding of our world. Thirdly, meaning and understanding are enmeshed in the historical world, the "objective mind", which

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

serves as our window through which we describe and thus understand our world -- our mind-constructed world. The question remains as to whether it is possible to either explain or understand the manner in which the historical world itself unfolds or develops. Since the connections between scientific explanation and historical meaning are themselves interwoven, the task of discovering the mechanism of a "widening-out" of an historical-world gets complicated.

Dilthey wholeheartedly places humans in the context of the whole of reality and hints at a possible solution. "Here, organic life must, according to the evolutionary character of all known reality, be viewed as an intermediary link between inorganic nature and the historical world and thus a preliminary stage of the latter".<sup>23</sup> Dilthey thinks that we should approach lived experiences disinterestedly indicating that in order to fully appreciate our situation in the world, we must distance ourselves from ourselves in order to correctly see ourselves. This is difficult because, as Dilthey points out, humans are constantly informed by a teleological system which invariably induces us to read into situations our own historical motivations, recognizing things that fall into this system and that "which does not fit this teleological system fall[s]

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<sup>23</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Construction of the Historical World" from Gesammelte Schriften vol.VII pps. 189-200, quoted in Rickman, Selected Writings, p. 213.



away without effect".<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, we are locked into the language of our times and our very concepts condition and determine "down to inscrutable depths" the expression of experience. Thus it remains difficult to separate disinterestedly our position as intermediary link between the realm of the inorganic empirical and the unitary historical world.

Tempering his teleological idea in comparison with either a religious or Hegelian teleology, Dilthey waters down any purposive end, replacing end with process: "The structural system does not work out a determinate purpose; it merely contains purposiveness".<sup>25</sup> The way to disinterestedness remains open though clouded. Hodges discusses subjective and objective angles on immanent teleology, paralleling Dilthey's separation of descriptive and explanatory psychology; "subjectively...mental processes work together to bring about the satisfaction of our instincts, or 'happiness'; objectively...they work to secure the survival of the individual and the species [which is] borrowed from biology".<sup>26</sup> The empirical

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<sup>24</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Übersicht Über den Zusammenhang" from Gesammelte Schriften vol. I p. 53, quoted in Hodges, Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, p. 158.

<sup>25</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Construction of the Historical World" from Gesammelte Schriften vol.VII pps. 329-330, quoted in Hodges, The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, p. 44.

<sup>26</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "Ideen über eine beschreibende und zergliedernde Psychologie" from Gesammelte Schriften vol.V

scientific world and the historical world are bound together and they each operate with purpose, the purpose of the scientific world allows us to survive but has no meaning and the historical world guides us toward meaning and a reason to carry on.

By remaining conscious of the limitation of the scientific approach, Dilthey thinks that we can derive a clearer understanding of the undivided existence of the human being. The scientific and human studies merely discover different appearances of one thing. Science observes the natural world with its ideas of causal chains and regular materialist processes, yet because humans live and depend upon this context of nature, the human studies to some extent rely on the natural sciences for raw material. This also provides a clue as to how understanding functions in other more humanistic disciplines of thought. Stressing that we must know the physical empirical world in order to know this condition, Dilthey sets a condition for the determination of the development of mental life. The human sciences are dependent on the facts of the natural sciences for data and the natural sciences are dependent on the human studies for a meaning of that data, thus there is a "double relationship" between the sciences.

In every age the *raison d'être* changes. In the modern era, new ideas of cosmic development pushed aside ancient notions of the unchangeability of the universe and

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pps. 200-13, quoted in Hodges, The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, p. 209.

swept through eighteenth century Europe bringing in its wake the idea of developmental history. Dilthey recognized the dissolution of the Romanized forms of natural social systems with the advent of the idea of developmental history that was started in the eighteenth century by Hume, Kant, Lamarck, Lessing and Herder. The profound consequence resulting from startling empirical studies of primitive people (and civilized nations) revealed with utmost clarity the complete moldability of human world-views. The destruction which befell these primitive peoples' societies was presaged when civilized nations' faith in the universal validity of any cogent system of concepts to express world order was itself completely overturned. Dilthey expressed this new change in direction: "Philosophy must seek its inner coherence not in the world but in man".<sup>27</sup>

Developmental history, empirically linked with the natural theory of evolution, crushed absolutism in religion and philosophy. This created the problem of historical anarchy: "The evolutionary theory which thus originated is necessarily linked to the knowledge of the relativity of every historical form of life... so the same development of historical consciousness which did such a destructive job on the great systems

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<sup>27</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, "*Die Typen der Weltanschauung und Ihre Ausbildung in den Metaphysischen Systemen*" from Gesammelte Schriften vol.VIII pps. 75-118, "The Types of World-views and their Development in Metaphysical Systems" included in Rickman, Selected Writings, p. 135.

must help us to eliminate the hard contradiction between the claim to universal validity in every philosophical system and the historical anarchy of these systems".<sup>28</sup>

In response, we must come to understand and interpret based on our total lived experience within an historical era. Historical reason destroys absolutes, yet Dilthey's hermeneutic approach by enclosing experience within itself as the basis of meaning provides each individual a path out of anarchy. And through individual reflection upon his age, it provides society with meaning. Dilthey hints that the double relationship between the sciences presents a method by which historical anarchy can be met.

We can thus see humans immersed in a web of relationships between the scientific relations of inorganic matter, the evolutionary process of organic life and the uniquely human 'neo-evolutionary' process of the human studies where each person can will their own adjustments to the meaning of reality. Nevertheless, we must also appreciate that the 'neo-evolutionary' process must itself be understood in historical terms relating to an individual person as historically located.

Thus we have recounted Dilthey's theory of history and are now able to situate his thought into the problem at hand, that of existence within a common historical

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

world *vis-a-vis* individual actors. According to Dilthey, any attempt at understanding historicity is based upon the lived-existence of each human within a larger world of historical unfolding. The notion of world is an expanding notion which is concretized as the "objectivity of life" or the "objective mind" and is a response to the dynamic flow of ideas. This flow ultimately constitutes Dilthey's historicity. Humans recognize this flow first as empirically explained (scientific) and then as given a meaning by describing for themselves the content of this historical experiencing.

The common world represented by the "objective mind" is a composite of the things and ideas that have been passed down and recognized within the current historical age and is woven into the human as a series of practices yet at the same time is reacting to the creative power of human genius. Dilthey suggests that the cogency of the world can not come from outside of the world but, rather, can be found only in the human. It is our teleological tendency that impells a scientific explanation of the discovered world and also provides descriptive meaning. Though the meaning of history is discoverable (at least initially) within the age only on the terms of the received world-view, it is memory, life-experience and the intellect together that serve to create intelligibility of reality; the historical world is an intelligible system of universals representing the existential interconnectedness of

life.

But here we see that Dilthey does not directly answer the problem of what the common world is outside of the cogency that we bring to the world. Instead he answers that we should not have expectations of discovering any other cogency. That is, each historical age has certain tools of the age to explain and describe itself, each of these explanations and descriptions can not be compared against a central truth, for truth does not ultimately exist outside of the objectification of mind. Thus historical anarchy does not remove the possibility for truth as much as change the requirements of what truth can be for us; truth is relative and conforms to the boundaries of the historical age. There is no transcendent property which can direct world history divorced from human determination: truth unfolds as history advances.

Thus the question of how we can connect with other people who presumably also escape historical anarchy by retreating into their particular objectification of mind remains problematic for Dilthey. Ultimately there appears to be no indisputable truth that exists between two people who meet and discuss, apparently, common experiences. Yet Dilthey would not want to remove the possibility of meaningful interaction between two people, and he furthermore points to a nexus of an age. It is the genius of an age who is able to combine the various unitary viewpoints into an

inner core, around which interpretations are able to revolve. Mutual understanding, that is a common world, reveals itself in the connections that appear to those who orbit around this central core, and who in so doing participate in a national or temporal unity surrounded by a flux of possible interpretations. None of this, however, allows for any certainty in once and for all describing what this central core is, nor since we can not ultimately agree on what it is, what it will look like in the future.

A further problem with Dilthey's view is that it neither raises nor answers the question of a human's fundamental structure, which is the basis of all interpretation and thus is needed to allow for the possibility of historical understanding. His stated position regarding a possible science of history reinforces his assertions regarding the unity of historical spirit. This spirit, which finds expression in many sub-sets of the human studies, means nothing outside of the manifold of human descriptions, and since all descriptions have nothing 'fixed' to compare itself to, each equally reflects a cogent assessment. Thus a general philosophy of history is precluded as a description of what historical movement 'means', for meaning arises individually out of human reflection. But there remains a possibility of a philosophy of history in an explanatory form, using a merely scientific approach - ignoring meaning and concentrating rather upon cause and effect, substance and force.... This however

leaves a philosophy of history cold and lifeless, like mass produced art. A rich philosophy of history involves the whole human condition, and thus requires a more thorough examination of a person's fundamental structure.

