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“Anxiety” in Heidegger’s Being and Time: The Harbinger of Authenticity

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ABSTRACT: Analyzing the fundamental ontology of *Dasein* in Martin Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, this essay details the essential relationship between the mood of “anxiety” (*Angst*) and *Dasein*’s authentic comportment to existence. Although a highly disturbing experience, anxiety holds the potential for enlightenment, as it opens *Dasein* to the fundamental characteristics of its temporal authenticity. *Dasein* assents to its Selfhood and enacts its freedom in a “resolute,” authentic manner only when it grasps the difficult and burdensome aspects of life revealed by way of *Angst*’s attunement. Thus, I argue that anxiety is the single most important mode of human attunement that Heidegger describes.

This essay examines the relationship between the mood of anxiety (*Angst*) and *Dasein*’s authentic comportment to existence. It will be shown that anxiety is a potentially enlightening experience, which brings *Dasein* before the most fundamental characteristics of authenticity, including *Dasein*’s awareness of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being, which it projects while bearing the full weight of its primordial guilt, thereby owning up to the “nothingness” at the root of its Being, and further, facing the uttermost, insurmountable “certainty” of its possible non-existence, or death. As a far-reaching primordial possibility of disclosure, anxiety makes manifest in *Dasein* its “*Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being – that is, its *Being-free* for the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself” (*Being and Time*, 232/188). To choose and take hold of oneself, as Heidegger conceives, is to assent to one’s ownmost potentiality-for-Being and exist in an authentic manner. This includes Being-in-the-world in such a way that one is beholden to the past and accountable for the future.

For the most part, *Dasein* exists in an inauthentic manner (everydayness), which amounts to *choosing not to choose itself*, and is characterized by the perpetual movement of falling. This mode of existence for Heidegger denotes “an

understanding in which the existent *Dasein* does not understand itself primarily by that apprehended possibility of itself which is most peculiarly its own” (*Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 279). In the inauthentic mode, *Dasein*’s understanding and discourse are expressed within the idle talk and curiosity of the “they-self,” disclosing existence in a superficial and ambiguous manner. Tranquilized by what seems a complete understanding of things, *Dasein* never sets out to acquire an authentic understanding of existence and is unconcerned with the clear-sighted projection of its ownmost possibilities. Lost in the “they-self,” *Dasein* does not enact its own Being and either avoids, or remains oblivious to, the uniqueness and “peculiarity” of its Being and its genuine possibilities.

This lack of authentic self-understanding is a problem for Heidegger, who is concerned with bringing *Dasein* back to itself to face its own Being with honesty and integrity. Asking how *Dasein*’s ownmost potentiality-for-Being is to be grasped and enacted, Heidegger offers a solution that spans nearly the entirety of Division II of *Being and Time*. When *Dasein* exists authentically, he concludes, “*Dasein* is itself in and from its own most peculiar possibility, a possibility that has been seized on and chosen by

the Dasein itself" (BP, 287). Authentic existence constitutes Dasein's most extreme possibility of existing, which primarily determines its Being. As opposed to moving along passively with the ebb and flow of things, Dasein, for the first time, is emphatically *choosing to choose itself* and its own way in the world. It is for this reason that Heidegger considers authentic existence an extreme possibility for Dasein.¹ However, before Dasein comports itself authentically, it must be brought back from falling and the "they-self" to instead face itself and the ultimate conditions of existence. This is accomplished by way of the revelatory mood (*Stimmung*) of anxiety, which for Heidegger represents the harbinger of authenticity.

Moods are fundamental states of attunement that color Dasein's disposition and awareness, out of which it uncovers, or discloses, things that matter. Prior to comporting itself to any situation, Dasein is already immersed within a mood of some kind, as attunement is always at work influencing its worldly orientation. Heidegger describes attunement as a primordial way of Being that precedes "all cognition and volition, and [is] beyond their range of disclosure" (BT, 175/136). However, not all moods are equally revealing. For example, everyday moods such as love, happiness, boredom, irritability, and fear do not provide fundamental *existential* insight into Dasein's Being as a whole, and instead reveal the world in a restricted and limited manner. Veiling more than they disclose, "everyday moods" lead to a diminished awareness. Therefore, instead of pressing forth into its possibilities in a lucid manner, Dasein responds inappropriately and inadequately to the situation at hand, as is the case when Dasein, in the mood of fear, "becomes unsure of everything else and completely loses [its] head."²