We will see in the following chapter that for Heidegger a critical understanding of historicity involves an ontological determination both of the human and of the Being of history. That humans derive historical meaning from a lived experience within an "objective mind" does not answer why this happens nor how it is constrained. Equally we do not see that Dilthey has explained what history is, to be so sent and incorporated into the lives of humans. Both of these issues reveal that although Dilthey raised the specter of historical anarchy, he left the job of reestablishing truth somewhat unsettled. We can claim that there is a common historical world that has a nexus around which interpretations hover like bees around a flower, but if all interpretations are individual, must we agree on what is or has historically been out there stimulating such descriptions.



## Chapter 2

Dilthey raised the issue that all knowledge is necessarily historically situated. By questioning the certainty of all knowledge, truth as eternally knowable likewise became suspect. It thus became critical to determine a means by which humans can rise above this historicism and derive meaning. Dilthey thinks that we must acknowledge the distinct character of humanistic to scientific understanding, in order to calm historicist concerns and free knowledge from historicist bonds. Accordingly, we must "describe" in a totality not merely "explain" in a hierarchy. However, this totality of thought, the "objective mind", is neither sufficiently grounded in what it means to be human nor how this world constitutes itself as historical. In other words, it is not sufficiently explained why all other disciplines of study remain beholden to history. That is, why is all human thought subject to an historical analysis? In this

chapter we will examine Heidegger's responses to Dilthey's analyses of the rôle of history in the foundation of the human sciences as well as the historical factor in human understanding. We will, at the same time, aim at elucidating Heidegger's own analysis of historicity.

Martin Heidegger refers to two possible determinations of history. History as *Geschichte* is that which we live through, the very manner in which things occur. This is distinguished from history as *Historie* which is the story that humans tell of their experience, the recounting of events recorded in books, the story of our past or a chronicle of thought.<sup>29</sup> According to the later Heidegger, we all live within the "sending" of Being, whose yielding of itself raises questions of central importance. Thus in order to understand Heidegger's philosophy of history, we must orient thinking based upon his convictions of the importance of fundamental ontology and the notion that Dasein is the one who is primarily historical. And thus this chapter will show that an understanding of history, which is always revealed in a process of interpretation, is established, partly, on the basis of Dasein's possibility for making *Geschichte* its own as authentic history, or making *Historie* its own as pre-thematic history.

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<sup>29</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1962) ft. p. 30.

Historiography is firmly rooted in the human world, for only in this realm does human interpretation carry any sway. Accordingly, we can surmise that any philosophy, or science, of history must be directed to the human realm, or *Historie*, and not towards Being itself in the totality of its yieldings. For Heidegger, Being, in all its multifarious sendings, underlies all meaning and is never completely captured by any single interpretation. We could say that the question of the meaning of Being can always be raised independently of the historical era. We cannot formulate a science of history upon something that is not itself historical but which is instead the very ground of history. Our thrownness into an historical world opens for analysis the constant possibility of Being, but it also reveals the possibility for an historical and scientific understanding of that world.

Heidegger regards the usefulness of a science of history with caution. Charles Bambach, in his book Heidegger, Dilthey and the Crisis of Historicism<sup>30</sup>, argues that part of Heidegger's project was to provide a corrective to the various crises of historicism and relativism that nineteenth century thought precipitated. Cartesian subject/object thinking forced a definition of history as something 'past' leading to a metaphysics of history into which an historian must 'immerse' himself to understand

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<sup>30</sup>Charles Bambach, Heidegger, Dilthey and the Crisis of Historicism p.255.

the facts of history. Bambach suggests, quite rightly, that for Heidegger historicity is grounded in Dasein and thus precludes such 'facts' of history. The consequent denial of the possibility for primordial inquiry with scientific practices is based on the lack of a ground that such a science requires.

Heidegger would argue that because temporality and thus historicity resides in the very essence of who we are, metaphysical historiography will never reach the Being of "our" history. Furthermore, in criticizing the historicism of Dilthey, Heidegger charges that historicism is the "clearest symptom" that historiography endeavours to alienate Dasein from its authentic historicity, and therefore from its very Being in its historical Being-there. Heidegger was in full agreement with Count Yorck Van Wartenburg, who claimed that scientific and methodical knowledge in cancelling each other, have cancelled modern man's opinion of himself; preparing him for burial! Heidegger challenges historiographical reduction:

The question of what man is must always be taken in its essential bond with the question of how it stands with Being. The question of man is not an anthropological question but a historically meta-physical question. (The question cannot be adequately asked in the domain of traditional metaphysics which remains essentially 'physics'.)<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Martin Heidegger, Introduction to Metaphysics, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) p. 140.

For Heidegger, then, the important questions - those about Being or humans - cannot be answered from within a scientific framework. Science is contained within itself and can not illuminate its own foundations. Science qua science is not ontological but if it tries to explain its foundations, it then becomes metaphysics. Thus any science of history, or philosophy of history, can only provide limited information about our Being, at the best of times.

Nevertheless Heidegger says, in Introduction to Metaphysics, that we can reach an "advanced state of knowledge" if we treat as an object "the historical relation between our historical being-there and history".<sup>32</sup> Again in an essay on Nietzsche he says that, "Preparatory thinking must move from time to time in the sphere of the sciences; for the sciences in manifold ways, always claim to give the fundamental form of knowing and of the knowable...An education in thinking in the midst of the sciences is part of preparatory thinking and its fulfilment."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the very title of section 76 of Chapter 2 Division 2 of Being and Time refers to the source for a science of history as "Existential", that is, the ontological structure of Dasein's

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<sup>32</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 43.

<sup>33</sup>Martin Heidegger, "The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead'" in Question Concerning Technology trans. W. Lovitt, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) p. 56. Hereafter referred to as (N p. 56.)

existence. Consequently, we will begin the study of history with factual Dasein as Being-in-the-world, and any consequent historiographical disclosure of history has its ontological structure rooted in the historicity of Dasein.<sup>34</sup> In relation to historiographical thematizing, (to thematize is to create an object for specific study), Heidegger specifically mentions the "cultivation of hermeneutical Situation". Overall, by distinguishing the limits of a science or philosophy of history, Heidegger's view of historicity should become more clearly outlined.

In addition to a hermeneutical consideration of Dasein's historicity as its ontological structure (to be discussed below as **care**), Heidegger also says that "for the most part it is only through traditional history that historiography penetrates to what has-been-there itself".<sup>35</sup> Thus the theme of historiography "as the possibility which has been factually existent" can be traced through the interpretations that history itself has received within its own history, that is, hermeneutically. Next we will examine the first case, namely Dasein's ontological structure described by Heidegger as **care** and discover its meaning as temporality in order to trace its connection with Dasein's historicity. Heidegger's treatment of *Seinsgeschichte* in

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<sup>34</sup>Being and Time p. 444. I have retranslated the word *historilological* to *historiographical* to reflect the current usage, although in every case the two are entirely synonymous.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 448.

his later works will be examined in the next chapter.

In Being and Time, Heidegger stresses the importance of raising the fundamental question of the meaning of Being. Heidegger focuses his attention in addressing this question to that entity in whose Being that Being is constantly an issue, that is, Dasein (There-being). Dasein's self-understanding derives from projecting itself upon its own potentiality-for-Being. Dasein thus finds itself already-ahead-of-itself as falling alongside things ready-to-hand within-the-world. This Being of Dasein Heidegger calls **care**. The unity of the ontological characteristics means that Dasein, "exists as factically falling".<sup>36</sup> But this equiprimordiality of Dasein's Being as **care**, i.e., as Being-ahead-of-itself (existing), Being-already-in (facticity) and Being-alongside (fallenness), is never complete.

Heidegger defines ontological meaning in human understanding as follows. "Meaning" provides the basis upon which "understandability maintains itself", and is where the projection of Dasein can formulate terms to understand the possibilities within its existing. When viewed authentically, Dasein anticipates resolutely its future possibilities as possibilities and then lets itself come toward itself in these possibilities. Heidegger calls this primordial phenomenon the "future as coming

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

towards".<sup>37</sup> This futural anticipation in order to authentically take over its thrownness, requires Dasein as "it already was". Finally, anticipatory resoluteness as the mode of authentic care which discloses the "there" is concerned with the factually ready-to-hand entities: "The ahead-of-itself is grounded in the future... 'Being-already-in' [has the] character of 'having been'... 'Being-alongside' becomes possible in making present... The primordial unity of the structure of care lies in temporality".<sup>38</sup> Thus Dasein is essentially temporal and **care** expropriates the future to make the present.

For Heidegger, the historicity of Dasein is just a more concrete working out of temporality: "Dasein exists historically and can so exist only because it is temporal in the very basis of its Being".<sup>39</sup> And since we have shown above that **care** is grounded in temporality, we can then provide an analysis of **care** in terms of historicity. But before we do this it would be appropriate to clarify what exactly Heidegger means by temporality.

Dasein exists temporally, and yet its temporal existence is a unity projected from within the structure of **care**. Heidegger's idea of primordial temporality is not one

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 375.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 428.



of "time that goes on" but one that maintains that primordial temporality is finite.<sup>40</sup>

All conceptions of time as "infinite", immanent or transcendent, are derived from primordial temporality. The problem for Heidegger is, "...how *inauthentic* temporality arises out of finite authentic temporality, and how *inauthentic* temporality *as inauthentic*, temporalizes an *in-finite* time out of the finite".<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, we can regard authentic historicity as finite.

For this reason, the moments of Dasein's life ordinarily appear as singular moments connected together to form a whole. Heidegger argues that Dasein does not fill up a "stretch" that avails itself present-at-hand, but according to a finite conception of primordial temporality "[A]s long as Dasein factually exists, both the 'ends' [birth and death] and their 'between' *are*, and they *are* in the only way which is possible on the basis of Dasein's Being as care".<sup>42</sup> An ontological clarification of the connectedness of life can be determined in "the way", in the movement, of Dasein stretching itself along and being stretched along. This process of "historizing" is grounded in a "specific temporalizing of temporality"; one that gives Dasein a "self-

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 426.

constant" way of Being.<sup>43</sup> Thus an analysis of **care** within the historicity of Dasein leads from a discussion of the temporalizing of temporality to a historizing of historicity. Dasein exists within a finite temporal horizon which already connects its birth and death, and so allows it to regard other factual things as either sharing its own temporalization or not. Thus we can see that as Dasein exists factically alongside other things, which are assessed as historical, these things can provide the backdrop for either an inauthentic understanding of history as something present-at-hand (history as a series of moments all connected) or an authentic understanding which regards history finitely, as a "recurrence of the possible".<sup>44</sup>

In the words of Charles Guignon,<sup>45</sup> Dasein's fundamental historicity (Geschichtlichkeit) is the structure of happening within which Dasein 'manifests', in action, what it is. In response to Habermas' "decisionist" critique of Heidegger's human Being, Guignon's coins the term "manifestationist" to better address the notion of the movement of Dasein within the care structure. As well, this avoids the metaphysicalizing problem of postulating an agent first and then decisions or actions

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 427.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 444.

<sup>45</sup>Charles Guignon, "History and Commitment in the Early Heidegger", in Heidegger: A Critical Reader, eds. H.Dreyfus & H.Hall (Cambridge Mass.: Blackwell, 1992), pps. 173-185.

later. What Dasein is, is what Dasein does. Dasein acts temporally and so is temporal. In order for history to become a science, we must make history a theme. This raises the problematic that we have identified two histories within Dasein itself 1) its primordial historicity as a concretization of temporality and, 2) the within-time-ness of its existence as factually falling. Heidegger says that these are equiprimordial.<sup>46</sup> The issue of Dasein's history as within-time-ness deals with four significations that Heidegger, in Being and Time, identifies with the common understanding of history. (i) History as past, can either be present-at-hand or no longer present-at-hand. (ii) History as the becoming of an epoch. (iii) History as the totality of entities that change "in time". (iv) History as that which has been handed down to us. Together these four signify that existent Dasein, as well as Dasein's Being-with-one-another comes to pass "in time" which is a continuously effective historizing of the past as handed down. But we need to clarify both the historizing of Dasein as 'subject' of these events and explain the historizing of the events themselves.

To do this we should ask how Heidegger explains Dasein finding artifacts from the past when it is only Dasein that is primarily historical? Heidegger answers this

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<sup>46</sup>Being and Time p. 429.

by pointing out that the world also has an historical kind of Being because it is an "ontological attribute of Dasein".<sup>47</sup> We must be careful to distinguish between the 'past' in terms of equipment that belongs to the 'past' and "*one's having been*" as constitutive for the unity of Dasein's temporality. This manifestation of the unitary temporality that in **care** is described as "ahead-of-itself as already-alongside". The brute presence of things from the 'past' allows for the strange question to be asked: "Why is it that the historical is determined pre-dominantly by the past?"<sup>48</sup> In other words, we could ask why could there not be 'historical' equipment from Dasein's future? Because of the character of "having-been" which "temporalizes itself equiprimordially with the Present and the future..." could we not expect things in-the-world to conform to this way of Being? Heidegger points out that 'historical entities' do not increase their historicity by being placed further back in time, and thus treating these entities as "in [a moment of] time" is incorrect. Ultimately, Heidegger thinks that their temporality (historicity) is so primordial that its ontological essence does not allow of such temporal manipulations. It appears that although items (entities) must conform to the temporal structure of Dasein to be understood as historical or futural, it is not necessary that they have an identical way of Being,

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 433.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 433.

which may be contrasted with the "self-Constancy" of Dasein.<sup>49</sup>

Heidegger calls these historical entities "secondarily historical"; otherwise called "world-historical" entities.<sup>50</sup> In their brute factuality they remain the "plaything of world-history". But to what extent are these entities encountered as having their historical character, rather than being given their historical status by Dasein? Heidegger states that, proximally and for the most part, Dasein understands itself in terms of what it encounters in its surrounding-world (*Umwelt*).<sup>51</sup> Thus any understanding of possibilities that it projects as Being-in-the-world stems from the everyday "soil and traffic" of the world with which it is in the "swim". One acquaints oneself and deals with this world and the history of the things and events within it. As Dasein is never a world-less subject: "The historicizing of history is the historicizing of Being-in-the-world".<sup>52</sup> Thus everything encountered in the world has already been discovered as having a history. Heidegger goes on to say two things about the historicizing of the world: first, that world-history essentially exists in a unity with Dasein; and secondly, that which 'happens' to secondarily historical entities "has its

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pps. 369, 381.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 433.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 435.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

own character of movement, and this character has been completely obscure up till now".<sup>53</sup> Thus it appears that things encountered within the world, because they are 'in-the-world' which is an ontological characteristic of Dasein are historical independently and in a different sense than Dasein.

We should not be oblivious to the presence-at-hand of things by excluding the notion that Dasein exists as factually thrown into a world with Others. Dasein, according to Heidegger, for the most part interprets its possibilities of existence in terms of the average public way. When Dasein discovers its "thrownness" as its possibility, it then becomes able to accept this possibility "authentically" -- that is, it embraces the groundlessness of its Being. It is with this "resoluteness" that Dasein can disclose and then "take over" its factual possibilities in terms of the heritage into which it has found itself. The resolute possibilities dependent on the public heritage can be seized and handed down to itself in a "moment of vision", a moment where Dasein recognizes and accepts its own thereness. Resolute action, struggle and communication, within a co-historizing Being-with-Others is determinative for the destiny (historizing) of a community or people. Ultimately, a complete authentic historizing must involve the historizing of Dasein's complete Being-in-the-world in

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 441.

conjunction with Dasein's Being-with Others: "Dasein's fateful destiny in and with its 'generation' goes to make up the full authentic historizing of Dasein".<sup>54</sup> Dasein is not alone when it looks back upon its historical being-there, but is immersed in an ebb and flow of multiple historizing things.

And yet Heidegger says clearly that, "[i]t is not necessary that in resoluteness one should explicitly know the origin of the possibilities upon which that resoluteness project itself".<sup>55</sup> While this remark indicates the impossibility for one to fathom the totality of the historical origins of one's current possibilities, it may startle those for whom uninformed action is anathema. There seems, at this point, an avenue for criticizing Heidegger's position. Specifically, one can act resolutely based upon ideas or possibilities presented by one's generation, but to act resolutely without a consideration of the historizing of those ideas, while aware that they do have an historical significance, should cause one more than a moment of anxious self-reflection: What is the bigger picture of my resolute action? Necessarily, according to Heidegger, one explicitly repeats a possibility of Being in resolve. But in retracing the steps passed down in co-historical possibilities, meanings thus created will then

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 436.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

get handed down as heritage, or a ground for destiny, into another's generation.<sup>56</sup>

Without also striving to know the origins of one's possibilities, taking resolute action merely for the sake of demonstrating resolve means nothing more than exchanging a fleeing into the ontological and 'unkownable origin' instead of fleeing into the ontic "they". Resoluteness as authentic behaviour would appear as nothing more than another type of fleeing, and thus would be inauthentic and thus contradictory. Charles Guignon speaks of a use for historiography as being a model for authentic action for Dasein's fundamental task as the preservation and transmission of a tradition<sup>57</sup>. Thus it remains critical for Dasein to have a complete understanding of its own resoluteness which means that it have a determination, as much as is possible, of the origin of its possibilities, if only to authentically and in good conscience hand them down.