Heidegger's task within *Being and Time* is to carry out what he defines as the "fundamental ontology" of Dasein. In order for the *existential* analytic to master its provisional task of exhibiting

Dasein's Being, it must first locate the most far-reaching, primordial mode of attunement that effectively reveals Dasein's entire structural make-up. In quest of this primordial mode of disclosure, Heidegger searches for the "right mood," that is, the mood that most effectively brings to light the oppressive, disturbing character of existence, and for this reason examines anxiety (*Angst*), a primordial state of Dasein's attunement. Anxiety reveals existence as a phenomenon that eludes all attempts to explain and control it, thus opening up the fundamental elements of Dasein's existence, revealing its "world as world," bringing forth its most important and authentic possibilities in light of finitude.

According to Heidegger, the fundamental mood of anxiety is the most rudimentary form of disclosure that attunes Dasein to its existence, more primordial and revelatory than any other average everyday mood. Anxiety exposes Dasein to the fundamental nature of its Being-in-the-world by bringing it before the great void of existence, and is therefore crucial to Dasein's authentic *existential* understanding of such phenomena as "death," "nothingness," and "thrownness." This awareness then attunes Dasein as it enacts its authentic possibilities in the *existentiell*. In essence, anxiety is about "nothingness," or the "nullity" that resides at the center of Dasein's Being. Heidegger views the issue of *existential* nothingness as a pressing philosophical concern, which is to be confronted and interrogated. The monumental significance of "nullity" within *Being and Time* is evident when we come to understand that without the ultimate "anxious" encounter with the "nothing" of existence Dasein can neither legitimately approach the possibility of its Selfhood nor authentically enact its freedom.³

Anxiety is about death and guilt, awakening Dasein to the inherent instability and indefiniteness of its finite existence. However, anxiety is not a fear of a particular entity in the world. Rather,

anxiety is a generalized, highly disturbing dread arising from Dasein, which induces a crisis of meaning. Anxiety provokes a shattering breakdown in the everyday, familiar ways in which Dasein conducts its life and most dramatically illustrates the principle of breakdown and revelation within Heidegger's philosophy. For example, in Division I, Section III, Chapter 16 (*Being and Time*), Heidegger analyzes the breakdown of "ready-to-hand" equipment and the subsequent revelation of "world" through the phenomenon of the "un-ready-to-hand." When a tool functions properly, its authentic "readiness-to-hand" remains inconspicuous. On the contrary, when a tool ceases to function properly, or becomes unusable, it quickly draws the attention of the user to the system of relations of which it is a part as it is directed toward a specific task. At the instant of breakdown, Dasein catches sight of everything connected to the work; the totality of the "workshop," so to speak, is lit up. The nature of "equipmentality" and the referential totality of the "ready-to-hand" are simultaneously made explicit, disclosing the overall purpose of the project (*towards-this*) and the manner in which the project must proceed in order to reach fruition (*in-order-to*). Anxiety induces a similar phenomenon, albeit on a larger scale, for in the moment of *Angst's* attunement, the entirety of Dasein's existence is disrupted, its life no longer "works," or functions with meaning. A breakdown occurs, and the phenomenon of the *world* announces its presence, disclosing the complex system of reference relations within which Dasein is immersed.

When the world announces its presence in anxiety, Dasein's everyday existence (inauthentic) falls into a state of confusion; meanings and interrelations are lost, and a slipping away of beings occurs. At the moment anxiety swells, Dasein no longer feels at home within the comfort and safety of its inauthentic Being-in-the-world, as the thoughts and interpretations of the "they-self" lose

meaning, force, and significance. Things that were once familiar and comprehensible show themselves in problematic ways. Dasein is momentarily "left hanging" as a homeless, thrown being. Alienated, in the mode of the "not-at-home" (*Unheimlichkeit*), Dasein is forced before the "nothingness" of existence.⁴ This primordial, "uncanny" *existential* mode of the "not-at-home" represents for Heidegger the most fundamental way of existence, acting to individualize Dasein for its own Being, revealing the unique, individual possibilities, which it alone has the potential to enact as Being-in-the-world.