Since according to Heidegger, Dasein exists within a co-historical historizing of Others and alongside things, in order that resolute action avoids becoming a mere fleeing, it is necessary to demonstrate that Dasein can understandingly take over the history of its generation, which means, it must understand to some extent the origins of the things within its co-historical world. It is necessary, then, to establish a means

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pps. 438, 435, 436.

<sup>57</sup>Charles Guignon, "History", p. 138.



of historically understanding the origins of the things which determine Dasein's possibilities.

Some basis for investigating the movement of world-history can be grounded in various ways that temporality temporalizes. One way that this occurs, ontologically, is in the "Self-constancy" of the Being of Dasein.<sup>58</sup> We can easily see that temporality does not always temporalize itself as Self-constant, but, rather, sometimes as partially constant, randomly, or even evolutionarily. As we saw above, Heidegger pointed to the movement of secondarily historical entities as having its own character; and in the case of things, the temporalizing of temporality may not be as self-constant. By investigating and comparing differing temporalizings of temporality one could formulate a philosophy of history; historical movement is determined by the temporalizations of those things within the world. Moreover we must recognize that not only is Dasein's historicity determinative for historiography, but the historizing of things, events and ideas independently of Dasein help constitute the historical world of Dasein.

Heidegger considers hermeneutically the possibility of a historiography based on Dasein's historicity in which, "...remains, monuments...can turn into historiological

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<sup>58</sup>Being and Time p. 427.

material only because in accordance with their own kind of Being, they have a world historical character".<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, we find these materials only on the basis of the activity of historical inquiry that pre-supposes these monuments have an "historical Being towards" Dasein.<sup>60</sup> Thus the historical world, as Heidegger describes it, is composed of only those things that can be revealed to Dasein historically. Presumably those things which do not allow of themselves an historical Being - if there are any - will not be noticed by Dasein.

For Heidegger, historiographical analysis arises from the authentic historicity of Dasein which can be revealed to it only upon that possibility of existence which is only existent as factual. Thus whatever happened in the 'past' is not factually determinable as having been actualized. This, I think, means that what Dasein interprets as a 'past event', cannot be said to have actually been the case (factual), but only the current interpretation, coming towards Dasein in its futural character, that holds any meaning. Heidegger says that historiography "can demand of itself" that it takes its orientation from the facts, "...equipment, of work, of culture, of the spirit, and of ideas".<sup>61</sup> But if, as Heidegger also states, "the central theme of historiography

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 446.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 447.

is the *possibility* of existence which has-been-there", then historiography is ultimately a link between "facts" and the possibilities that have-been-there. Without either current facts or a possibility of existence which has-been-there, we could have no past. Still these current facts can be seen as just interpretations of past possibilities (historicism), or just as past possibilities seen in terms of current facts (anachronism).

For Heidegger the possibility for Dasein's authentic awareness of itself lies within its factual and given possibility - this is the fundamental truth discoverable regardless of any particular historical interpretation. The past is not only a possibility for Dasein, it is a necessary part of its interpretation of the disclosure of its world. With that in mind, it is also safe to say that the past, as Dasein conceives it, represents not any factual happening, but rather is a projection of possibilities for meaning upon the secondarily-historical things that disclose Dasein's world. Every philosophy of history should not seek to define the possible as only the really factually existing, nor should it concentrate on the particular historical situations versus universal movements, but should investigate how Being has yielded itself in the emergence of possibilities in general for Dasein.

Before ending the discussion of Heidegger's early analysis of historicity, an observation of the difference between particulars and universals seems in order. Historiography, as Heidegger describes it, is concerned neither with particular

historical events nor with universal determinations, but with the "possibility that has become factually existent". Particulars on the one hand, especially those of particular 'past events', can neither form any type of "science" nor allow for an escape from the determinations of the "they" world. Universals on the other hand, because they are generally seen as transcending both "in-time-ness" and history, serve no better as a basis for a science of history. We view our thrown world, at any given time, as having a past only because we are temporal creatures in general and historical creatures in particular. A study into why this particular or that particular possibility has occurred is a study into our way of having the world historically disclosed to our understanding. Even though the things in the world of the current possibility must allow for an historical interpretation to be placed upon them, this interpretation does not exhaust their meaning, thus a descriptive universality does not consume the particularity of its Being.

Thus in conclusion, in Being and Time Heidegger points to a context (totality) of equipment ready to hand out of which an individual item shows itself. Each individual item thus indicates that the context of equipment "has already been discovered" by Dasein.<sup>62</sup> In Division II Chapter 5 section 76 entitled "The existential

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

source of historiography in Dasein's historicality", Heidegger suggests that an artifact that is encountered as an antique signals that the world of its context of equipment is no longer. But this does not mean that this artifact has its own 'world', but rather, that Dasein's interpretation of that artifact is such that it discloses Dasein's world as a historical world of historizing things. World-historical entities get their historical character because they belong to the world - to Dasein's world - and to the extent that the world of Dasein historizes, the things within it also historize. Yet, the manner in which they historize is only partially dependent upon the historicality of Dasein; they have their own historicality. Books, buildings, ideas have their own history, and their continuation depends upon Dasein's world and yet the continuation of Dasein's world depends upon the seeing historical things within it as present-at-hand and ready-to-hand, and not as 'something that is past'.<sup>63</sup>

Going part way to overcome Dilthey's historical anarchy and alienation, Heidegger by seeing historicality in the very Being of Dasein has removed history as something that keeps Dasein separated from where it actually is (its Being-in-the-world). Dasein can no more be detached from its historical world than to be detached from itself. Dasein is, in some way, the march of history itself. Any movement of

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., pp. 432, 440-41.

history is a movement of Dasein and problems stemming from the historical situatedness of truth is a problem internal to who Dasein is: Dasein exists as historical. In the next chapter we will look at Heidegger's response, in his later works, to the problem of truth and historicity which will go far in exposing the relation of Dasein to historical truth.

## Chapter 3

Heidegger raises the issue of historicity in Being and Time primarily from the standpoint of Dasein. From this direction, history appears to Dasein as a function of its ontological condition of Being-in-a-world in conjunction with Dasein's temporality within the **care** structure. As a consequence of the world's interpretation across a temporal/historical horizon, things which are disclosive of that world are also seen as historical. Heidegger's project in his middle and later works is still a matter of contention among modern commentators and this chapter will not go into the details of this contentious issue of the 'turn'. Rather by forging ahead into an analysis of Heidegger's later approach to the question of history and historicity in general we hope to show that the question of historicity is not exclusively approached either

from Dasein's ontology or from Being itself: both approaches serve to manifest historicity. Serving as a template for this chapter will be that whereas in the earlier works the question of historicity is, for the most part, exposed as a function of the ontological structure of Dasein, the later works seem to move towards an exposition of historicity as the history of Being, *Seinsgeschichte*, in terms of the totality of its sendings.

Heidegger's works which followed Being and Time betray both stylistic and content differences from this chief work. Reflecting upon the relevant insights from these middle and later works, namely, Introduction to Metaphysics, Origin of the Work of Art, "Metaphysics as a History of Being", Nietzsche Vols. I and II and On Time and Being, this chapter will attempt to show that Heidegger's conception of Dasein's historicity is ultimately related to the so-called "sending of Being". In these works, Heidegger avoids a solipsitic subject-ism, for Dasein's inherent historicity is included within the unfolding of Being. In these later works, Dasein's Being-in as a Being-with (others) and Being-alongside-things is approached not from the standpoint of Dasein's current understanding but from the totality of a yielding of Being.

Heidegger's profound insight into the concept of truth is that truth happens as a strife between concealing and revealing. *Aletheia*, the unconcealment, in essence



(that which holds open and preserves itself) is a process and not static. He describes this unconcealment in the Origin of the Work of Art:<sup>64</sup> "The unconcealedness of beings - is never a merely existent state, but a happening". Simultaneously with the giving of itself which, ultimately through Dasein, reveals a world, Being conceals other ways of revealing itself. This is definitely not to say that Being is something, but that Being is providing the grounding for whatever does show itself. The totality of any given sending is capable of providing any historical period with evidence of Being, which in the history of thought has either been conceived as the most empty or the most important of concepts. In terms of his earlier thinking, the meaning of Being is visible in an examination of one's own historical world in a moment of "fateful repetition" which discloses the "thrownness of the there" as a constant possibility.<sup>65</sup>

According to Heidegger's vision of ancient Greece, one such moment of fateful disclosure happened when the ancient Greek questioning process brought Western thought out of the darkness of concealment into the light of awareness. Greek artists and sculptors, statesmen and poets, created a world based on experiences of the

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<sup>64</sup>Martin Heidegger, "Origin on the Work of Art" in Poetry, Language, Thought, trans. A.Hofstadter, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1971) p. 54.

<sup>65</sup>Being and Time p. 443.

wonder of Being.<sup>66</sup> With and through various descriptions of the nature of Being, in the form of culture, the *polis* was established. In a practical sense it is within the *polis* that a world can be seen to exist: existentially the *polis* reveals the "there". Citizens depend upon the *polis*; for without such a clearing, where truth can be seen and discussed, people would not come together as citizens, that is they would not constitute a people within a world in an historical time. For Heidegger, the *polis* is needed as the place where history can and must take place, and it is within the *polis*, from within a culture that we can think in concrete terms about *Geschichte* and *Historie*.<sup>67</sup>

Mirrored in the conflict of Being is the conflict within the human who exists either within the *polis* or is occasionally thrust outside of the *polis*, becoming *apolis*. By escaping the *polis* we escape the confines of a particular historical world and we can possibly approach the ground of experience, the constant possibility of Being-in a "there". From this *apolis* perspective - a quasi-historical vantage point - we can glimpse the chaos of the abyss over which we as human Beings create order.<sup>68</sup> Heidegger maintains that with such formulations we neither change the history of

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<sup>66</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics p. 152.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 152-53.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 152-53.

Being nor do we make it, rather, with our participation within a *polis*, we are experiencing the living out of the history of Being. First aware of our position within the unfolding of history as a member of a *polis*, then by stepping outside of the rules of the public world, that is outside of the pre-thematic (pre-conceptual) history of the public "they", we assert ourselves as the ones who can speak about Being. In this we can see a parallel with Guignon's "manifestationist" conception of Dasein as being what it does. Here Being is manifested in the action of the sending of historical epochs. And by stepping out of a *polis* we create a conflict between the ordinarily known and the extraordinary unknown, impelling the question of Being to appear the ultimate ground of the manifest (*polis*) or the not-yet manifest (*apolis*).

Another approach to the abyss over which we create truth, or live out the history of Being, we find described in Heidegger's assessment of Nietzsche. In Heidegger's words, Nietzsche says that truth fulfils a necessary practical function allowing humans to remain alive.<sup>69</sup> Human life will secure its vitality in a system of value relations. Nietzsche states: "We have projected the conditions of our preservation as predicates of Being in general".<sup>70</sup> Underlying valuation, which for Nietzsche involves

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<sup>69</sup>Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche* vol. III, ed. David Farrell Krell, trans. Joan Stambaugh & D.F.Krell & Frank A. Capuzzi (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987) p. 55.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

the setting of conditions in the broadest sense, we "transpose truth to life itself as a necessary condition of life".<sup>71</sup> Despite efforts to free truth from the static bonds of an eternal and bring it down into a world of 'becoming', Heidegger thinks that Nietzsche remains well entrenched in leaving truth under the sway of beings, though recognizing them as in a state of becoming.

Contrarily, truth in the sense of *alethia* belongs for Heidegger in the realm of Being -- not merely of beings. What is for Heidegger the mark of Western metaphysics, is that even when Being is conceived as the power over beings, Being is still seen as "in service to beings, just as every power is dependent most of all upon what it overpowers".<sup>72</sup> Further entrenching metaphysics in Nietzsche's thought is that while maintaining focus on beings, Nietzsche extinguishes the opposition of Being and becoming which was for Plato so important by making Being a Being of becoming. Nietzsche, Heidegger states, has decided upon the truth of beings with a domineering anthropomorphism that reduces truth to a condition of the survival of vital life; the age of consummate meaninglessness begins; meditation on Being "can only remain in default".<sup>73</sup> Being is now dependent on the self-enhancing becoming of will, and

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

of human preoccupation with things.

Heidegger, in Being and Time, likens Nietzsche's categorization of the three types of history with his notion of the temporality of **care**. First, "monumental history" allows humans to open themselves to the 'monumental' possibilities of the past. Then by thus seizing the past one is at the same time creating the possibility of reverently preserving the "antiquarian history" into the future. And finally "critical history" allows an understanding of the possibility that has disclosed itself in the today.<sup>74</sup> Thus historicity for Heidegger exists projecting out of a present, in as much as whatever is historical shows itself from out of the open of the present. Thus we can see that although Heidegger makes use of Nietzsche's thought, he neither accepts the determination of the Being of history as a thing dependent upon an axiological system and beings, nor that a concrete history as represented in monuments exists independently of the ontological temporality of Dasein. Rather, we can plainly see Heidegger's determination of the centrality of Being, which allows these factual monuments to be present for Dasein, over Dasein's horizon of temporality (historicity).

As mentioned in the introduction to the previous chapter, one way in which

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<sup>74</sup>Being and Time, p. 448-49.

Heidegger approaches the question of the historicity of Being is with an analysis of the history of Being. Heidegger maintains in the essay, "Metaphysics as History of Being"<sup>75</sup> that the entire project of Western metaphysics since the time of Plato and Aristotle has been a forgetting of the primordial questioning of Being. To probe the earliest thought about Being, Heidegger returns to the works of Heraclitus and Parmenides with a close and rigorous etymological examination. Heidegger contends that the conflict between revealing and concealing, between the ordinary and the unknown, was not yet reduced into a regressive materialism but still asked why there is what there is. Such a question returns in Leibnitz' "Why is there something rather than nothing", and is used by Heidegger as a basic question for philosophical thinking.<sup>76</sup> According to Heidegger, Plato fell away from such basic questioning with his metaphysical postulation of an ideal world. This retrenchment which stresses the 'whatness' of things, excluding the 'howness' or 'whyness', has served to concretize beings and make Being merely a (forgotten) issue. Later transformations through Roman, Christian, and modernist phases, have highlighted the nihilist basis of such exclusionary concentration upon 'whatness'. Specifically, by always

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<sup>75</sup>Martin Heidegger, "Metaphysics as the History of Being", in The End of Philosophy, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

<sup>76</sup>Leibnitz, in "Metaphysics as History of Being", ftn. p. 42.

searching for a 'what' behind every question about existence, answers like those of God or the world of perfect forms, necessarily invite a negative or nihilistic counter-response. History, in its common modern formulations has stressed this 'ideal place' within which humans live and with which one must imaginatively return in order to capture the truth that then existed.<sup>77</sup> It has been Heidegger's project to dispel a metaphysical construal of history.

Thus it is important for an hermeneutical investigation into the central theme of historiography to delve into the history of metaphysics generally and analyze Heidegger's standpoint concerning the end of Western Philosophy. In his essay "Metaphysics as History of Being", Heidegger contends that "truth" in the writings of Heraclitus and Parmenides was not contingent on human subjectivity, but was the unconcealing (*aletheia*) of Being in the appearance of things. At this time, before *logos* became propositional, the Being of things lay bare (*logoi*) a clearing that Being lit, an "open" where things could be seen. It is the seeing that determined truth, not understanding or inconvertibility. That is, there was no appeal made to an authority above and beyond the facticity of the presence of things, there was no obvious reason to question from some standardized viewpoint. This was a time when

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<sup>77</sup>R.G.Collingwood, Idea of History, (London: Oxford University Press, 1982).

"appearance, just as much as appearing, belongs to the essent ... This appearance is not Nothing. Nor is it untrue."<sup>78</sup> Heidegger called this the 'Great Age of Greece' because it accepted that the power of the moment provides real knowledge about the experience of existing: for the ancient Greeks, beings gave adequate information about Being. Truth is inherent in Being, and thus truth appears insofar as something is.

Heidegger maintains that Plato, responding to the seemingly contradictory sayings of Parmenides and Heraclitus, metaphysically redirected the course of philosophical thought, hiding the deeper questions about Being in favour of superficial clarifications on a particular sending of Being. Plato mistakenly detected a crisis of truth. Are things and thus truth ever-changing (i.e., Heraclitus) or does nothing change (i.e., Parmenides)? Plato, reacting to the problems of sensory perception, linked truth with the unchanging - that which can not be fooled by mere appearances.<sup>79</sup> Because everything on earth changes, the unchanging was not on earth and so consequently it therefore existed only in a suprasensory world of perfect

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<sup>78</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 105. Translator Manheim translated being(s) as essent(s) and Being as being. To keep consistency with the rest of the works cited, I will in all my references to 'essent(s)' use being(s) and to 'being' use Being.

<sup>79</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 97 & "Metaphysics as History of Being" p. 8.



forms. With Aristotle's establishment of propositional logic as the arbiter of truth, truth had indeed changed from its Pre-socratic form. As an indication that people were satisfied with this way of thinking, Heidegger quotes Kant's comment that "since Aristotle [logic] has not taken a single step backward" but, "that it has also been unable to take a single step forward to this day and thus to all appearances seems to be concluded and complete".<sup>80</sup> Thus for the posterity of Western metaphysics, truth meant that appearance must be tempered with 'rational' and 'Idealized' thought.