However, the individualization (*existential solipsism*) that occurs in anxiety is the exact opposite of solipsism as traditionally conceived, i.e., as a retreat into the secluded interiority of the consciousness, and is instead Dasein's bold reclaiming of its world and Being. Anxiety works on Dasein so as to bring it out of the world of the "they-self" to face its own "world as world, and thus bring it face to face with itself as Being-in-the-world" (*BT*, 233/188). Anxiety frees Dasein to take hold of its existence by throwing it back upon that which it is most anxious about – its own potentiality-for-Being-in-the-world – provoking Dasein to reflect upon that which matters most in its existence. Heidegger claims that anxiety arises out of Being-in-the-world as a whole, and when Dasein is anxious, its Being as "care" is disclosed. "Thus the entire phenomenon of anxiety shows Dasein as factually existing Being-in-the-world. The fundamental ontological characteristics of this entity are existentiality, facticity, and Being-fallen" (*BT*, 235/191).

The ontological understanding of care provides important insight into Dasein's existence, as the three modes (*ecstases*) of temporality are implicit within its definition as "ahead-of-itself-as-already-in-the-world" and "Being-alongside" in the world.⁵ Heidegger views primordial temporality, the ontological meaning of the care-structure, as a finite phenomenon.

“Care itself, in its very essence,” argues Heidegger, “is permeated with nullity (nothingness) through and through” (BT, 331/285). Hence, due to the nature of its being, Dasein endures a finite existence and inevitably faces insurmountable obstacles, which restrict and shape its possibilities and the enactment thereof. It is anxiety that discloses the limitations of Dasein’s existence by revealing the three ways in which “nothingness” manifests itself *existentially* within the care-structure: (1) Death (2) thrownness and facticity, and (3) the impossibility of enacting all possibilities. These delimiting factors represent the primordial “nothingness” with which Dasein, enduring a finite existence, must come to terms in order to exist authentically.

“The Nothing with which anxiety brings us face to face,” writes Heidegger, “unveils the *nullity* by which Dasein, in its very basis, is defined; and this basis itself is as *thrownness* into death” (BT, 356/308). Anxiety is about death. Inauthentic Dasein interprets death as if it were only a biological truism, signifying nothing more than the physical cessation of the organism. Falling within the everyday mode of existence, Dasein misses the *existential* significance of death and treats it as a present-at-hand thing or occurrence. For example, viewing death as an event that happens to others, or as a quasi-established, abstracted truth, which occurs at some point in Dasein’s distant future, characterizes a “fleeing in the face of death,” which is ultimately a fleeing from anxiety, described by Heidegger as a “*fleeing* of Dasein in the face of itself – of itself as an authentic potentiality-for-Being-its-Self” (BT, 229/184). Living in an inauthentic way, in the midst of the “they-self,” Dasein allows denial and deception to shield it from the pressing impact and monumental import of its mortality. Conversely, authentic Dasein interprets the oppressive void of anxiety and the ultimate nothingness of death as the single most integral aspect of authentic comportment. When Dasein, uncannily

and individuated, with its worldly relations severed, is brought before the utter possibility of its no-longer-being-able-to-be, its ownmost authentic potentiality-for-Being is revealed as Being-towards-death. It not only attunes itself to the inevitability of mortality, but also projects the “uncanniness” of anxiety into its *futural* existence. This, for Heidegger, represents the *existential* understanding of death as a “Being-certain of death,” or mortality, and when Dasein takes on this possibility as its own possibility, it is *anticipating* and “running ahead” (*vorlaufen*) towards or up to its death, with the dual recognition of its inevitability and indeterminate nature, as death, the uttermost possibility of non-being, can occur at any moment.

Dasein is free for the possibility of death when it accepts its mortality, and this is what Heidegger calls the “freedom towards death.” At the moment Dasein is free for death, open for what is possible at any moment, all of its possibilities are subordinated to the uttermost possibility of death and thus become provisional. In its “running ahead” to death in *anticipation*, Dasein is liberated from its absorption in the “they” of everyday existence and understands its existence in terms of its *factual* possibilities, which are constrained and shaped by mortality. As Heidegger indicates, anticipation is something other than merely Being-certain of death’s inevitability; more importantly, it is the freedom for possibilities within which Dasein holds and maintains itself. Being-certain for death is only disclosed when Dasein enacts the “not-yet” that is always a part of its “Being-ahead-of-itself.” In anticipation, Dasein recognizes death as a constant and legitimate threat arising from anxiety’s latent presence, which holds Dasein open to “*the utter and constant threat to itself arising from [its] ownmost individualized Being*” (BT, 310/266). Thus, anticipation is also about anxiety, as “running ahead” to death is Dasein’s authentic comportment to death and includes maintaining, or holding, oneself

within the threat of death's indefinite certainty.