Tracing back the progress of ideas provides a glimpse into the different possibilities that Dasein could find itself in, and out of which it could and did choose its disclosure of world. These beginning transformations of Western thought are only the first of many transformations. The presencing of Being has since come to show itself, according to Heidegger, as the *hen*, the unique unifying One, the *logos*, *Idea*, *ousia*, *energeia*, *substantia*, *actualitas*, *perceptio*, monad, as objectivity, as the being posited of self-positing in the sense of the will of reason, of love, of the spirit, of power, and finally "as the will to will in the eternal recurrence of the same".<sup>81</sup> What

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<sup>80</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 188.

<sup>81</sup>Martin Heidegger, On Time and Being, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) p. 7.

we now call 'Being' provided the basis for these concepts, yet, through this intellectual process Being itself has remained hidden. Yet in any of these various transformations of thinking about Being via beings, whether in the Medieval period which viewed the world as God's creation or the modern world view of the world as material for manipulation, Dasein remains open to the possibility for historical awareness of its position within a particular disclosure of Being's sending.

What we see emerging from this analysis is that Dasein's ontological historicity, thus temporality, is linked both to the lived historical world and to Being itself. How Being is conceived, the truth of Being, is affected by the ideas of the *polis* and each conception reveals truth differently. It is not that there are different truths, but that the clearing from which Being can be thought about, is changing: this clearing is historizing. Dasein exists both within this historizing clearing and yet remains the one who does the historizing. At each moment what can be thought about changes what Being, in truth, reveals. Descriptions of the "there" as a constant possibility changes, and in so changing reflects the truth of Being as unconcealedness, which is a process. The truth of any given description is better described as the happening of truth that has in this present revealed itself in this way. Dasein is the only "existent" being who throughout history has the task of forming the bases of questioning and thus can be regarded as the necessary outgrowth of the happening of truth itself.

Heidegger wishes to clarify what is and what is not being referred to here. Claims have been made that metaphysics in all of its various manifestations is merely 'pointing' to the same universal thing or idea. This asserts that metaphysical thinking is innocuousness in that it denies that the ideas that we use to explain our existence, to understand or interpret our Being-in-the-world, has any effect on who exists, namely, Dasein. According to this view, no matter what we say, metaphysically speaking, the world remains the same and our place within it merely takes on a different way of dealing with an eternal given:

Even though the linguistic formulations of the essential constituents of Being change, the constituents, so it is said, remain the same. If changing fundamental positions of metaphysical thinking develop on the foundation, then their manifoldness only confirms the unchanging unity of the underlying determinations of Being. However, this unchangingness is only an illusion under whose protection metaphysics occurs as history of Being.<sup>82</sup>

Heidegger is challenging us to think beyond the framework of Western metaphysics constructed over two millennia. Metaphysics, and its basing of truth on the eternal-unchanging, can only have sprung from the history of the "sending" of Being, *Seinsgeschichte*. Heidegger asserts that Nietzsche turned Plato on his head. The

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<sup>82</sup> "Metaphysics as the History of Being", p. 11.

inversion of Platonism where "the sensuous becomes the true, the suprasensuous the semblant, world"<sup>83</sup> leaves to humans only hollow empowering. Specifically, Heidegger points to an inner unity between Nietzsche's notions the "eternal recurrence of the same" and the "will to power", and that both are symptomatic of the anthropomorphic revaluing of all values, that clearly asserts the domination of beings over Being. It is not just that 'When Being lacks the clearing, beings as a whole lack meaning' but that the ungroundedness of the primordial commencement can not be preserved in beings. Rather, history begins when the commencement - "which is only in commencing", is compelled to rest in the abyss of its ungrounded ground. The truth of Being, as the subject of the primordial question of commencement, "haunts" the beginnings of history, which remains outside of historical descriptions.

Nevertheless we can make use of the historicity of Being: "The determination of man as *subiectum* and of beings as a whole as 'world picture' can only have sprung from the history of Being itself - here meaning the history of the transformation and the devastation of its ungrounded truth."<sup>84</sup> Thus despite Being refusing itself by abandoning beings in its historical destruction of all grounds, what is worthy of question - Being as Being - is lodged in the clearing that Being opens. Keeping this

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<sup>83</sup>Heidegger, Nietzsche, p. 176.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p.179.

originary question in the forefront means that mechanical domination, in the form of a stamp technology or scientific standardization (including historical science), must be replaced by "unusual and singular things". We can see, therefore, that even with, and even especially with, the meaninglessness of Nietzsche's eternal recurrence of the same/will to power, that the end of metaphysics speaks more loudly than ever of its own demise and of a new commencement.

Following this avenue of thought, what Heidegger is arguing for is an appreciation of the mystery of Being. Being is not subject to a single historical interpretation, but it is only "by grasping what the metaphysics that predetermines the age has elevated to thought and word" that one can determine what sustains history and draw nearer to 'what is happening' - namely Being.<sup>85</sup> Because humans have a Being in which Being is an issue they are an integral part of history. Creating and changing the way that Being's sendings (*die Schicken*) are interpreted, humans participate in interpreting the way that, in strictly Heideggerian terms, the world worlds. Essentially, metaphysics does not reveal its own essence, does not show its own necessity.

According to Heidegger, nihilism within Western metaphysics repeatedly shows

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

itself incapable of showing such necessity by metaphysical means. Whereas a hermeneutic of historical interpretation shows, if thoughtfully viewed, that Being-in-the-world as a Being-in-an-historical-world has been manifested differently in different epochs. Different interpretations do not merely describe the same manifestation, but different interpretations actually describe specific historical worlds, which are different ways in which the world has worlded. The structure of the world-process is the same, the contents of different historical worlds are expressive of the different possibilities of "the (human) world". Ultimately, we can only catch glimpses of what is 'happening', of the undercurrent behind the manifold descriptions. Varying opinions do not negate the veracity of the sendings of Being, but merely serve to raise the question of the history of the sendings of Being.

Heidegger says that the Being-there of historical man is a "breach" out of which the power of Being bursts forth making the breach itself smash against the wall of Being. The "overpowering of Being is confirmed in works [art works or specifically that which brings about the phenomenon] in which the emerging power *physis* comes to light" and in these works Being accomplishes itself as history.<sup>86</sup> History is primarily the destiny of Being. History as a concrete temporal manifestation of

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<sup>86</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 159-64.

Being, is necessary for Being if Being is to have any "there", that is, if it is to be either concealed or revealed to Dasein. Artworks give evidence of the connection between the destiny of Being as history and the historicity of Dasein's Being-there. Great artworks center attention upon commonplace articles, and/or historical monuments, thus showing a human historical world around that entity, revealing how the artwork and the onlooker (called the "preserver" by Heidegger) gathers and views the world as an historical people. In such a gathering what is thoughtfully presented is the presence of that which is presencing - that is, the Being of beings.

Humans can appreciate and understand history as a reflection of their own ontological foundations, (thus a reflection of Being itself). But, in order to avoid a solipsistic-anthropomorphic view of history, they must also see the limits of their understanding of history and thus of the world. Heidegger seems to court a solipsism when he criticizes the very question of whether the objects of historiography are "laws" or "events" saying that inaccessible and colourless supratemporal models must be replaced by objects "already in the factual existentiell choice of Dasein's historicity".<sup>87</sup> However, if it is the capacities of Dasein's understanding which provide it with historical knowledge of Being, itself and Others, how can we avoid

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<sup>87</sup>Being and Time p. 447.

falling into a radical subject-ism?

What are these aspects of Dasein's disclosedness or the "there"? According to Heidegger, Dasein has moodness (*Befindlichkeit*), understanding (*Verstehen*), and discourse (*Rede*) equiprimordially as the constituents of its disclosedness. Language is regarded as meaning bearing. Thus these aspects can be regarded as the means by which Dasein articulates meaning to itself, or to others, about the world and about its historical world.

Heidegger points to those who step out of the *polis* as the creators of new worlds. These *apolis* people sow fields with new ideas and bring into history new paths to discover the unknown alternative fields of understanding. For, according to Heidegger, it is the case that despite our current and "outworn" nature of truth as correctness, we nevertheless remain open, and attendant upon the primordial unconcealedness - for which we need no presuppositions. We stand in a lighted realm, unthought by us, exposed to the primal conflict of Being which presents to us something that we apprehend.

When Being thus yields and holds itself back in the various historical epochs, the "appropriate" grounds of understanding emerge in each epoch. Thus the aspects of Dasein's disclosedness shed their solipsistic implication, as their direct connection with the yielding or holding back of Being in any historical epoch is discoverable by



an ontological inquirer. Heidegger asserts that the appropriate grounds for understanding exist necessarily within the sending of Being itself.

The inexplicability of the beginning of this revealing and concealing Heidegger explains, is not a deficiency in our knowledge of history, rather, that the "greatness of historical knowledge resides in an understanding of the mysterious character of this beginning".<sup>88</sup> Recognizing the grandeur of the beginning, the *apolis* person returns to the *polis* with new ideas that move history forward once these new ideas are translated into terms favorable to the *polis*: "The knowledge of primordial history is not a ferreting out of primitive lore or a collection of bones. It is neither half nor whole natural science but is, if it is anything at all, mythology".<sup>89</sup> For Heidegger, the appropriateness of an understanding that humans have about the history of Being, one based upon the secondarily-historical objects such as myth, depends upon the given historical epoch, "Thinking remains bound to the tradition of the epochs of the destiny of Being".<sup>90</sup> Any given epoch is seen as historical only upon interpretations of the various temporalizings of temporality which reveal themselves in stories and in the words that are used in those stories. Art and mythology, equipment and ideas,

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<sup>88</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 155

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>90</sup>Heidegger, On Time and Being, p. 9.

as well as our perception of factual history are dependent on the ideas which articulate the changes that arise out of our historicity.

It should not be overlooked that Being does not have a history like a city or a people have their history. Thus Heidegger says, "What is historical in the history of Being is determined by what is sent forth in destining, not by an indeterminate thought up occurrence".<sup>91</sup> By this, what is historical in the history of Being depends upon the appropriateness of what is sent by Being. We can not randomly pick a transcendent universal or some independent arbiter to decide upon the way that the history of Being unfolds; we must take our clue from what is already. There is no other measuring stick against which to determine what the history of Being is, it is just the way it sends itself.

Interestingly, Heidegger speaks about the absence as a means of explicating the sending of Being. We can make nothing of this absence if it is a pure absence, but Heidegger specifically speaks of a "what-has-been" and a "what is to come" as a letting become present what "is no longer present" and by withholding the present lets that be present which is "not yet present". Here we have "manifest" the open into which Being as temporal "gives all presencing into the open". Thus the absence of

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., pps. 8-9.

something from the past lets us clearly see the open of the present, which is open and waiting for what-has-been, or something else that may presence. Heidegger also speaks of a giving. The giving that conceals itself, accordingly, is the sending of Being as time.

But we may not speak of Being as a being; neither may speak of time as a being, according to Heidegger. Yet how are we to understand the giving of time, which appears not to be a giving of any-thing at all? Here we must look to the word *Ereignis* which denotes an "Appropriation" which when applied to Being and to time, means that they belong together in that the "destiny, lies in the extending opening up".<sup>92</sup> Here we seem to have come across a type of equiprimordiality, what I call 'equi-Appropriated'. Time and Being are 'equi-Appropriated'. The sending of Being is time, and is the clearing in which Being can be seen as historical. But this clearing is not temporal as in a past, present, future. Rather Heidegger states that this time is four-dimensional, and the nearing of nearness is the forth dimension of this ontological time. This nearing of nearness opens by unifying and separating past, present and future, and it is thus the openness of the presencing of the gift of time-space. The nearing of nearness can be seen as a special case of the appropriating of

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

appropriateness. Here what is appropriately given to understanding also clears and opens a place for Being to be described. And just as past, present and future must remain united but separated by nearness in the giving, in historicity what is appropriate keeps truth from collapsing into an a temporal static form.

In the openness of time-space, the destiny of Being as the history of Being, is a double holding back (*epoche*) of the self-manifestation of both the sending and the It which sends.<sup>93</sup> This obscure double holding back, harkens back to Dasein's guilt over the facticity of its thrownness. Here, instead of finding the destiny of Being self-manifested, we question from where this historical age comes from (metaphysics), or how this historical epoch appeared (fundamental ontology), or even ethical judgements on the goodness of such appearances. Moreover because no-thing self-manifests, questions arise over any given interpretation of what appears. Any and all interpretations must of accord strive to be grounded in something other that what is manifested as such, and yet there remains nothing other that the manifestations to look towards for interpretation. Thus interpretations will shift as manifestations shift. History, as a history of Being, is a shifting of what is appropriate as a grounding for the interpretations of Being.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

We can draw more parallels between the approach of Being and Time and On Time and Being based upon a methodological option presented in the latter work. In an attempt to remove obscuring covers, Heidegger suggests that we should not consider the destiny of Being only in the historical terms presented in Being and Time but we should instead use the corrective of placing the 'destiny of Being as history' as a being, and then doing an ontological analysis of the Being of beings as was done in Being and Time.<sup>94</sup> This type of procedure ends treating history only as an occurrence interpretable on the basis of Dasein's historicity but includes history itself as a manifestation of Being. Thus if we can see parallels between an ontological analysis of the history of Dasein and a history of Being, it becomes credible to see the historicity of Being as a concretization of the temporality of Being.

Thus by revealing such a relation between temporality and historicity we can see why there needs to be a space opened for a particular instance of nearness, a space for the action of life to take place. By striking a balance between what remains known and what unknown in any historical epoch, Being yields what is appropriate for sense to be made of any-thing. In a sense it is like a theatre which opens the

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

curtains while keeping the actors true identity hidden. An historical epoch (holding back) manifests enough of itself so that some of what is hidden can come to the fore. But in a theatre there are moments of insight (or boredom) when we forget the play and instead unmask the actors. Equally there are certain moments when we see our historical epoch with its pretense of completeness. And in a theatrical performance when we question its pretense of completeness by unmasking the actor we reveal our "there" (Sein) of watching the performance in destroying for ourselves the flow of the performance. What we lose by unmasking historical beings, leads to a gain of awareness of the space where the, ultimately ungrounded, performance of history is played out.

Some historical ages pride themselves on accepting the facticity of their situation while others look for the hidden grounds of what they see. In this sense, the fluctuations of history, appearing within the destiny of a nation, depends on what it deems appropriate. If the question of Being remains hidden from questioning, then the gift of Being that refuses such questioning moves into the fore. Heidegger states that what is appropriate is neither "accidental, nor can it be calculated as necessary".<sup>95</sup> It is only by removing the covers of many obscuring epochs layered one upon another

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

that we can reach the root of appropriateness.

Finally, we should not be content to find a singular source (i.e., historical) for appropriateness either ontically in any given age or ontologically in the destiny of Being as history. In the same way, we should not be satisfied with one determination of nearness. As we know we can be near to something even though we are far away in distance, and alternatively distant when we are close by. Heidegger's charge upon the levelling effect of modern technology is that it removes the ability to appreciate nearness by making everything equally near (as near as the phone!). If we lose the ability to judge nearness we shall then lose, presumably, the ability to see the space that nearness provides for us. Equally, if we level off the grounds of appropriateness then history as an articulation of that clearing that holds back a sending of Being will go unnoticed.

## **Conclusion**

The preceding exposition of Heidegger's later formulation of historicity addresses the problem spelled out by Dilthey as "historical anarchy", which is a recognition that the historical situatedness of knowledge precludes deeming any knowledge as certain and thus as true. And, depending upon one's point of view, this formulation either changes the problem to a non-problem or exacerbates the problem. Certainty, or truth, is not a construction dependent upon an historical age for Heidegger, and so truth cannot be based upon certainty in the sense conveyed by Dilthey. However,



since according to Heidegger, truth is not constructed but revealed as unconcealment (*aletheia*), each historical age has equal ability to uncover truth. Truth is a possibility of each historical age.

Dilthey's world as the "objectification of life" or the "objective mind" is a metaphysical conglomeration of the totality of the things and affairs that the human being confronts. The human, in Dilthey's opinion, is the historical being into which we "seek inner coherence", but is historical because of an immersion within the historical world. What any given human decides upon as true in this world, of course, depends upon the lived experience of the person. The world is nevertheless filled with things that historically exist. The world's truth is therefore linked with whatever is decided upon about these things by the participants within that world; and since there is no outside arbiter for truth truth changes.

We can immediately see the problem that Heidegger would have with this type of formulation. First, he would argue, Dilthey begins understanding based upon things and then moves to an understanding of the Being of things. Secondly, he would agree with Dilthey that Dasein (the human entity) is that which is fundamentally historical, but not because of its immersion in the historical world, rather because of its ontological temporality (thus historicity as a particularization of temporality). Thirdly, the world is not an existent thing outside of the lived

experience, and thus the objective mind is not existing somewhere waiting to be discovered and have (various) determinations made about its existence. Rather, one is so to say endowed "with" an inner view (pre-ontological understanding) of life already. Finally, truth is not ultimately decideable, either by participants or otherwise. To claim that truth is and is then described within a historical situation presupposes that what is true is static and bound and somehow predecided. Truth, the way that Dilthey conceives it, is for Heidegger found neither inside an historical world nor outside of it, rather, if it is to be found at all it is discovered as "happening" in the present of Dasein.