In Division II, Chapter I (*Being and Time*), Heidegger ends the discussion of death by explicating the ontological possibility of the *existential* projection of anticipation. The question remains, whether or not any phenomenon in Dasein's existence actually realizes this "ontological-existential" possibility of a Being-towards-death in the concrete, *existentiell*, i.e., "Dasein's ability to come to owe anything in factually existing" (*BT*, 332/286). Heidegger demonstrates that such a phenomenon exists and refers to it as the "conscience." When Dasein owns up to the primordial guilt of existence (nothingness), which conscience formalizes and "silently" communicates, it therefore fulfills the ontological conclusions about death and is free for the pursuit of its own finite possibilities within concrete *existentiell* situations.

Heidegger does not express conscience in traditional psychological, ethical, or religious terms. Rather, he views conscience as a form of understanding, expressed as a silent voice which urges Dasein to end its flight into the inauthentic world, i.e., face the "nothingness" of its Being as *thrown-projection*, own up to its primordial guilt, and assume the responsibility of enacting its authentic potentiality-for-Being. In vocalizing what anxiety intimates, conscience reminds Dasein that it does not control its own Being, as the care-structure is ultimately grounded in primordial "nothingness." Since anxiety discloses this fact, it is therefore integral to the phenomenon of conscience. "In uncanniness," reminds Heidegger, "Dasein stands together with itself primordially. Uncanniness brings this entity face to face with its undisguised nullity, which belongs to the possibility of its ownmost potentiality-for-Being" (*BT*, 333/287). Like facing death, the acceptance of guilt's burden requires Dasein to confront the disturbing truths of existence brought to light in anxiety.

The reticent voice of conscience speaks from the depths of anxiety's rumbling silence. The summons of "Being-guilty" is potentially audible because of Dasein's ontological predisposition for hearing:

Only in keeping silent does the conscience call; that is to say, the call comes from the soundlessness of uncanniness, and the Dasein which it summons is called back into the stillness of itself, and called back as something that is to become still. Only in reticence, therefore, is this silent discourse understood appropriately in wanting to have a conscience. It takes the words away from the common-sense idle talk of the "they" (*BT*, 343/296).

The uncanny call of Dasein (conscience) in its thrown "nothingness" is unfamiliar to the ordinary, everyday Dasein and thus resonates as a distant, "alien" voice. The silent discourse of conscience rings in an unfamiliar and anomalous manner within the loud confusion of inauthentic existence. For this reason, the voice penetrates the crash and rattle of idle chatter and reaches the "they-self," attempting to induce Dasein's authentic "Self" to pay heed to its message and return "*into the reticence of [its] existent potentiality-for-Being*" (*BT*, 322/277). However, to merely have the voice of conscience reach the inauthentic Dasein is not sufficient to call it back from the "they" into its existent potentiality-for-Being. For the possibility exists that Dasein, absorbed within its fallen everyday existence, may ignore the call, fail to understand it, or remain oblivious to its urgent communications. Hence, just as there exists an inauthentic reaction to death, there exists an inauthentic response to conscience. Heidegger states that as Dasein runs from its primordial guilty nature, it is again fleeing the oppression of anxiety, and in this instance it is "fleeing in the face of the conscience."

Heidegger argues that guilt, in the everyday sense, emerges when Dasein endeavors to cover over, or flee from, the agitation it experiences by way of *Angst*. Attempting to quell its unsettledness, Dasein passively adopts the ethical mores of the “they-self” as rigid criteria for its behavior. When the voice of the “they-self” is erroneously protracted and universalized, it forms that which Heidegger refers to as the “world conscience.” To envisage the conscience as an objective, formalized phenomenon, with content supplied by the venerable obligation to religious beliefs, principles of reason, or societal mores, is to respond in an inauthentic manner to the call of the *existential* conscience. Although the voice of the conscience is the call of care (Dasein’s own call), inauthentic Dasein judges the caller “after the manner of the world,” i.e., the collective voice of the “they-self,” and interprets conscience as a power that it can “come across Objectively” (BT, 323/278). Heidegger contends that the traditional conception of conscience and guilt, as expressed within psychology and religion, for example, originate from the misunderstanding of the *existential* conscience.

Unlike the everyday idea of guilt, existential guilt is a form of obligation characterized by an emptiness, a lack of content, which Heidegger expresses in the following terms: “Being-the-basis for a being that is defined by a ‘not’ – that is to say, as *Being-the-basis of a nullity*” (BT, 329/283). Dasein is guilty because its possibilities for the future, past, and present are all influenced and constrained by the primordial “nothingness” that resides in the care-structure. To enact its authentic existence, Dasein must own up to its guilt. It must acknowledge and accept that the possibilities that it seeks to project itself upon are limited by “nothingness,” which manifests itself in thrown-Being, death, and the fact that in choosing one possibility it is therefore precluding a host of other equally viable options. “Freedom,” writes Heidegger,

“is only in the choice of one possibility – that is, in tolerating one’s not having chosen the others and one’s not being able to choose them” (BT, 331/285).

It has been the aim of this work to analyze anxiety as the harbinger of authenticity, but as a neutral mode of attunement, *Angst* is the forerunner to both Dasein’s authentic and inauthentic modes of comportment. Thus, to merely stand courageously before anxiety does not amount to “choosing” an authentic existence based on what anxiety reveals, for *Angst* “merely brings one into the mood for a *possible* resolution” (BT, 394/344). If anxiety is to be considered and acknowledged as the harbinger of authenticity, an active move in which Dasein *chooses to choose itself* is required (recall the contrast between Dasein’s authentic *choosing to choose itself* and the inauthentic *choosing not to choose itself*). Dasein must therefore incorporate the insight gained in anxiety and actively take on the responsibility of its death and the guilt-ridden “nothingness” of its existence. Heidegger locates the means by which to open Dasein to the enactment of its authentic potentiality-for-Being within the phenomenon of “resoluteness” (*Entschlossenheit*), which is to say, positively incorporating anxiety’s seemingly negative influence:

[A]nxiety can mount authentically only in a Dasein which is resolute. He who is resolute knows no fear; but he understands the possibility of anxiety as the possibility of the very mood which neither inhibits nor bewilders him. Anxiety liberates him *from* possibilities which “count for nothing”, and lets him become free *for* those which are authentic (BT, 394/344).

To initiate authentic Being-in-the-world, a transformation of inauthentic existence is required. Dasein must submit to the disturbing revelations of anxiety by way of “wanting-to-have-a-conscience,” i.e., choosing to own up to its being-the-

basis of a nullity as *thrown-projection*. This blameworthy attitude, or authentic hearing of the call of conscience, is Dasein's ownmost Self taking action "in itself on its own accord in its Being-guilty, and represents phenomenally that authentic potentiality-for-Being which Dasein itself attests" (BT, 342/295). The authentic understanding of conscience, which signifies a readiness for anxiety, is what Heidegger terms "resoluteness," which is the authentic "disclosedness" of Dasein. This distinctive mode of "disclosedness" holds within itself Dasein's authentic Being-towards-death "as the possible existential modality for its own authenticity," which it enacts in the *existentiell* (BT, 353/305). Heidegger links resoluteness, as disclosedness, or "uncovering," to the authentic truth (*aletheia*) of existence, "the most primordial, and indeed the most authentic disclosedness," in which Dasein is its potentiality-for-Being (BT, 264/221).

In the moment of resolute openness, which is nothing other than wanting to have a conscience, throwing itself down upon its Being-guilty in readiness for anxiety, Dasein opens itself to what Heidegger terms the "Situation," or the authentic way of "Being-there" (BT, 347/300). As previously stated, Dasein's authentic existence represents an emphatic "choosing to choose" itself. However, to understand Heidegger's conception of Dasein in the moment of resoluteness, the traditional notion of volition as the "deliberate choice of a subject" must be reconsidered.⁶ This is because resolute Dasein is not willfully choosing between the competing alternatives of inauthentic and authentic existence. Rather, Dasein is opening itself up to Being; its "choice," so to speak, is already made when it allows itself to be called by conscience to own up to guilt and accept the "nothingness" of existence. Therefore, Dasein is not so much "choosing" authenticity and the Situation as it is choosing its actions within specific situations. In resoluteness, Dasein, released from the oppressive

influence of the "they-self," pushes forward authentically into its possibilities with the *existential* understanding of what is factually possible at each and every moment.⁷