Thus, according to Heidegger, we should not be preoccupied with the different events and formulations that have appeared over the course of history. It is not a sign that there is no truth, or that we shall never be able to once and for all decide what truth is, but that truth reveals itself variously in different ages. It is not, because there are 'truths' of different historical ages and that there is no truth, but that there are multiple disclosures of truth. What is true is more than one thing, and each age can appropriately reveal it. Thus one way to view this is that the problem of no truth is replaced by multiple disclosures. Dasein is described as always in the truth.

But this again is not quite right. In that truth, for Heidegger, is not a static thing that allows of a comparison over time-space: to compare the truth of something at one

historical time to that of another is impossible. For the criteria of what is appropriate at any given time has also changed in conjunction with the truth, or can we say, because of it: the world-disclosure that is true is the one that only that disclosed-world can *verify*. In other words, what is true for one world-disclosure may not be true for another.

Heidegger thinks that the foundations of the Greek world "even though distorted and transposed, covered and concealed, still sustain our world".<sup>96</sup> Thus as inheritors of a part of this clearing, we have the potential to inquire into the truth that they saw. Certain ancient Greek concepts, though indeed changed, have managed to keep their force in disclosing our existence. Each epoch, each generation, preserves the ideas of its past (monuments), projects them into their future (makes antiquities out of them) and creates a present (uses them critically to understand its world). What each generation takes from its past is determined, at least in part, by its "usefulness and serviceability". This preservation and projection stem from the ontological character of Dasein as **care**. According to Heidegger, we have preserved something metaphysical from the Greeks, projected it into our future in order that the present contains remnants of the Greek world.

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<sup>96</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 125.

The dominance<sup>97</sup> of certain views, Greek or otherwise, reduce the importance given to other views. Whether these views, which are disclosive of a world, remain dominant does not demand that those views are passed along with an understanding of their original character and may in fact be only empty verbal shells. Thus without the authentic questioning of Dasein, ideas which disclose our world are not fully understood as to the nature of the world that is so disclosed. Heidegger would claim that for the most part we exist inauthentically, that is we do not question the importance of the ideas that take hold and dominate in the disclosing of our world, but merely accept the ideas as given. It is incumbent upon Dasein, as that Being who is fundamentally historical, to investigate the history of the world disclosing interpretations into which it has been thrown, and to resolutely accept the world as so disclosed. This type of analysis will also allow for an appreciation of different ways in which the world is disclosed, ways in which truth reveals itself in the worlding of the world. If we question into the birth place of our ideas, then we will become able - not to delimit or define Being - but to see, among other things, the many possible manifestations that have historically conspired to keep the question of

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<sup>97</sup>Heidegger uses this term repeatedly: "Metaphysics as the History of Being" pps. 18 & 21 & 67, Introduction to Metaphysics p.137, "Origin on the Work of Art" p. 39. Being and Time p. 442, & p. 43 speaks of the 'tradition as master'.

the meaning of Being hidden!

Heidegger sees two consequences if inattention to the dominance of the ideas that disclose our world becomes rampant. First, such inattention will allow the current earth exploiting mentality to become the sole criterion of appreciating the destiny of Being. We then shall have moved into the age of the technological cybernetic, which reduces everything, including humanity, to mere exploitable beings. Yet, secondly and surprisingly, total reduction to a metaphysics of beings reveals with more clarity than is possible with more "ontological" approaches, the concealedness of Being. This is due to Heidegger's notion that absence can cause what is absent to come forcefully into the foreground. However for the most part, when time and Being become 'things' among other things, exploitable by and alienated from humans, the hidden nature of Being will remain unquestioned, and humans will fall into a darkness which fails to grasp the depth and mystery of their beginning.

In referring to his own ideas and way of thinking, Heidegger asks whether the true interpretation is simply the one into which one falls, as self-evident, or is it the one that actually questions what is needed. Heidegger states that we question positions that we have clung to "out of historical necessity".<sup>98</sup> But the violence that we

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<sup>98</sup>Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 176.

sometimes do to old interpretations is bound up with how we view ourselves. And ultimately, by throwing ourselves against metaphysical notions of historicity, against the comfort of the world of the "they" that craves novelty but not depth, and by disowning a "past which has become unrecognizable", we can come to see "history as the recurrence of the possible".<sup>99</sup> A return to the ancient Greek idea of truth as the clearing, would require an "historical meditation" upon the foundation of Western Metaphysics. Thus the idea of truth as a clearing can not be grasped simply by stating it is a clearing, for like Dilthey, Heidegger recognized that any given information is contained within the context of its occurrence: "...utterances inevitable speak out of a background, a background from which they emerge; such utterances do not explicitly interrogate that background but return to it unwittingly in their very speech".<sup>100</sup> In other words, what we can determine in language does not reveal the groundlessness of the 'whatness' of whatever is discussed, in fact just the opposite, for it must blandly assume it. And yet, if we think deeply or meditate upon what constitutes truth for us, this process can reveal its self-grounding and expose the abyss out of which such "a clearing" may have appeared for the ancient Greeks or whomever.

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<sup>99</sup>Being and Time, p. 444.

<sup>100</sup>Heidegger, Nietzsche, p. 162.

Although Heidegger did not feel that a science of history could explain the Being of humans, their place in the *kosmos* or the rift out of which world is disclosed, nor did he think that a philosophy of history could determine how Being will represent itself in the future, he did think that it was valuable in terms of thinking the question of the "there" of Dasein and the question of Being. Heidegger's limitation may go too far. Certainly his attack on bland historiography as a recounting of historical words would prove completely inadequate to the task of exposing what history is, either Dasein's historicity or the history of Being. But Dilthey also had the same objections for similar reasons. For Dilthey a science of history is impossible because first it is a descriptive science dependent upon meanings that the person receives from experience, and secondly, since any new event completely restructures a person's description of the 'objective mind' there is no way to create a science of history which parallels a science of nature. The human sciences are woven into a whole where each part effects the whole and cannot be systematically unravelled. The creation of such a world is for Dilthey based on an inherent teleology, which is perhaps the predecessor of Heidegger's description of Dasein which discovers things out of a context of equipment. Thus for Heidegger, the arena for any historical science is the world of Dasein, which is first revealed in a totality. This world reflects the sending of Being as a whole, and accordingly any single event is not intelligible

in exclusion from the entire background. Perhaps Dilthey's "inner core" of an historical age represents an metaphysical analog to Heidegger's "hiddenness of Being" which lurks behind any given historical age.

Thus a science of history for both Dilthey and Heidegger would involve an analysis of the changing totality based upon the change of one part whose change is only understandable in terms of that changing whole. Any analysis of the change in terms of that which followed any given change will not be completely sensible in terms of the background of what existed previously. Thus we indeed run into a problem of translating an event that happened into terms that are acceptable and understandable in the post-event environment. Perhaps a science of history will prove itself to be an analysis of the structure of relations that can be only ever roughly translated into a current context. Since the structure of the background as a sending of Being itself changes over time, this program for historiography does indeed look challenging. If the Human Genome Project presents a similar feat of imagination, that of deducing meaning from within a series of relations which remain fluid within an ever-changing structure, then a recognition of the amount of facts compared with the amount of genes makes the historical project that much more of a daunting task.

This type of relation, of a part which defines the whole which is in turn defined by the whole is, I think, what Heidegger is pointing to in his dual approach to



historicality. Specifically, Dasein's historicality is that which is primarily historical, and yet Dasein is dependent upon the primordial temporality which is co-Appropriated by Being. Thus Dasein's disclosed Being, as a temporal Being-in-the-world, is but a manifestation of Being. Furthermore, it is Dasein's description of the disclosure of its world, that ultimately decides upon the truth of Being; that is, in what ways the meaning of Being can be questioned and described. Being is describable only from within-a-world, and that in-a-world is itself ontologically dependent on Being which allows for a description of that relationship: truth 'is' nothing other than that description.

The generally understood notion of the common world, becomes void of solipsistic overtones with Heidegger's pursuit of fundamental ontology. Dilthey left us with a metaphysical common world understood only by means of individuals, leaving truth as a battle between competing descriptions. Heidegger grounded the 'world' in the individual, removed truth from the realm of description to the realm of the experiencing of Being, and created a commonality not in "a" Being-in-the-World but that ontologically we exist as Being-in-the-world as a Being-in-a-historical-world-with-Others. The truth of the Others can not be proved metaphysically as a 'whatness' of the Others, but is rather variously interpreted depending on the historical epoch. In addition, such truth cannot be contradicted only usurped.

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