The authentic Situation of Dasein is not an axiomatic guide to authentic behavior, presenting a theoretical schema for human existence. Instead, it is an authentic way of inhabiting the present moment, which modifies and clarifies Dasein's relationships, i.e., its concerned dealings with entities and its solicitous Being-with-Others. The Situation is the authentic clearing of Being, an opening for the enactment of Dasein's authentically owned possibilities. Seizing upon the *existential* understanding of thrownness and death, Dasein makes its choices in light of its uncertain future and thrown-past. It is within the Situation that Dasein's freedom is born of the relationship between its choices and the constraints that shape its possibilities. To erroneously conceive resoluteness as a deliberate choice, which establishes the permanent transformation of Dasein, is to truncate freedom and eradicate the possibility of ethics, and thus deny to existence "nothing less than the very possibility of taking action in a particular Situation" (BT, 345/298).

When "resolute" Dasein comports itself, anxiety has extinguished intrinsic meaning from its life, and the reasons for acting and making choices hinge upon the "*disclosive projection and determination of what is factually possible at the time*" (BT, 345/298). Authenticity does not provide life with a new content, for authentic existence is in fact devoid of content, nor does it alienate Dasein from the world. Rather, authenticity "brings the Self right into its current concerned being alongside what is ready-to-hand, and pushes it into solicitous Being-with-others" (BT, 344/298). Authenticity is a shift in the framework of Dasein's existence, transforming the "context" in which it enacts its approaching possibilities. Authentic Being-in-the-world is a spontaneous way of living in which Dasein is

open and receptive to the approach of Being. The radical, authentic transformation to authenticity occurs when Dasein owns up to the disclosed “nothingness,” or *nullity*, of its Being, which first manifests itself through the primordial attunement of *Angst*.

Conceived as a temporal phenomenon, the Situation is Dasein’s “moment of vision” (*Augenblick*), or “instant,” of authenticity. “In the instant as an ecstasis,” writes Heidegger, “the existent Dasein is carried away, as resolved, into the factically determined possibilities, circumstances, contingencies of the situation of action” (*BP*, 287). This is the moment of *enpresenting* (the authentic “present” of ecstatic temporality) when Dasein, accessible and free, projects itself into its possibilities within the factual and distinct circumstances of its own unique life. Such an authentic “resolute” openness to worldly encounters is only possible because Dasein is a temporal being that *temporalizes*, and thus is at once its future, past, and present as *thrown-projecting Being-in-the-world*. The present, which is held within authentic temporality, is the sustaining form of Dasein’s authentic choices, the “resolute rapture with which Dasein is carried away to whatever possibilities and circumstances are encountered in the Situation as possible objects of concern” (*BP*, 287).

The authentic *temporalizing* of Dasein occurs as it projects its finite possibilities, initiating a forward movement towards itself as resolute Being-towards-death in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This movement secures a “repetition” of the authentic nullity, or “nothingness,” characterizing Dasein’s authentic response to the call of conscience. Thrown before the revelations of anxiety, this future-oriented act of retrieval is the authentic appropriation of Dasein’s “having-been.” In coming to itself (future) from out of its own thrown-Being (past), Dasein discloses the meaning of authentic Being within the “instant,” or *enpresenting* (present),

of the Situation. This “ecstatic” temporal process represents the letting be of Being, which has been defined as the authentic truth of existence. Thus, when Dasein exists authentically, it experiences the world in its basic “unconcealment” – *allowing that which shows itself from itself to be seen* – now not disclosing beings, but the phenomenon of world as such, i.e., the overarching matrix of meaning and purpose structuring Dasein’s Being-in-the-world.

The concluding remarks focus on Dasein’s authentic response to anxiety as an insightful and philosophical way to encounter *Angst*. The ultimate situations of human existence, which manifest themselves by way of anxiety, represent the very conditions that hold the potential to make human life genuinely meaningful. Death, nothingness, and thrownness, disclosed through anxiety, are precisely what Dasein must accept in order to exist authentically as its future (free-for-death), past and inheritance (its having-been), and present, the “there,” or *enpresenting*, of existence. It is of benefit, at this point, to inquire into the mind-set of the authentic, resolute Dasein as perceived by Heidegger. Is it likely that while preparing his extensive analysis of authenticity, Heidegger was drawing inspiration from his own existence as a philosopher? Such an assumption is reasonable, if we envisage the philosopher as one who is attuned and open to life’s most difficult situations.

Of assistance in understanding the philosopher’s mind-set is to recall the two perspectives from which this essay has considered anxiety’s influence. If, on the one hand, *Angst* is interpreted in an inauthentic manner, as a constant threat to one’s healthful existence, Dasein flees in fear from anxiety’s disturbing effects to the safety and familiarity of the interpretations of the *status quo*. If, on the other hand, *Angst* is perceived as the bridge to a unique form of understanding, which connects Dasein to the finite realities of its Being-in-the-world, then as opposed to prefiguring horror and passivity, anxiety

announces itself as the harbinger of Dasein's authentic enactment of freedom for its possibilities. As anxiety is disclosing the insignificance of the world, authentic Dasein is reinterpreting the meaninglessness and impossibility of existence as revelatory. This radical conversion of the inauthentic view "signifies that one is letting the possibility of an authentic potentiality-for-Being be lit up," i.e., one is behaving philosophically, awakened by the sense of wonder (*BT*, 393/343).

The philosopher therefore embraces, through resolute openness, the limited and ephemeral nature of the world that anxiety discloses. To abandon the notion of a finite worldly existence in search of meaningful consolation elsewhere (e.g., inauthentic worldly projection or other-worldly projection by way of religion) is to degrade our vast potential, as such

incoherent aspirations work to tear down our genuine earthly relations. Philosophy is ultimately concerned with enacting ways of life that embrace finitude, for "existence is truly philosophical only when its knowledge is appropriately attuned to that which cannot be known, to a destiny that exceeds oneself."⁸ Philosophy must take up and challenge the ultimate uncertainties that comprise Being-in-the-world. Heidegger accurately concludes that outside of the single fatality of death, that uttermost certainty, which is non-relational and insurmountable, Dasein is a wealth of potential. Considering the depth and breadth of his treatment of authenticity, Heidegger may well be asking the reader of *Being and Time* to consider seriously the life of the philosopher as representing an "anxious" obligation to death, which frees her/him for the joyous and challenging activity of living.*

* I thank Professor William McNeill, author of *The Glance of the Eye: Heidegger, Aristotle, and the Ends of Theory*. His comments and suggestions helped to improve this essay.

Notes

1 Heidegger, Martin, *The Concept of Time*. Trans., W. McNeill, bilingual edition (Blackwell: Oxford), 1992, p. 10E. Heidegger's exact quotation concerning Dasein's authenticity runs thus: "The authenticity of Dasein is what constitutes its most extreme possibility of Being. Dasein is primarily determined by this most extreme possibility of Dasein."

2 _____, "What is Metaphysics?" *Basic Writings*. Trans., David Farrell Krell. (Harper & Row: San Francisco), 1993, p. 100. "Because fear possesses [the] trait of being 'fear in the face of' and 'fear for,' he who fears and is afraid is captive to the mood in which he finds himself. Striving to rescue himself from this particular thing, he becomes unsure of everything else and completely 'loses his head'."

3 _____, "What is Metaphysics?" *Basic Writings*. Trans., David Farrell Krell. (Harper & Row: San Francisco), 1993, p. 103. The monumental importance that Heidegger attaches to the Nothing within his philosophy is expressed directly within the following statement: "Without the original revelation of the Nothing, no self-hood and no freedom."

4 "Unheimlichkeit" translates as "uncanny" but means more literally "un-homelike," or "not-at-home" (fn. H. 188).

5 _____, *The Concept of Time*. Trans., W. McNeill, bilingual edition (Blackwell: Oxford), 1992, p. 20E. To understand Dasein and further, Being in general, Heidegger argues that we must first understand time, for Dasein is temporality. "Dasein is time, time is temporal. Dasein is not time, but temporality."

6 _____, "On the Origin of the Work of Art," *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans., A. Hofstadter (Harper & Row: New York), 1971, p. 67. Reflecting on the phenomenon of authentic "resoluteness" within "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger writes the following: "The resoluteness intended in *Being and Time*, is not the deliberate choice of a subject, but the opening up of human being, out of its capacity in that which is, to the openness of being."

7 Heidegger describes the immediacy of Dasein's action-taking when resolute for its own Potentiality-for-Being in the following terms: "Resoluteness does not take cognizance of a Situation and put that Situation before itself; it has put itself into the Situation already. As resolute, Dasein is already *taking action*." (*BT*, 347/300).

8 McNeill, William, "Care for the Self," *Philosophy Today* (Spring Issue), p. 62.

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